

**SAUL Final Conference
Amsterdam, 29 June 2006, Conference day. Chair: Tracy Metz**

Report of the discussions that followed the lectures and the forums

**Challenges of New Urban Landscapes – the Amsterdam example
Jan Doets (South Axis Business District)**

Questions and remarks

Jan Doets explains that the area called the Amstel Wedge is one of the landscapes around the river Amstel that penetrates into the city. Doets supports the aim of the project to maintain this area in the long term. At the moment, there are still farmers in this area, but their farms are not sustainable. There are talks with the city and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality to create funds, one of them for private parties who want to participate in the project to maintain the area. The funds will be used to buy land each time a farmer wants to sell it.

Ursula Stein (Stadt- Regional- und Freiraumplaner, Luxembourg) points out the fact that this is a long-term project that runs until 2030. This project will have an enormous impact on the neighbourhood. In what way are the inhabitants involved in this project? Jan Doets remarks that in the close surroundings of the South Axis Business District there are sports fields. These fields are located in between the neighbourhood and the business district, so there's enough room to expand. The development of this project started in 1998 and there's a constant dialogue with the citizens as part of the normal process of decision-making.

Romain Diederich (Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire, Luxembourg) asks what the role of public transport will be in this area. Jan Doets says that 25,000 travellers per day now use the train station. In the future, the amount of trains will be doubled; this includes not only national trains but international ones as well, like the German ICE. About 30% of the people living and working in the area make use of public transport. There is also a parking garage for 2000 bicycles.

Deznalyn Lewis (Groundwork London) points out the fact that this project started in 1989. In what way was the community involved? Jan Doets explains that Amsterdam is divided into districts. Apart from a central council, each district has its own council. Most of the communication with the citizens is handled by the district council; the same is true for the formal process of decision-making. The district council is responsible for the consultation of inhabitants and in this way people do have influence on the final design of the park.

Alain Thierstein (Professor for Spatial and Territorial Development, TU Munich) also mentions the fact that this is a long-term project. This area will have to compete with other areas, like Schiphol airport. How do they ensure the economic competitiveness of the area in the long term? Jan Doets answers that Schiphol airport is limited regarding its expansion possibilities and depends on the development of the South Axis for this reason. There are talks with Schiphol regarding further cooperation. Jan Doets stresses that the South Axis wasn't affected by the slump in the real estate market over the last few years. The green areas will certainly be realised: they are planned and money is labelled for their realisation. About 5% of the total budget will be used to develop green areas.

New Urban Landscapes – what are they and why are they important? Alain Thierstein (Professor for Spatial and Territorial Development, TU Munich)

Questions and remarks

Steven Gauge (Groundwork Southwark, London) explains that in his experience, most regulators do not play a positive role regarding these projects. They try to prevent things from happening in the face of some grand plan. Alain Thierstein admits that in some cases the regulators are not able to see the added value of urban landscapes. However, there's also a new generation that brings in new perspectives and new knowledge about the development of such areas. He mentions the Haarlemmermeer, wherein approximately 25,000 new homes are due to be constructed. The urban taskforce which was responsible for the design didn't focus on the question of how to build 25,000 homes, but tried to find out how the quality of space could be enhanced, taking into account the specific needs of the people who are to live in this area.

Henrik Schultz (Stadt- Regional- und Freiraumplaner, Luxembourg) asks in what way the small SAUL-projects can help to enlarge the awareness of the value of open landscapes in general. Alain Thierstein answers that from small things, big things grow. In the end, the general awareness depends on the tenacity with which people try to convey the message over time. Small-scale projects do have their impact on a regional or even global scale. It's how the micro level adds up to the macro level.

Romain Diederich (Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire, Luxembourg) thinks the impact of small actions on a large scale poses an important question, which cannot be answered easily. Alain Thierstein points out the role of innovation. Innovation not only means technological innovation, but also methodical innovation. If you try something new, it's very likely you'll fail. Innovation is all about trial and error. He states that four out of five innovative projects will fail. This doesn't matter; it costs money, it takes time, but in the end it helps to build up knowledge and know-how.

