

SAUL: INTERNAL EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT

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29 March 2006

I. INTRODUCTION

- 1. This report presents the findings of the internal evaluation of the transnational learning aspects of the SAUL project. It is mainly based on 32 interviews with leading members of SAUL: either Steering Group members and/or Joint Planning Group (JPG) leaders. These interviews were supplemented by attendance at four Steering Group meetings, four JPG meetings and two symposia, to witness the transnational learning process in action.**
- 2. To establish a baseline, eighteen interviews involving 21 people were conducted between January and August, 2004. This was followed by a further fifteen interviews with 18 of the same people, between September and November, 2005. The differences are explained by three combined interviews and staff changes.**
- 3. Based on the premise that to fulfil its potential SAUL should incorporate a productive process of transnational learning, this internal evaluation was conducted as a part of the overall evaluation of SAUL. Other separate but related aspects of the evaluation are an analysis of the learning logs; evaluations of the four symposia; and external reviews of 6 of the SAUL action and investment projects.**
- 4. The timing of the first round of interviews was chosen to coincide with the early stage of the project, so that it could influence SAUL's subsequent development. The interviews, based on a standard questionnaire, had a threefold purpose:**
 - to establish a base-line from which to assess the transnational learning process that was expected to take place during the remaining stages of SAUL;**
 - to identify changes to the design of SAUL which might be made to strengthen the transnational learning process; and**
 - to reinforce the transnational learning project message with leading members of the SAUL team at an early stage.**
- 5. The interim report of the first round interviews was discussed by the Steering Group at its meeting in February, 2005. The second round of interviews was held as late as possible, while still leaving time to make the results available for the final SAUL report. This effectively gave at least an 18-month interval between individual first and second round interviews. The main aims of the second round were:**
 - to establish whether the transnational learning process had continued and changed in nature during the course of SAUL;**
 - to focus those involved on the major lessons learned from SAUL at the key final stage of the work; and**
 - to establish that the approach of having continuous, internal evaluation was valuable, in that the resultant changes made during the SAUL process had been helpful.**

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- 6. While the questions asked in the two sets of interviews were the same, more emphasis was put in the second round on institutional as opposed to individual learning. The list of those interviewed, the survey process and the interview preparation form are attached as annexes.**
- 7. The major sources of information for the general lessons learned during SAUL are the Regional Reports. Similarly, the major sources of detailed information are contained in the learning logs. This report is not intended to duplicate these two other sources and, therefore, concentrates on the broad-brush aspects of transnational learning.**

II. SAUL AS A LEARNING PROJECT

- 8. The interviews concentrated on whether the structure and ethos of SAUL contributed to its ability to foster transnational learning. Those interviewed in both rounds felt that there were several key features that contributed to this aspect of SAUL. In particular, as SAUL grew out of an Interreg IIC project, for many of those involved transnational learning started from an established basis.**
- 9. The selection of projects was one of the key factors influencing SAUL's transnational learning capability. Experience is more easily transferred if the projects in the different partner regions are similar in nature. In this respect the selection of SAUL projects, although chosen at an initial stage before the key issues had been refined, was thought to have provided each project with at least one other with which it was closely comparable: for example, Saarland and Luxembourg; Burgess Park and Noorderpark; and Amstelland and Colne Valley. This had become more evident by the second round of interviews compared to the first round. However, slower than expected progress on implementing some of the projects limited transnational learning on the Saul key issues.**
- 10. Turning to the substance of SAUL, it was thought during the first round of interviews that the key issues were too numerous and too complex. This meant that learning on any one topic was being spread too thinly. However, by the second round of interviews there was a greater realisation of the interrelated nature of the issues and that this added to the possibilities for transnational learning. In other cases the pressure to complete action and investment projects restricted the learning process.**
- 11. The administrative complexities of Interreg IIIB were initially seen as a barrier to transnational learning. They occupied time and energy that might otherwise be used for work on and reflection about SAUL's substantive issues. However, the regular reporting cycle was a discipline which forced participants to confront the question of what SAUL was achieving. As SAUL moved forward, participants became more accustomed to the administrative aspects and this point became less of an issue during the second round of interviews.**

