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BROWNTRANS – Focusing Brownfield Knowhow Transfer

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1 ABSTRACT

This paper reviews experiences of a partner involved for nearly a decade in promotion of Brownfields reuse, Brownfields awareness raising and Brownfields education and know-how transfer to the Central and the East European Countries. These experiences were gained from involvement in various projects such as Brownfields project for the Czech Ministery of Regional Development, Brownfields inventory projects for CzechInvest, BROWNTRANS, LEPOB, BRIBAST, CABERNET, CobraMan, CircUse and others, and they serve as a background for considering the effectiveness of various know-how transfer approaches. Different focus of individual projects, their partners´ profiles and project outputs are also reviewed. Project impacts and sustainability and transferibility of project results are examined. The effectiveness of Brownfield know-how transfer for different type of partners and stakeholders is also considered. For some projects, details of their local impact are compared and potential benefits to their participants and to local stakeholders are described. Finally, a recommendation is given for an approach to Brownfield know-how transfer to countries, which are yet to grasp the Brownfield nettle and need to integrate their Brownfields reuse into their national, regional and local systems.

2 EMERGENCE OF THE BROWNFIELD ISSUE

2.1 Introduction

Societal and production changes of the 1990's in the Central and the Eastern European states have generated large amounts of underused Brownfield land. These changes [1] required a spectrum of know-how, skills and tools, which would help them and their citizens to cope with new issues and emerging free markets. In some fields such know-how became avaliable, in other fields it was missing. An absence of know-how, skills and suitable tools particularly affected the urban development domain and actually it is affecting it until today. Here, local spatial planning was (and still is) failing to cope with the forcomming situation, turbulent market forces and the subsidiarity principles drive for community based leadership, which substituted the centraly planned and driven economy. All this was (and still is) simultaneously contributing to a worsening land use economy, Brownfields emergence and to a deregulation of large amount of Greenfield land, which is seldomly linked to any real population increases. The consequences are the increased costs of local development externalities and sharply developing differeces, between the "rising" and "failing" urban locations. Where as the "rising" locations are attracting development on Greenfield sites and exeptionally also on Brownfields land, the failing locations are experiencing ever increasing dilapidation, which is weakening local communities and deterring even further any potential investors. At the beginning of this milenium, such development dynamics were still not really fully perceived or understood by these countries polititians, academics or practitioners, nor they were clearly understood by various teams of international advisors, which in those days traveled these countries.

2.2 Problem identification and recognition

Nobody initially perceived (in policy or practice) that these sprouting dilapidated industrial, institutional or agricultural sites were "the same thing", which needed a common label! At the early days no external technical assistance was available for planning and development, but it was being available for environmental and economic issues. One of such US EPA external technical assistances has in the Czech Republic in the late 1990 labeled as Brownfields the environmentally polluted and dilapidated industrial sites and similar labeling have occurred also in another Central and Eastern European countries. The different

[1] GAVRILIDIS A., IOJA C., SAGHIN I.:Urban Regeneration through Industrial Restructuring of Brownfields 47th ISOCARP Congress 2011

nature and origin of Brownfield sites, their varied development potential and their spatial aspects were started to be recognized in the Czech Republic after the year 2002 and the local planning system in the Czech Republic acknowledges Brownfields only since 2007. However, most of the other Central and Eastern European countries´ local planning systems have not perceived Brownfields as a land use and planning issue [2] until now. It is Brownfields multi-sector and cross-professional reach, which makes their problem recognition and solutions difficult. In the Czech Republic during the years 2002-2004, it was the external experts and the NGOs who helped the Czech Brownfields issue perception and recognition. This was achieved by estimating and sizing the magnitude of Czech Brownfields, by promoting Brownfields typologies and by identifying the need for an overall institutional responsibility for the land use. When finance was attracted into Brownfield research, the awareness of the issue among academics has improved. Increased knowledge and subject publicity have then helped lobbying Brownfields into the key national policies. In most of the other New Member States, such recognition has emerged five or more years later. For example until recently, some of Latvian, Bulgarian and Romanian, academics and practitioners still perceive Brownfields as an environmental and not as a land use and development issue [3]. For brownfield solutions to be successful, awareness and know-how improvements have to reach the national as well as the regional and the local levels. The regional and the local levels however, have serious language barriers, which prevent them from benefiting from international resources and literature, foreign experts´ produced reports and web-based information on Brownfields. Also, the local and the regional levels were not (and until today are often not) able to cope with the EU urban regeneration and management expertise transfers. This is because there are large areas of development and economic related know-how still missing in these local systems – and this effect the ability at the local level to absorb state-of-the-art urban development and Brownfield know-how. Simply, it takes time to build it up.