Gerd-Rainer Damm (Ministerium für Umwelt des Saarlandes, Saarland) points out the distinction Alain Thierstein made between regulators, producers and users of landscapes. The producers of landscapes are also users. Thierstein stated that for the ranking of cities, green open landscapes play an important role. Damm stresses the differences in perspective of the different actors: an economist thinks in years, a planner thinks in decades. Yet for landscapes, the perspective should be 200 to 300 years. Thierstein admits this is a critical aspect: how do we make the future speak in the present? Most planners do not think in terms of decades, but in terms of their contracts. It's a challenge to synchronize timescales. He mentions Japanese carmakers like Toyota: they do think in decades and that's part of the secret of their success.

Kevin Thomas (CUDEM Leeds Metropolitan University, England) says that, in his experience, regulators do not value green spaces like they should. How can regulators be persuaded to attribute the same value to green space as they do to economic space? In addition, it's very difficult to generate enthusiasm for green spaces in city regions. Alain Thierstein explains that his lecture was aimed at raising questions, instead of providing answers. When referring to green spaces, he thinks more about functions - about the multifunctionality of spaces - rather than the fact that the spaces are green. He doesn't agree that green space isn't valued like economic space: the EU spends billions on agriculture. Yet, it's true that economists in general do not grasp the meaning of landscapes. For example, in Switzerland planners don't even mention the landscape, though it covers 80% of the country. But there are also other examples, like Zurich, where eight communities decided to get together and find out how they could make better use of the green open spaces. This makes it clear that new coalitions are formed. New approaches demand visualisations and the cooperation of different disciplines.

Tackling New Urban Landscape – approaches, challenges and possible solutions Fred Schoorl (Netherlands Institute of Physical Planning and Housing)

Questions and remarks

Tracy Metz concludes that there must be someone who's very insulted by the comment that SAUL is too traditional in its approach. One person responds by saying that he's not insulted. He admits that in the beginning there was some confusion about the basic concepts of SAUL. However, Fred Schoorl didn't mention the idea that was chosen in the end: to institutionalise the process of learning, just to keep it going. Fred Schoorl agrees that the aspect of learning is very important. This raises another important question, though: who's learning? He concludes that the experts do the learning, not the common users of the spaces. In his opinion, all of the stakeholders should be involved, at various stages. Only then can the transition be made.

Paul Rijnaarts (City of Amsterdam and SAUL Steering Group member) points to one of his own final conclusions regarding the SAUL-project: cities are no longer cities, planning is no longer planning. This is caused by the fact the population of the world is becoming multimodal. That results in new kinds of cities: city systems and new urban landscapes. Fred Schoorl agrees, but says in conclusion that this doesn't make the matter easier. Some things are easy, and Schoorl mentions the project Meerstad as an example. You need people who demonstrate commitment and leadership.

Discussion forum 1 – Involving citizens in quality of life issues

Forum members:

Hugh Drew Stevenson – Special Advisor to Mayor of London, London

Cyriel Thomas – Opbouwwerk Noord, Amsterdam

Evert Verhagen – Stadsdeel Amsterdam Noord, Amsterdam

Judy Saunders – London Borough of Merton, London

Romain Diederich – Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire, Luxembourg

A picture is shown of a couple hanging from a tree in a net. Cyriel Thomas states that these nets were made by primary school children, after being invited to explain what they would like to do in the park. In a temporary project, the children made several of these nets. Afterwards, these nets were taken in by the local youth who normally do not make use of the park. Currently, these youths temporarily keep the site clean and repair the nets if necessary. Wim Verhagen, manager of the park, says it's crucial to consult the neighbours in the process of designing the park. As a manager, he has to try his best to include all of the wishes of future users. This means that the park is used in a way nobody had foreseen. He emphasizes that designers have to realise they do not know the way in which public space will be used in the future.