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JOINT PLANNING GROUPS

12. The feature that contributed most to SAUL's character as a transnational, learning project was the participation in Joint Planning Group (JPG) meetings of members from other partner regions. All transnational members of JPGs felt that they were able to make a positive contribution at the meetings. The other JPG members interviewed during both round of interviews reciprocated this impression. In particular, site visits linked to the JPG meetings were considered to provide extremely valuable transnational learning opportunities.
13. There was also added value when formal JPG meetings were supplemented by additional informal meetings and visits. This helped consolidate learning by including a wider group of individuals in a partner region. When SAUL was extended (between the two rounds of interviews) in the form of SAUL Plus, this also provided more opportunities for informal exchange. The most impressive example has been two bilateral meetings (including site visits in Saarland and Luxembourg and discussion sessions) between Luxembourg and Saarland (20-30 participants per meeting). This networking, extended by 'second order' contacts which arose as a result, proved a useful supplement to the JPG transnational learning process. It also led to the extension of projects, as in the case of the 'youth ambassadors' based on Burgess Park and Noorderpark.
14. The relaxed atmosphere of the JPGs contributed strongly to the formation of informal, transnational networks within SAUL. The JPG format also provided the possibility of thinking outside normal frames of reference. These features strengthened in importance between the first and second round of interviews.
15. But it was not axiomatic that JPG meetings gave rise to transnational learning. The agenda, management and minutes of the meetings have to be designed to promote that aim. Also, allocating JPG members to track an individual action or investment project helped to deepen JPG discussions. These aspects of the management of JPG meetings were generally refined on the basis of experience during the course of SAUL.
16. The finance for JPG meetings was initially less than proposed, as the budget was cut when SAUL was approved. However, additional meetings were added between the two rounds of interviews as a result of savings made on other activities. This was universally welcome by those JPGs which took the opportunity to hold an extra meeting. However, funding only permitted an average of one meeting per JPG per annum. Also, JPG membership from other partner regions, particularly London, changed over time. These factors weakened links between JPGs and their members from other partner regions, thus limiting somewhat transnational learning potential.
17. Although the composition of JPGs was decided in the light of the general issues likely to be raised by particular action and investment projects, there were advantages when initial JPG membership was later supplemented by experts on the specific topics relevant to the project concerned. It was also considered that JPG membership from other partner regions was more appropriate when

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it consisted of operational as opposed to managerial staff. By the second round of interviews several of the JPGs had taken appropriate action on these points.

INTER-JPG LEARNING

- 18. Steering Group meetings could have acted earlier as a forum for transferring learning on substantive matters between JPGs. However, it was decided for practical reasons that the Steering Group agendas needed to concentrate on administrative matters. Towards the end of SAUL, when Steering Group meetings became more focussed on the final report and final conference, the discussions necessarily became more substantive. The transnational learning process was thereby enhanced. However, a more considered and earlier approach to transferring learning between partner regions would have enhanced SAUL's claims to be a learning project.**
- 19. On the plus side, the symposia were valuable in promoting transnational learning among SAUL partner regions, but necessarily at widely spaced intervals and mainly on the topics of the symposia. However, symposia also provided the opportunity to talk about wider issues informally. In the second round of interviews, after more symposia had been held, the opinion of them was even more positive.**
- 20. At the time the first round interviews were conducted, the development of the website was at an early stage. Negative comments made by interviewees gave a boost to the subsequent development of the site. Although the majority view is now a favourable one, the web site is still not thought to have realised its full potential. This may be a particular view among those interviewed. The discussion and information pages of the site are likely to be of more value to a wider constituency, rather than those centrally involved in SAUL who have more regular involvement with its progress. Also, to put the comments in context, during the second round of interviews there were no specific ideas forthcoming for web site improvement.**
- 21. While the organisational arrangements for SAUL were very conducive to transnational learning, they were somewhat less so in the London region, compared to the other partner regions. For the other 5 regions members of the Steering Group included JPG leaders. Therefore, they felt a greater involvement in and commitment to SAUL. They were also more fully aware of the strategic dimension, as well as the project level aspects of SAUL. Further, the London Steering Group members were only members of JPGs in their own region (although it should be noted that the Lead Partner team attended almost all JPGs). This two-way discontinuity between policy and projects was compounded by the fact that London hosted almost a third of the JPGs.**
- 22. Also, Groundwork Trusts are independent, local, project-based organisations, and their work tends to be funding led. Therefore, the four JPG leaders they provided could not be expected to be on the same, more policy and strategic, wavelength as the national and regional levels that provided JPG leadership in the other partner regions. This factor, linked to a much lower level of symposia attendance, is also likely to have reduced the transnational learning ability of**

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the London region on the SAUL key issues to less than it might otherwise have been.