BOX 1 – Emerging brownfield know-how

Slovakia and the Czech Republic have similar political and development conditions and legal frameworks, but in terms of Brownfield regeneration the Czech Republic became the know-how transfer partner for Slovakia (see various papers by the authors dealing with the Czech Brownfields). In 2004, the Slovak Chamber of Charted Engineers and one of the educational institutions became a partner in the Czech initiated LEPOB project, focused on Brownfields education in local languages, targeted mainly to local practising construction and development professionals. At that time, understanding of the Brownfield issue in the Czech Republic was relatively well developed, whereas in Slovakia, the issue was so new, that it became difficult during this project to access experts, which could convert the generic Brownfields handbook into a Slovak country-specific version. Since this time, further Brownfield know-how transfers reached Slovakia from the Czech Republic. For example the Czech national investment support agency, CzechInvest, has in 2009 shared with the Slovakia´s investment agency SARIO expertise on Czech industrial Brownfield support programs and Brownfield inventory making. Meanwhile, Slovakia´s partners have also participated in other European Brownfields focused projects. By the year 2011, the awareness of Brownfields issue in Slovakia developed to such an extent that Slovakia´s stakeholders were themselves seeking means, how to improve and update their local Brownfield know-how. To fulfil these objectives they prepared the project BROWNTRANS financed from the EU Livelong Learning Programme. But the BROWNTRANS project aims not only to develop the Slovak professionals and academics Brownfield know-how, it is also reaching further East, to initiate and to open up Brownfield know-how transfer to Bulgarian and Romanian partners [4].

Whereas in the Czech Republic the national policy has responded to Brownfields since 2001, the Czech regional and the local levels, were responding later, partially from 2005, but on a larger scale after 2006, when Structural funding for urban and industrial regeneration became broadly available. In the other Central and the Eastern European states, such a policy and programme recognition of urban regeneration and Brownfield issues occurred a few years later. Hence the full impact on urban land use, which was possible in

[2] POPESCU G., PĂTRĂŞCOIU R.: Brownfield Sites – Between Abandonment And Redevelopment – Case Study: Craiova City, Human Geographies – Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography, 6.1 (2012) 91-97

[3] http://business-review.ro/investments/country-investment-reviews/brownfield-developments-still-waiting-for-green-light/#comment-18172 (last accessed 15.1.2013)

[4] COBÂRZAN B.: Brownfield Redevelopment in Romania, Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences, 21 E/2007, pp. 28-46

see section 12 and 13 of the project BROWNTRANS handbook on http://fast10.vsb.cz/browntrans/index/

the Czech Republic by the application of 2007-2013 Structural funding, is in these countries yet to come. But time moves on and also in Bulgaria and Romania various successful Brownfield projects are now springing up. They are mostly privately financed, but there are also emerging various publicly financed urban regeneration projects, some of which can be classified as projects on Brownfields [5].

BOX 2 – Brownfields in Romania and Bulgaria

There are several similarities of Brownfield perception in Romania and Bulgaria [6].

- In both countries until now Brownfields are perceived nearly exclusively as a contaminated land issue.
- In both countries there exist databanks of contaminated land but no databanks or inventories concerning dilapidated or underused urban land (Brownfields).
- In both countries, dilapidated or under-used urban land (Brownfields) is not recognised as a local urban, spatial, an economic or a social issue by the national legal framework and policies.
- Spatial planning in both countries does not "see" dilapidated or under-used urban land (Brownfields) as land use, planning and development issue.
- In both countries dilapidated or underused urban land (Brownfields) does actually represent a considerable amount of local urban fabric and because this issue is not correctly labelled, recognised or sized, Brownfields continue to be excluded from local urban policies and local urban plans, and financial resources, which could aid their remediation, are therefore not being provided.

Where the approach to Brownfields differs between the Bulgaria and the Romania is in their academic spheres. Whereas from the year 2007 there now are several scientific papers written by Romanian academics recognizing the economic, the social and the spatial context of Romanian Brownfields, there seem to be no such papers produced by the Bulgarian academia, which publishes only numerous scientific papers related to soil contamination and environmental aspects of Brownfield land.