Tracy Metz introduces Judy Saunders and asks her about the process of designing Wandle Valley Country Park. The talks regarding this subject took almost twenty years. How did they handle the fact that the park would be used in ways that were not foreseen at the beginning?

Judy Saunders emphasizes the importance of communication: you have to take the consultation of citizens very serious. She notes that almost all the people involved in the SAUL-project consult their citizens in the process of developing public spaces. What they do not do effectively is to report the outcome back to these citizens. She admits that the project in London took almost twenty years. This was mainly the result of insufficient funds. She stresses that it's also the most important for people to see something happening: with the Wandle Valley Country Park there was nothing to see, so there was also nothing to feel involved with. She admits that it is impossible to implement all of the existing wishes: during the process of consulting citizens, you have to deal with conflicts in priorities or opinions. But this is better than having no agenda whatsoever: by discussing the different priorities you can reach a consensus.

Hugh Drew Stevenson refers to the presentations that morning and draws the conclusion that there are two major issues. First of all, it's important to achieve genuine community involvement. He notes that there's clearly a desire to involve people. The second issue concerns the question of whether or not we actually know what we mean by 'urban landscape'. And if we do, how important is it? Stevenson refers to the 'Ladder of participation'. The lowest level is providing information. The second one is to communicate, and the seventh and final level is to give the citizens control. He states that in the UK there is a long track record of genuine participation, which goes back to big social movements in the 1970s. He describes five ways to engage the local community:

- 1 Involvement in planning
- 2 Involvement in carrying out the project
- 3 Involvement in management
- 4 Involvement in ownership
- 5 Involvement in a wider (regional or national) strategic discussion

There is a history of the public sector handing over ownership to the community, when the public sector finds it too difficult or thinks that the community can do it cheaper. Steven Gauge (Groundwork Southwark) explains that in his project the process of handing over ownership is progressing slowly and painfully, but within another year the council should be able to decide on the ownership of the park. He stresses that from the council's point of view it isn't about getting rid of a problem, but about the long term securing of the boundaries of the park. The new owner will be a community development trust, made up of partners and led by Groundwork Southwark, though the final structure has not yet been established. The final goal is for all of the interest groups to have a

stake in the governance of the park. Groundwork will own the park and ensure that the people from the neighbourhood will be involved in decision-making.

Romain Diederich explains his earlier statement that local government isn't ready for this kind of ownership. He stresses that he was speaking only for Luxembourg. He found it very interesting to see how normal institutional organisations and stakeholders worked together in a non-hierarchical way. This was the bonus of the SAUL-project for Luxembourg. The next step will be to realise modern regional planning, but this will take a lot of effort. It's a learning process and he emphasizes that in Luxembourg the only actors are institutional actors, instigated by law. Luxembourg has to try to form more informal processes regarding involvement and will make use of the experiences in the other participating countries.

Tracy Metz refers to the Wandle Valley Country Park and asks Judy Saunders whether she had to fight hard to get her voice heard. Saunders says that she had the advantage of not only being a member of the council, but also having the opportunity to vote on subjects. It's her responsibility to enable people to get their voices heard as well, so that they can fulfil their role as stakeholders and try to take ownership of the park.

Cyriel Thomas says that he is stimulating the youngsters to participate and make use of the park. Wim Verhagen is convinced that designers have to anticipate new uses of the park, of which the youngsters are a good example. These children are now formal users of the park. He refers to the playground in the Westerpark, just outside the conference hall. This was designed with the help of twenty children. He stresses the importance of involving people in the process of developing public spaces, but is also convinced that someone should be in the lead and take formal responsibility. This conclusion is agreed upon; people should be involved, but this should not result in mere compromises. Professionals, noting that planners aren't designers, should guard the overall quality.