LEARNING LOGS

23. For SAUL to operate as a learning project the learning log process had to work well. Some respondents in the first round interviews had no experience of completing the logs. It was felt that the logs should have been more strongly promoted at an earlier stage. However, those that had completed logs were generally very positive, and produced many good ideas about how to use them. This contributed to changes and to a much more enthusiastic and supportive attitude to the use of the logs in the second round interviews.
24. There is still a minority current of opinion which finds the logs too formal and passive and feels that, because learning often takes place after a period of reflection, the completion of the logs quickly is unsatisfactory. However, this is countered by those who say that if the logs are not completed immediately, learning experiences get forgotten and crowded out by other priorities. To meet both positions completing the logs quickly was in some instances supplemented by discussion of them at subsequent JPG meetings. Also, other logs were completed outside of JPG meeting and these were used to record lessons distilled after reflection. It also needs to be acknowledged that some people will never fill in a log.

III. TRANSNATIONAL LEARNING

25. The interviews concentrated on transnational learning on the SAUL key issue of socially inclusive spaces and the three contributory issues - regional identity, planning through partnerships and the learning region. Further a stricter criterion was applied to learning in the second round of interviews. Particular proof of learning taking place was sought in actions having been taken at the institutional level as a result. This also served as a surrogate for measuring the quality as opposed to the quantity of transnational learning.

SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE SPACES

26. On the SAUL key issue of socially inclusive spaces, it was evident in the first round of interviews that partner regions were learning transnationally about techniques to reach out to a wider spectrum of the population. Several projects were being completely rethought, most notably in Saarland, London and Amsterdam where, as a result of SAUL, recreation issues had come to the fore in place of land reclamation, nature conservation and agriculture respectively.
27. In the Frankfurt region a wider spectrum of community involvement was starting to be recognised, not as a separate process but as embodying the essence of the project itself. Similarly, in Luxembourg wider community involvement was being seen to be essential, not just because residents may

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necessarily want to use the facilities being proposed, but because they want to feel that they have the choice to use them if they wish.

- 28. By the time of the second round of interviews, considerable progress had been made in implementing measures to foster social inclusion. All the three German partner regions had secured more public involvement in the management and use of their projects. For example, in Frankfurt there was more stakeholder involvement in the Route of Industrial Culture, where a more autonomous and self-regulatory approach to the project is now being taken. In Rhein-Ruhr there had been direct public involvement in redesigning and maintaining the Emscher bridges.**
- 29. In Saarland the Saarkohlenwald 'boxes' had reached out to a wider cross section of the public, as had the "temporary landscape installations" initiative in Luxembourg. Both of these partner regions felt that, by being part of SAUL, they could be more confident in taking creative and communicative approaches to social inclusion.**
- 30. As another example, the involvement of young people has started in developing ideas about the future of both Burgess Park in London and Noorderpark in Amsterdam. Interestingly based on the European Declaration on Rights of the Child, this initiative had been promoted jointly between the two rounds of interviews. The London Parks and Green Spaces Forum has formed a new sub-group on access and inclusion, which deals with matter related to social inclusion.**
- 31. On the role of socially inclusive spaces in the sustainable development of metropolitan regions, a difference emerged between declining regions, where the priority needs to be on environmental improvement, and growing regions where the emphasis is on increasing facilities. In the general context of securing more socially inclusive open spaces, the importance of quality, as opposed to quantity, emerged strongly from transnational working. However, it was also considered that central government recognition of the social value of open space was essential to improving the level of open space provision generally.**

REGIONAL IDENTITY

- 32. Turning to the first of the three SAUL contributory issues, promoting regional identity, this was initially the least developed area of transnational learning. Although regional identity in London is weak, there were fledgling examples in south and west London of new sub-regional identities being more widely recognised. The Frankfurt region was also dominated by separate sub-regional identities, but there were indications that SAUL was sowing the seeds of a larger regional identity. The special character of the Amsterdam region, in terms of promoting identity, was becoming more widely appreciated. In Rhein-Ruhr, Saarland and Luxembourg regional identities were already in place.**
- 33. By the time of the second round of interviews the understanding of the value of regional identity had developed considerably, with a slight change of emphasis to promoting a 'sense of place'. As examples, in London the Wandle Valley**

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Country Park is now being developed to reflect more fully the characteristics of the area. In Amstelland the perception of the area as being principally agricultural was seen as the main barrier to moving with the times. Efforts are being made, in consultation with local people, to change the identity of the area. The Route of Industrial Culture is now being actively used to promote more of a common identity in the Frankfurt region.

