

Fourth SAUL Symposium

The Learning Region: The Role of Knowledge in Spatial Planning

12th – 13th October 2005 in Frankfurt

Report



Frankfurt, February 2006

Overview.....	5
Excursion Day: Urban Landscape Experience.....	5
Bonames Airfield Project.....	5
Building Bridges.....	6
Another Access to Urban Landscape.....	7
Talks and Debates: The Learning Region.....	8
The Value of Knowledge.....	8
The Learning Region – Findings from the CRITICAL Project.....	8
SAUL and the Learning Region.....	9
Learning Through SAUL, and How to Assess it: The Amsterdam case.....	9
3 Workshops and their results.....	9
Appendix.....	11
List of Participants.....	11
Photos.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Image 1: The Planungsverband's Offices.....	5
Image 2: Klaus Hoppe Image 3: The apron.....	6
Image 4: Foreland bridge with river bridge in background.....	6
Image 5: Material Image 6: Bridge builders' conference.....	7
Image 7: At work Image 8: The result.....	7
Image 9: At the Kronenhof.....	8
Image 10: Lars Tata and Jürgen Schultheis Image 11: John Zetter.....	9
Image 12: Workshop 2.....	11
Image 13: Preparing the feedback Image 14: Preparing the feedback.....	11
Image 15: Clive Fox.....	11
Image 16: Self portrait of the author.....	12

Overview

The fourth SAUL Symposium, the last in line, was held on 12th and 13th October 2005 in Frankfurt. It had the double purpose of addressing one of the SAUL key issues, *The Learning Region: The Role of Knowledge in Spatial Planning*, and to give partners an idea of the projects in this partner region. Accordingly, the symposium was composed of an excursion and a day for presentations and debates.

Excursion Day: Urban Landscape Experience

Participants met and registered at the Planungsverband's premises in central Frankfurt, and after words of welcome were transferred by bus to the former military airfield at Bonames (a Frankfurt borough). During that short transfer participants already got an impression of the structure of that urban landscape, with, within minutes, views of the highest office skyscrapers in Europe, 1950ies residential areas, motorways, farmland, meadows, high rise social housing and the core of a former village, complete with narrow lanes and half timbered houses.



Image 1: The Planungsverband's Offices

Bonames Airfield Project

Since the US army had left, the former airport is being redeveloped carefully into a unique urban landscape, both socially inclusive and accessible. Main features are the runway, partly left intact for roller skating, kite flying or informal bicycle training for young children; the former apron, partly broken open, partly removed and now a habitat for rare species, and a few of the hangars and service buildings. The site is a core area of Frankfurt's green belt, the *GrünGürtel*, and part of the Regionalpark Rhein-Main. It is open for everybody, free of charge, but, additionally, there is a programme of events and workshops, mainly addressing children and young adults, managed by the municipality.



Image 2: Klaus Hoppe



Image 3: The apron

SAUL has helped to enhance the situation by converting one of the buildings into The Green Classroom (complete with blackboard), and by refurbishing a hangar to use it for thematic workshops – building water rockets, for example. The main investment however is a bridge across the river Nidda to link the site to the Nidda bankside bicycle path, a mayor axis for leisure cycling.



Image 4: Foreland bridge with river bridge in background

The group met in the Green Classroom for a welcome drink and snack (apple juice and apples from the GrünGürtel). Then Klaus Hoppe, responsible for that project, gave a tour across the site and explained the concept. That tour included an informal inauguration of the bridge, as participants used the opportunity to walk it although it had not officially been opened yet, and ended in the SAUL refurbished hangar.

Building Bridges

The highlight of the day however was a hands-on project, giving a tangible example of the sort of activities possible there. Professionally instructed by Sandra Eisenmann participants were split into a couple of groups, each equipped with lots of card box sheets, scissors, tape, rope, walkie-talkies, and the task to build one bridge – together within one hour, from the material provided, and able to carry a person. The groups had to work out of sight of each other, had to appoint messengers to co-ordinate the groups, and were allowed to communicate via radio.



Image 5: Material



Image 6: Bridge builders' conference

To cut a long story short: After an hour all groups joined in front of the hangar and brought their products, and together these really formed a long, unique and working bridge!

To round off that experiment participants were then asked to reflect their experience and to report back.



Image 7: At work



Image 8: The result

Obviously that project confirmed, in a nutshell, various rules to obey when acting under time pressure, with insufficient means and with a transnational team with members some of which haven't met each other before.

On another level these hours demonstrated the potential of the site: It is spacious, unconventional and inspiring, and it has the necessary infrastructure.

Within the symposium that workshop and made people know each other, what was a good prerequisite for the following theoretical debates. And it demonstrated once more the inspiring qualities of an adequate dose of humour.

Another Access to Urban Landscape

The Group then was taken to Bad Homburg, a city neighbouring Frankfurt, for dinner. It was a dinner with a message, as it was held on a new style farm: The Kronenhof, in a typical peri-urban landscape, rural at first sight but on land that would sell at very high prices if it were allowed to develop offices there. The Kronenhof is an example for urban agriculture, addressing the needs of this metropolitan core: Features are horse riding, beer brewing (from own barley), a restaurant and a farm shop. Energy is supplied by the own power station fuelled partly with biogas, produced from organic waste from

horse keeping and brewing. After dinner Stephan Hilprecht gave a short presentation about these backgrounds.