Tracy Metz states that it's inevitable that when different people with different interests make use of public spaces, there will be conflicts of interest. According to Wim Verhagen, a good designer will make the difference. If you are aware of the existing possibilities, then you're able to create a public space that can be used in many different ways. Hugh Drew Stevenson thinks it's impossible to anticipate all of the possible conflicts of interest. Some conflicts are design issues, some are planning issues and others are management issues. You cannot pin all of them on the designer of the park. He agrees that to design a park, you will need some technical and creative skills. Even more important is the blueprint leading the designer and Stevenson says that in thirty years time he hasn't been involved in anything that has not been improved through genuine public consultation. The task of designers is to provide projects and buildings for other people to use, not to provide the ones they like to build personally.

Tracy Metz points to the fact that the SAUL-project is ending. It's commonly known that when funding ends, the continuity of the project is in danger. How do the participants in the SAUL-project feel about this danger and what can be done to make sure the end of SAUL doesn't mean the end of all good intentions?

Hugh Drew Stevenson stresses two things, from a London point of view. First of all, it's very important to take local events up to a regional level, onto the national agenda. The London plan is a plan for the whole of London and started at a regional strategic level. This regional strategy is implemented in all the local projects, a top-down approach. This ensures that all projects in London follow this approach, without specifying in detail how it is to be done. The second result of the project is the establishment of the London Parks and Green Spaces Forum. This forum breaks down barriers between the different specialists by having them sit around the table and realise the limitations of their own expertise. The forum is also a place for discussion and networking and, thirdly, it's a working group that contributes to the process of decision-making.

Romain Diederich explains that, for Luxembourg, the SAUL-project made clear the importance of a spatial vision as a first step to regional planning. In that sense, sustainable urban landscapes are a key issue. He sees a continuation of the process by integrating notions from the SAUL-project into

the regular, formal procedures. The SAUL-project offered new ways for dealing with former industrial terrains.

Cyriel Thomas states that the project will be evaluated later this summer. He learned a lot from the project in London, which at some points differs from the project in Amsterdam, but also shows interesting similarities. An example of this is the way in which youth is involved. There was an exchange programme between London and Amsterdam, for the young people but also for the professionals. Evert Verhagen explains that SAUL provided a great service for the already-existing contacts in Europe. The Noorderpark, especially, benefited from SAUL in the first couple of years, by making elements in the park and the consultation of stakeholders possible. Personally, he thinks money is the wrong reason for participating in European projects, though money of course is a necessary element. In the end it's about working together and exchanging ideas and that process of cooperation should be and will be continued.

Discussion forum 2: Tackling unemployment and inequality

Forum members:

Kirsten Adamczak – Emschergerossenschaft, Rhein-Ruhr and SAUL steering group member

Franz Kerner – Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main. Frankfurt Rhein-Main

Gerd-Rainer Damm – Ministerium für Umwelt des Saarlandes, Saarland

Preceding the forum discussion, Henk Veen (Landschap Noord-Holland) tells how his TEMS-project was funded by SAUL. The money was used for the maintenance of the Amstel-wedge. Private landowners were subsidised and jobless people followed an internal course, aimed at the use of machinery and techniques of maintenance. In the end, this project served two goals: to maintain the otherwise neglected landscape and to give unemployed people a better chance at getting a regular job. The project featured three groups of approximately twenty people each.

Tracy Metz introduces Franz Kerner who's involved in a TEMS-project in the region Frankfurt/Rhein-Main. Does he recognize aspects of the project mentioned above? Franz Kerner states that his TEMS-project is partially geared towards the same goals, though in his project there were also other professions involved, like stonecutters and carpenters. The unemployed who took part in the project not only maintained the landscape, but also built wooden tables and benches. The project consisted of ten smaller projects in which approximately fifty young people participated, between 18 and 28 years old. Kerner indicates that the projects have come to an end recently. There was no opportunity for employers to take part in the project. It was a unique project that was mainly targeted at getting the participants acquainted with the professions involved, but it did not lead to regular jobs.