Estimating and sizing the seriousness of the Brownfield issue was attempted for the first time in the Czech Republic by external experts in 2003 [7]. But for this now very outdated estimate, until today no other actual Czech Brownfields volumes figures exist. Brownfield data are also missing, or are incomplete and incompatible in most of the other Central and the East European states. Gathering qualitative data (achieved by an expert judgement stigmatising a property as a Brownfield) is an expensive pursuit and, if it is to be of any use, it requires a common approach to such data collection. This is still missing, even in the Czech Republic. Up to date Brownfields data are unavailable in the Czech Republic despite that since the year 2007 the Czech law enables signifying and publicizing properties as Brownfields for purposes of planning support information gathering. Because in the Czech Republic such an indication on a property usually has allowed its owners access to the Structural funding, property owners were in general not objecting to this very much. In the other Central and the Eastern European countries such a legal framework does not exist, which leads to difficulties with Brownfields surveys legitimacy and it also causes difficulties with Brownfield data publicity. Without at least estimating the amount of Brownfield land, and without analysing gathered data to understand what type of problems local Brownfields represent, it is very difficult to include Brownfields into the national/regional/local policies, channel research into them, or prepare programs and focus public finance and mainly soft intervention to Brownfields.

BOX 3 – Private sector – a leader in Brownfield reuse know-how

Despite the public sector failing in providing suitable policies or legal frameworks and despite an absence of suitable programs focused to aiding Brownfield regeneration, in the Central and Eastern Europe countries, the private sector is taking a lead on viable and well-located Brownfield sites. Such Brownfields are redeveloped by 100 % private funding for various commercial activities. Examples can be quoted not only from Czech Republic, Poland or Slovakia, but also from Romania[8] and Bulgaria.

[5] see section 12 and 13 of the project BROWNTRANS handbook on http://fast10.vsb.cz/browntrans/index/
[6] http://www.cabernet.org.uk/resourcefs/132.pdf (last accessed 15.1.2013)
[7] EU PHARE assistance in North Bohemia and Moravia regions 2003-2004, final report
[8] http://www.europe-re.com/system/main.php?pageid=2616&articleid=20514, http://www.palasiasi.ro/en/ (last accessed 15.1.2013)

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3 LEARNING THROUGH PROJECTS

3.1 History of participation on international Brownfield projects

One of the first international Brownfield projects where the Central and the Eastern European countries have participated was the CABERNET [9] network. This network was conceived and lead by the Western academia and this was why, in 2003, the Central and Eastern European countries partners invited to participate on this project, were not from the policy of professional backgrounds, but were from the academic backgrounds, often quite removed from the Brownfields issue. This has presented problems with the project results dissemination, if there was not a strong backing from another national organization, with a keen interest in promoting Brownfield issue. One of the spin-offs from the CABERNET project for the Central and the East European states was in the year 2004 the project LEPOB. The CABERNET project outputs were all in English and were presenting relatively sophisticated concepts, which were in general preceding in time the general European professional perceptions of the issue. This was why these outputs became not too easily accessible for the Central and Eastern European audience. This was partly because of language barriers, but also because of a high level of background property, economic development and other knowledge, which the CABERNET outputs presupposed from any potential reader. The LEPOB project lead by a Czech partner and its later clones, the BRIBAST and BROWNTRANS projects have adapted and interpreted the CABERNET message to the Central and the Eastern European audiences. Parallelly, there were a number of other Brownfield projects [10], where the Central and Eastern European partners have also taken part, but in these projects the Central and Eastern European partners were usually in passengers and not the drivers´ seats. This was why a full impact of such projects was usually limited to projects partners´ participation and there was a little impact reaching the national, regional or local levels. Not until the CobraMan or CircUse – Brownfield and land used focused projects, initiated from 2009 by the Central European programme (which however limits participation only to the Central European states), similar approaches were adopted. That is, the training materials and selected outputs which were focused onto local stakeholders were adapted into country specific versions and were translated into local languages.

