



RE-Block

REviving high-rise Blocks

Mid-Term Newsletter



MEETING

of European Experts in Gelsenkirchen 26 – 28 March 2014



“What is the city but the people?” (*W. Shakespeare: Coriolanus*)

“The Hans Sachs Haus is a civic house that belongs to all of us and is used by almost everyone! This concept was very decisive in the renewal of the Tossehof which has turned out to be a great success in the end. Yes, we can and should think about and discuss plenty of constructional details as well as technical and financial questions. However, these efforts are in vain if we don’t involve the actual experts: the citizens that are directly affected, people who want a good place to live and a pleasant residential

environment.” That was the core statement of Mr Frank Baranowski, Mayor of the City of Gelsenkirchen, welcoming the participants of RE-Block's Mid-Term event. The recently refurbished town hall Hans Sachs Haus was the venue for 50 experts from the 10 partner cities. The combination of constructional and social activities directed by good governance was the overarching theme behind all speeches and discussions concerning the renewal of housing estates in the partner cities.



RE-Block is on halfway!

The project 'RE-Block - Reviving high-rise Blocks for cohesive and green neighbourhoods' organised its mid-term event in Gelsenkirchen between 26-28 March 2014. This event, including a Steering Committee meeting and a Transnational Urban Hub workshop, provided an opportunity for all project partners to meet for 3 days. The project partners were able to: gain an overview on project pro-

gress so far from an administrative and financial point of view; present their Local Action Plan (including the findings of the Peer Review Sessions); and share their experiences, concerns and future plans. This discussion was strongly assisted by RE-Block Lead Expert, Mrs. Ágnes Böhönyey and the Thematic Expert, Mr. Hen Gerritse.

Looking back

The 10 project partner cities (from 9 EU countries) have worked intensively in the past 12 months to get more acquainted with each other's particular problems and challenges on how to manage/support the high-rise housing estates, with the focus on integrating development of their social and infrastructural environments.

This process has been supported by a special transnational and knowledge exchange method called Peer Review Sessions, which involved visits to each of the partner cities. During these events a group of qualified experts (the "Knowledge Ambassadors") in the relevant fields, who were delegated by the

partners, have also contributed to the knowledge transfer objective of the project. They shared their know-how and good practices with the partnership and added their recommendations for each host city to help inform their Local Support Group members. Even though each city has individual problems which need individual solutions these discussions have helped them to consider how they can start adapting the good examples locally. This has enabled the partners to elaborate their Peer Review Reports highlighting what can be seen as good examples of governance structures, social inclusion and improvement of areas' images, as well as the built environment.



Actuality

The Transnational Urban Hub Workshop mainly focused on the Local Action Plans. All partners had the chance to present their concepts by taking into consideration the advice provided by the Lead Expert:

- Agreed goal and objectives for the LAP, listing the type of activities
- Interventions inspired by the Knowledge Ambassadors' good practices, and/or the Peer Review Sessions
- Policy mapping: which city level policies, strategies and urban plans have been identified, to which the LAP needs to fit
- Working method of the ULSG in preparing the LAP

- What was found problematic so far in the design of the LAP, running the ULSG or others?

Outcomes have demonstrated that lessons learnt from the Peer Review Sessions have been framing the partners' thinking process while drafting their LAPs, where the first steps towards possible adaptation of good practices were introduced. Moreover, URBACT Local Support Groups – bringing together stakeholders, residents and politicians, are intensively involved in this work, thus the cities are making something important with the people, not without them.

What's coming next?

In the 2nd half of the project the Local Action Plan activities will be further elaborated and based on that project ideas will be formulated as spin-off projects in compliance with the framework conditions of the national Operative Programmes and other funding opportunities.

In RE-Block, project partners will set out recommendations for potential adjustments to EU policies which could help to

provide regions with a more consistent and supportive context for regional /local efforts. This will in turn enable them to play their part in the delivery of the ambitious goals set out in EU2020.

In order to support these activities and to stimulate the interactivity and the know-how transfer between partners, the Lead Expert and the partnership suggested organising 2 additional workshops in Rome and Budapest for autumn 2014.

The Mid-term Conference (on 28th March 2014), aimed at supporting the Local Action Plan elaboration with some inspiring thoughts and to introduce some innovative solutions from Europe but outside the networking partnership. In accordance with the accentuated topics of the project the Conference focused on three specific fields which are also relevant to the project afterlife: governance, monitoring and financial schemes for urban regeneration.



Good Governance for urban regeneration – Piotr Lorens

Urban regeneration is a complex process especially in distressed areas like some of the high rise housing estates in the RE-Block project target areas. The complexity is a result of the interlinked problems associated with spatial (physical), societal, environmental and economic issues. Therefore we can talk about urban regeneration if all these areas are recognised and dealt with in an interconnected way helping to bring distressed/decayed urban areas back to life and re-creating the liveable urban environment.

As well as the collaboration of highly-skilled professionals with municipal officials, urban regeneration processes need new ways of thinking compared to the traditional approach of urban planning which was based on “command and control”. As there isn’t a single true solution any more, the new planning approach needs to define local solutions within the local problems, taking the local commu-

nity’s view into account as well. The new way of thinking needs new approaches and methods, such as public participation in planning (governance) and new types of planning documents (structure plans, regulatory plans, local action plans).

To make good governance work for urban regeneration a strategic and interdisciplinary approach has to be followed which defines both the present and desired state of the spatial (physical), societal, environmental and economic situation/ issues and the way of achieving these. Local Action Plans can become key instruments in assuring good governance for urban regeneration processes if the LAP has a clear structure and includes the analysis of the present situation, a strategic vision, an effective implementation mechanism and financing strategy, and it serves a clearly stated purpose. Having all these attributes, LAPs can serve as vehicles for delivering good governance practice.