Kirsten Adamczak emphasizes that it was actually her colleague who started on such projects in the late nineties. Throughout these projects, young unemployed people made cycle paths and the goals were similar to the TEMS-project in the region Frankfurt/Rhein-Main: to educate and discipline the unemployed. During the projects, contractors worked with the unemployed youngsters, who received training in the use of machinery. In the nineties, this system was used on many construction sites and recently it was used in the TEMS-project. The combination of contractors and unemployed youngsters was very successful: between 30 and 70% of the participants got a regular job with one of the contractors. For the contractors, the project meant a good opportunity to see whether the youngsters were qualified to work for them. Adamczak explains that in the early nineties there was a lot of discussion with contractors who claimed that they experienced losses because of the projects with the unemployed. The contractors involved in the TEMS-project did not receive incentives.

Tracy Metz introduces Gerd-Rainer Damm, who is responsible for the overall organisation of projects like these. She asks whether these projects are comparable to the labour projects in the 1930s. Gerd-Rainer Damm admits that the connection with the labour market is indeed important. It was noted that in some regions, the economy structurally changed. Skilled people found it hard to get a job. This applied to men in particular, because women are, in general, more flexible. The structural change of the labour market asked for parallel, social measures. Damm emphasizes that not all people can easily adapt to the circumstances of the modern labour market. Some people drop out and these projects are aimed at the group of potential drop-outs. Damm mentions the phenomenon that young German men and women abandon the idea of having children, due to the uncertainty of a proper income. Another problem is formed by youth, partially immigrant, who leave schools without diplomas. These problems need to be handled, and the projects described by Kirsten Adamczak are an excellent example of how social activation can result in regular jobs.

Tracy Metz points out the fact that the budget of SAUL was not intended to solve social issues. How is the social dimension combined with the aspect of urban landscapes? Damm explains that these social issues already existed, irrespective of SAUL. Yet SAUL formed an opportunity to do even more. He notes that in all regions the social issue plays some role. Participating in the SAUL-project meant they had to meet specific conditions, which they readily accepted.

Franz Kerner mentions the project Sustainable Open Spaces (SOS), which is aimed at the upgrading and maintaining of the natural environment. Crucial for this project is the notion that the natural

environment is not just a free space, but that it needs development and maintenance. When this notion is generally accepted it will, in the end, result in regular jobs.

Tracy Metz points out the categories professor Alain Thierstein used in his presentation in the morning session. He made a distinction between regulators and users. Are the people who work on the projects also users? Kirsten Adamczak says that these people certainly are users of these public spaces as well: most workers live in the areas where the projects are situated. Therefore, the workers create their own landscapes. Franz Kerner adds that the workers feel that they do something useful. They leave a mark in the landscape about which they can feel proud and it is known that workers take care of the maintenance with great commitment for a long time afterwards.

Tracy Metz asks for the reason that some projects are directly linked to the labour market, while others aren't. Gerd-Rainer Damm points out the fact that one participating organisation (ACP) has a long history of bringing together contractors and unemployed youth. The success of the projects in the Rhein-Ruhr area underlines the importance of connections between the so-called 'secondary labour market' and regular employers.

Franz Kerner states that with his TEMS-project, it took four years before the assigned funds were actually put to work, due to extensive administrative conditions and internal organisational issues. There was only one year left to run the project. This helps explain the low success rate of his project. Kerner adds that it was hard to find third parties who were interested in taking part in the project. It took a long time to establish the necessary contacts and commitment. Kirsten Adamczak says that in her case, the plan for developing a cycle path was already there. The project could, therefore, start at the moment the funding was assigned. Secondly, the organisation already had a lot of experience with running similar projects, so the management of the project was far more easy. Even without funding, they will continue with the projects. At this moment, a follow-up is prepared.

Tracy Metz asks whether or not the Landesregierung will support new projects like the ones that are now funded by SAUL. Gerd-Rainer Damm states that it will not be easy to create projects as successful as the SAUL-project. However, there is a team with people from different organisations and specialties and this team will continue the work that was started with SAUL, though perhaps in a more efficient and cheaper manner. SAUL created new contacts and new ways of cooperation and these are to be continued in the future.