PLANNING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

- 34. With a smaller degree of public sector involvement than in the other partner regions, there was already a well-developed approach to this second contributory issue in London. From the start the, planning through partnerships issue, found a particular resonance in the three German regions. Transnational learning from the London and Amsterdam regions (as well as learning from each other) was leading to a more inclusive public sector relationship with the private and non-governmental sectors. In the Saarland and Rhein-Ruhr regions new models of public/private cooperation were already being experimented with before the first round of interviews.**
- 35. More concrete examples of progress on forging new partnerships emerged from the second round of interviews. In the Rhein-Ruhr region Emscher genossenschaft had, via the Emscher Dialogues, been able to establish new partnerships, particularly with the private sector. Similarly, in the Saarland and Frankfurt regions, new partnerships had emerged, respectively, with other regional agencies and local authorities. In Luxembourg the local authorities were cooperating actively with each other, and with other partners in the private and non-governmental sectors, in a way that was not apparent before SAUL. More generally, a wider range of partners was being sought in developing SAUL policies and a wider range of options investigated for their implementation.**

THE LEARNING REGION (INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING)

- 36. In the first round of interviews learning on the third contributory issue, the learning region approach, was concentrated in Luxembourg. This was because the South Region in its entirety, rather than a specific project, is the focus of SAUL involvement. The interaction of formal and informal processes at the regional level had become more apparent. This had also been realised in Saarland, as had the need for those involved in formulating spatial policies planning to engage with those preparing policies and plans in other sectors. This is an essential step to becoming a learning region.**
- 37. The learning region issue did not come into sharp focus until the Frankfurt symposium on the topic, which was held after all but one of the second round interviews had been completed. However, a new approach to spatial planning in Luxembourg, where it is now seen less as a regulatory system but more as a way of fulfilling community objectives, has emerged. This interactive approach to planning based on spatial visions, has very much influenced the general**

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discussion about the regional planning approach in Luxembourg, and after a test in the South region will also influence regional planning elsewhere in Luxembourg. Similarly, Staatsbosbeheer has been given a remit to promote the SAUL approach in other Dutch city regions where the experience of Amsterdam is relevant.

- 38. In the Frankfurt partner region planning is also seen less as a regulatory and more as an open governance process, in which learning in and about the region are essential. In Rhein-Ruhr, ILS-NRW has included the SAUL issues in its forward programme to build institutional capacity to support the learning region.**
- 39. Generally all regions see the need for learning mechanisms which promote closer links between planning and the social processes it seeks to manage. In Rhein-Ruhr public participation is now built into corporate policy and the Mengede experiment has led to demands for the new approach to be taken in other parts of the region. This is another example of a regional learning in action. SAUL will contribute to the review of the London Plan, which itself is based on a consultative process, which typifies regional learning.**
- 40. More generally, SAUL has heightened awareness of the challenge presented by fragmented landscapes in older industrial regions, where certain areas are losing their existing functions and need to find new ones. The evolving role of the planner as mediator and facilitator is more widely realised, as is the value of a more participatory approach to regional planning. Also, this aspect of SAUL has been extremely useful in helping to see that there is added value when individual projects in each region are linked together. This itself is part of the regional learning process.**

IV. CONCLUSIONS

- 41. This final report concentrates on the second round of interviews which had three objectives:**
 - to establish whether the transnational learning process had continued and changed in nature during the course of SAUL;**
 - to focus those involved on the major lessons learned from SAUL at the key final stage of the work; and**
 - to establish that the approach of having continuous, internal evaluation was valuable, in that the resultant changes made during the SAUL process had been helpful.**
- 42. From the evidence of the second round interviews presented above (and other sources) there is no doubt that the transnational learning process continued and intensified as SAUL progressed. However, tracing a direct link to SAUL and weighting it are not easy when other influences are tending in the same direction. Also, the nature of the transnational learning process had changed. Three phases are apparent, although not all individual or institutional learning, which is itself likely to be a slow process, has taken place at the same pace:**
 - initially, a better understanding emerges of the reasons why policies and programmes in a region take the form they do;**