Political Commitment and the role of the political level in the regeneration process – Thomas Knorr-Siedow

The key issue addressed by the presentation was how to develop a knowledge based approach in regeneration which includes good - inclusive and effective – governance.

The overview of regeneration practices shows the evolution of approach in the past decades:

1985 – The first crisis of the large (Western) housing estates built in 1960s to 1970s implied deficiencies and market failure in West European countries. Response: technical upgrading.

1990 – Assessment of the challenges of the Eastern housing estates.

1995 – The practice in Central and East European countries was characterised by the assessment of risk, technical and environmental deficits, and the lack of management, legal and ownership provisions and relevant policies.

Post 1995 – In some Western countries – in limbo between demolition and rehabilitation.

Post 2000 – Large scale housing estates are a joint European issue. Many housing estates have acceptable quality, but some have become deeply problematic. Diversity of development was accepted. Therefore a turn from the strictly technical solutions to the more complex environmental (energy efficiency) and socio-economic considerations have been applied and political responsibility is required locally, nationally and on a European level.

Due to the complexity of the development issues, politicians have to be realistic and accept that certain elements of the development process are out of the range of the policy realm while others are in reach. To better understand the development processes and also the limits of development actions the culture of communication between the various actors needs to be clear and good governance, as well as knowledge management, has to be established and improved.

A strategy of knowledge management identifies the 'knowledge needs' for actions and implies the various forms of knowledge (i.e. milieu-, institutional-, product-, expert-, leadership-, local) and reflexivity (cycles of learning and reacting to change). It needs formalized procedures for knowledge exchange from professional to story-telling. However reflexivity needs time – both are preconditions for knowledge based change.

What we expect from politicians and policy-making:

- understanding limits to actions
- allow all actors to experiment – on the basis of good inclusive knowledge
- risk sharing
- devolution of decisions to people – introducing self-organization in the fields of opportunities
- build new real partnerships



Outlook on future funding possibilities and spin-off projects – Hen Gerritse (Thematic Expert of RE-Block Project)

In the ocean of funding opportunities the chance to finance integrated urban development became wider. Cities have to concentrate their search for the right funding from the Europe 2020 priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Some illustrative examples for new types of urban investment are:

- supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure;
- promotion of low-carbon strategies for urban areas;
- taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalize cities,
- regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites;
- providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban areas.

Two instruments, the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) will help in implementing territorial strategies in a more coherent and integrated way while bringing projects closer to stakeholders and at the same time using European Funds more coherently and in a more targeted way.

The URBACT Programme will also continue (URBACT III). It will be open for all cities, to create thematic networks to create knowledge exchanges. Likely objectives of URBACT III are the improve-

ment of the capacity of cities to manage, design and implement sustainable urban policies.

In the Horizon 2020 Programme, which focuses on research and development, possible funding opportunities can be found in the field of secure, clean and efficient energy and smart, green and integrated urban transport. The COSME Programme aims to improve and strengthen the competitiveness of enterprises in the EU. Although it has a strong private sector focus, public actors can create enabling strategies in urban areas.

The new INTERREG Europe Programme (the successor of INTERREG IVC) is designed for developing action plans. Its priority fields are focusing on the promotion of low-carbon strategies on all kinds of territories (e.g. promotion of multi modal urban mobility) or the exchange of experiences among regional authorities and waste management agencies on policies and strategies.

What is apparent is the ocean of funding opportunities. The question is how to navigate around it, because all the funds require specific approaches. The best sources could be identified by detailed analyses of action plans and city policies. Based on the LAPs, the 3 most “effective” and “challenging” spin-off project ideas will be identified to elaborate future development initiatives.



ERDF financing for sustainable urban regeneration – Ivan Tosics (URBACT Thematic Pole Manager)

The European Parliament initiated a study to improve the understanding of how the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was used in housing projects in the 2007- 2013 funding period. This document also explores how ERDF has fostered integrated approaches which address simultaneously housing, energy and socio-economic needs of deprived communities.

In his presentation Mr. Tosics highlighted some case studies focusing on an overarching question: Are ERDF housing projects contributing to integrated sustainable regeneration in deprived areas? The final result was that the ERDF housing intervention projects generally focused on

physical improvement to housing (particularly around energy efficiency improvements and the use of renewable energy). There was less evidence of projects actively stimulating wider sustainable urban regeneration linked to social and economic issues. These projects tended to focus on improving individual blocks of flats or discrete areas of housing, rather than being part of a holistic integrated area-based development programme for entire neighbourhoods.

In the 2014-2020 programming period, integrated urban development is the key to achieve the EU2020 targets. To reach the set goals the available new tools are the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and Horizon2020.



Integrated approach in governance – Wolfram Schneider (formerly town planning dept. Gelsenkirchen)

Urban renewal is really a priority in Gelsenkirchen, so the Local Authority adjusted the municipality to the organisational needs of an integrated approach and to involve all relevant players in urban development.

The model of multilevel governance for urban renewal in Gelsenkirchen has the following core elements:

- Lord Mayor and head of the local administration are in charge of the integrated urban development policy for the city. They form a Steering Committee for defining the strategic directions of integrated neighbourhood renewal.

- The Municipality's Planning Department is responsible for the coordination of the renewal process. It is working closely with the staff of the sub-offices set up in each regeneration area and also with all those organisations and institutions which have a role in the design and implementation of the integrated neighbourhood renewal.
- Local contact points, set up in the regeneration areas, like the one in Tosehof, the RE-Block target area, are the front line engines for the renewal processes in the city. They are connecting the local stakeholders and involving the civic society/residents in the renewal process.