Image 9: At the Kronenhof

Talks and Debates: The Learning Region

The next day then was devoted to talking and theory. To approach the Symposium's topic 4 experts gave statements, two of them from the academic world and with a vision from outside SAUL. The other two reported findings from their studies within SAUL, with different perspectives.

In the afternoon participants split to deepen the debate in the 3 workshops *The value of knowledge*, *Knowledge societies and learning societies* and *The learning region through SAUL*. Results were fed back to the plenum by a team of rapporteurs, before Clive Fox concluded in his final address.

Chairman of the day was Jürgen Schultheis, a journalist specialised in Frankfurt Rhein Main region affairs.

The Value of Knowledge

First in line was Steve Littlewood. He is a research fellow at the Centre for Urban Development and Environmental Management at Leeds Metropolitan University. His intervention had the important function to sort out the terminology used: "Knowledge" is a term so commonly used that it needs a definition to distinct it from e.g. "data" and "information".

The Learning Region – Findings from the CRITICAL Project

Dr. Lars Tata then reported about recent findings from a research project designed to test how the concepts of a knowledge society can be applied within the context of cities using holistic approaches to collective learning, competitiveness, sustainability and cohesion. Lars Tata is a member of the academic staff at the department of spatial planning in Europe at Dortmund University.



Image 10: Lars Tata and Jürgen Schultheis



Image 11: John Zetter

SAUL and the Learning Region

John Zetter, with his academic background as a visiting Professor at The Bartlett School of Planning at University College London, is assessing learning processes within SAUL, focused on the Steering Group. He reported his findings from attending SAUL meetings and from his survey among that SAUL core group.

Learning Through SAUL, and How to Assess it: The Amsterdam case

Hans-Peter Westerbeek completed the picture by reporting about the results of his investigation into learning processes within one of the SAUL partner regions, Amsterdam. In his report he also proposed a method to assess these learning processes. Hans-Peter Westerbeek is an independent consultant and combined his assignment with research within Environmental Sciences.

3 Workshops and their results

Joined by Sabine von Bebenburg, one of the SAUL Action Leaders, the 3 Workshops were chaired by members of the SAUL Steering Group, assisted by other Steering Group members as rapporteurs. The workshops were designed to deepen the issues raised at the morning session.

The value of Knowledge (Sabine von Bebenburg, Kirsten Adamczak)

In the first workshop the participants discussed on the value of Knowledge, the main outcomes can be summarised as follows: **The value of knowledge is directly depending on how knowledge is shared and made accessible.** Knowledge has to be set in a context and to be connected to a common strategy as well as to common goals. This is how masses of information can be canalised and prioritised.

Nevertheless it can be very difficult to share knowledge between different target groups (e.g. farmers – citizens) and to come to common solutions. Therefore different strategies are needed to lead to decisions. **Events with first hand experiences can for example help to build up shared knowledge.**

Learning within the region (Philippe Peters, Andrea Hartz)

The main message of the second workshop is: **Be a learning planner! Keep up your skills!**

This means planners and other experts involved in planning processes have to become important players through government and governance. They should find access to creative and important networks, offer a creative planning culture and strategic visions. But they should always be aware of strong competition and interests within networks.

Planners should focus on change. This is important to be able to meet the ever changing needs of the knowledge society. Thus sophisticated, differentiated and flexible responses towards new requirements, manoeuvring between different scales and answering to different speeds are needed. In this context they should be aware of the increasing importance of soft location factors: green culture access.

City regions are and will be the platform for the knowledge society, help to fully make use of the opportunities of city regions and city networks for the future developments of the knowledge society.

The region learning through SAUL (Martin Jones, Anita Konrad)

The SAUL project offered opportunities to develop a new working and learning culture (within organisations and with external stakeholders) beyond the project implementation. Based on the SAUL experiences following advises can be given to planning partnerships: **Methods and mechanisms for recording learning processes are very important.** Captured learning needs to be translated into knowledge to be disseminated. This requires a structured process.

Learning has furthermore to be complemented with actions and tangible outcomes. Therefore budgets need to provide both for implementing physical improvements and for creating regional communication and co-operation mechanisms.

Regional project partnerships give the opportunity to build on joint projects in order to identify and tackle new challenges. In this context it is also very important to accept **setbacks – they offer opportunities to evaluate learning so far and help to re-focus.**

In regional project partnerships a lot of practical experiences are made and – **it is essential to capture this “anecdotal” but very valuable way of learning and its results.**



Image 12: Workshop 2

Eventually chairpersons and rapporteurs met to prepare conclusions from the workshops. Jürgen Schultheis presented them to the plenum for the final debate.



Image 13: Preparing the feedback



Image 14: Preparing the feedback

Clive Fox concluded and closed the Symposium with thanks to all participants. He used the *Grüngürteltier*, the Green Belt's mascot, to illustrate the importance of positive images and awareness raising campaigns to sustain mental accessibility of Open Space.



Image 15: Clive Fox

Appendix

List of Participants

4 Presentations:

The Value of Knowledge by Steve Littlewood

The Learning Region – Findings from the CRITICAL Project by Lars Tata

SAUL and the Learning region by John Zetter

Learning through SAUL, and How to Assess it: The Amsterdam Case by Hans-Peter Westerbeek



Image 16: Self portrait of the author