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- next, moves are made to improve the operation of existing policies and programmes; and
 - finally, innovative changes take place introducing new policies and programmes.
43. Turning to the second objective, from comments made at the interviews the internal evaluation process seems to have helped in the process of keeping SAUL focussed on transnational learning on its key issues. This is one of the principal purposes of European Commission programmes of this type.
44. A continuous internal evaluation has other advantages in that both the need for changes can be more easily identified and the changes more quickly made. In the light of the third objective most recommendations of the interim report were adopted in essence, if not exactly in the same form.
45. Other regions widened their range of contacts, even if the Amsterdam ‘Saul mates’ model was not followed exactly. The recommendation that learning in the separate JPGs should be pooled and jointly examined, possibly by the Steering Group or at a meeting of JPG leaders, was not adopted. However, more time was spent on substance as opposed to administration at Steering Group meetings as SAUL progressed, which met the same point. For resource reasons, the recommendation was not adopted that in the second round additional interviews should be conducted with individuals in organisations not directly involved with SAUL. This would have helped to establish whether the project had a wider influence beyond those directly involved.
46. However, the other changes recommended in the interim report were largely implemented. The improvements suggested to procedures for completing and analysing learning logs and for managing the operation of the JPGs were made. The recommendation that the results of the symposia evaluations should be summarised was also followed. Similarly a recommendation to prepare a glossary of terms will be implemented as part of the final report.

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Annex 1: List of Interviewees

<u>Name</u>	<u>First Round</u>	<u>Second Round</u>
Kirsten Adamczak	21.01.04	30.06.05
Sabine von Bebenburg	23.07.04	13.10.05
Tom Buxton	27.04.04	10.08.05
Ed Buys	19.07.04	10.06.05
Jane Carlsen/ John O'Neil	08.04.04	09.11.05 (JC only)
Matthew Carrington	29.07.04	07.09.05
Gerd Rainer Damm	10.08.04	-
Michiel Firt	11.06.04	14.09.05
Clive Fox*	08.04.04	04.07.05
Andrea Hartz	10.08.04	29.06.05
Reinhard Henke	09.08.04	28.06.05
Tim Houghton	27.04.04	-
Martin Jones/Anita Konrad/ Helen Rawlins	16.06.04	04.07.05 (+CF*)
Rainer Kestermann	21.01.04	28.06.05
Philippe Peters	26.07.04	22.09.05
Irene Seijo	23.04.04	10.08.05
Femke Vergeest	19.07.04	15.09.05
Sioned Williams	12.03.04	15.08.05

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Annex 2: The Survey Process

- 1. Questionnaire agreed with the Lead Partner following written consultation with the Steering Group**
- 2. Interview list agreed with the Secretariat to include all Steering Group members and JPG leaders. (In the event because of staff changes 1 steering group member was not interviewed in either round and a further steering group member and JPG leader were not interviewed in the second round.)**
- 3. Letter from lead partner to all potential first round interviewees explaining the survey and enclosing the questionnaire (Dec 2003).**
- 4. Interview arrangements for both rounds made by the Secretariat and interview preparation form (Annex 3) dispatched.**
- 5. Interview.**
- 6. Draft record of interview prepared by John Zetter and dispatched to the interviewee.**
- 7. Comments from interviewee taken into account in preparing the final record of the interview.**

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Annex 3: Interview Preparation Form.

The purpose of this form is to help you prepare for the one-to-one meeting that has been arranged for you with John Zetter. As you know, he is the member of the SAUL team evaluating the effectiveness of the project. (The attached letter from Clive Fox explains the background.) The questions listed below will be used to structure the meeting with John. The format allows you to make your own notes beforehand, as the basis for the discussion at the meeting.

It is estimated that the meeting will last no longer than 1½ hours and that you should spend up to 1 hour preparing for it. Within a week of the meeting John will send you for comment a draft of his record of what was said. Near the end of the SAUL timetable you will be sent the record and asked to update it in the light of subsequent events.

1. What features of SAUL do you think either contribute to or detract from its character as a learning project?

2. In your experience of SAUL investment and action projects on which of its key issues - the vital role of socially inclusive spaces in the sustainable development of metropolitan regions; regional identity; and planning through partnerships - did transnational learning take place? Please give examples.

3. In your experience of SAUL regional strategies on what particular issues did learning take place? Please give examples.

4. How has the particular investment project, action project and/or regional strategy in which you are involved been changed in the light of learning stemming from involvement in SAUL? Please give examples.

5. Has SAUL had an impact on other projects and strategies which are not part of SAUL? Please give examples.

6. What occasions (e.g. symposia, web site visits) were the most fruitful for providing learning opportunities? Please give examples

7. Are the learning logs useful, or should they be amended or replaced? Please give reasons for your opinion.

[For JPG leaders only]

8. Do the JPG members from other countries make a particular contribution to learning within the SAUL project? Please give examples.

[For other JPG members]

9. Were you able to help in the learning process of the project in another country to which you contributed as a JPG member? Please give examples.

Note. The form was amended for the second round of interviews to emphasise that institutional learning was to be given more prominence than in the first round. This was because it was reasonable to expect that institutional learning would not have taken place until the later stages of the project.