3.2 Partners profiles and beneficiaries

The partners in the Lifelong Educational Program projects (LEPOB, BRIBAST, BROWNTRANS) were mainly experts, educational providers and dissemination bodies such as professional chambers. These projects´ main beneficiaries were practising professionals, but also academics and students benefited. As a spin-off of these projects, Brownfield courses started in several of the Central European universities. On the other hand, the partner mix in Central European Program projects (CobraMan, Urban SMS, ReNewTown, CircUse) were focused on cooperation of local or regional authorities and research or academic bodies. Their main beneficiaries here were local and regional administrations. The partners in the URBACT Program Brownfield project project BRING UP were public bodies supported by a delegated expert and beneficiaries of this project were the local authorities. Partnership in the INTERREG III C program project the B Team was a large one, consisting mainly of public bodies and institutes, where the beneficiaries here were the local and regional administrations.

3.3 Sharable projects outputs

There is a transnational value in these various Brownfield and urban land development focused projects´ outputs. Especially for countries, where the Brownfield subject is a new one or a rising issue, which is not sufficiently supported by local resources. In such cases, local language resources are usually very limited and all resources which are adapted to country-specific versions and are in local languages are of a great value. But for a non-academic newcomer to Brownfields, reaching all these international or even the local language outputs may not be easy. Various EU Programmes may harbour Brownfields and urban land development related projects, but they do not enable cross programme subjects search. Also projects web life after projects´ completion is limited. The EUKN network [11] so far posts mostly outdated information and the

[9] CABERNET network, 5th Research Framework Program, www.cabernet.org.uk (last accessed 15.1.2013)

[10] http://www.central2013.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/outputlib/cobraman_tools_brownfield_regeneration.pdf (last accessed 15.1.2013)

[11] EUKN – European Urban Knowledge Network, http://www.eukn.org/ (last accessed 15.1.2013)

EURO Soil [12] portal is focused only on soil issues, not on the spatial and the urban development ones. The outputs produced in national languages are even more difficult to identify, as they may not always be on the public side of projects´ web pages and a search on the local partners´ webs may be needed. So far, the Local Contact Points of various programs do not have any duty to provide web sites for their projects outputs, which can be sourced in local languages. The other issue is, that the outputs and information in respects of Brownfields and urban land development ages quickly, but unfortunately they do not age all in the same rate. A new comer to this field may not to realise that for example, the CABERNET project findings from the year 2006 are nearly all relevant and valid until today, where as the outputs of some other or later Brownfield projects, do not age so well and may be outdated even on the day they are posted on the web.

4 THE EXPERIENCE OF HINDSIGHT

Experience shows that the structure of the project partnership is important. When the lead partner has sufficient experience and partners know each other from the past, the matters usually run much smoother. Firstly, the project is conceived on a more balanced way, where all partners contribute, and not on bases that partners are being invited to a more or less "baked cake". Secondly, individual partners can more influence outputs which would be advantageous to be produced in their national languages and have more time to approach suitable local associated partners for projects outputs dissemination. But large partnerships (above 12 partners) also limit partners direct input into the scope of a project. The aim of any partnership should be to work together to the contracted goals, share knowledge and findings and add transnational value to such cooperation. But sometimes it is difficult to balance contributions from various partners, especially, when considering partners (and also countries) levels of subject expertise, technological standards or limits of local legal frameworks, policy, institutional capacity and modes of operation. Partners which are new comers to the subject, may feel lost, whereas the expert partners, especially when participating on non-research focused programs, may feel frustrated, because in these non-research programs, the experts position offers relatively a low value to such partner own expertise expansion. It is often much better for an expert partner to enter a project with a subject, which only relates to the partner´s key expertise, because in such a case his benefits from project participation are much more substantial (this applies not only to Brownfield projects). Some motivation from programmes to encourage top expertise partners in non-research projects is needed.

5 RECOMMENDATION HOW TO START ADDRESSING THE BROWNFIELD ISSUE

In Central and the Eastern European countries, the spatial and urban context of Brownfields has to be acknowledged at all governance levels. This is in order to drive and improve Brownfields´ regeneration chances and aim for more sustainable land use practices. Channelling public funding into Brownfield research and education drives such country knowledge and helps to develop understanding for necessary changes in national policy and legal framework. Defining, identifying and mapping Brownfield sites attracts stakeholders, investors and public interest to Brownfield regeneration and allows for integrating Brownfields into the existing urban context and local spatial and development planning. Data availability also helps to understand and identify likely development potential of local Brownfields and their realistic chances for any meaningful reuse. Understanding of Brownfield sites volumes, typologies and their redevelopment potential enables governments, regions and municipalities to formulate public programme interventions (perhaps also dedicate some soft and hard funding) which can help Brownfield regeneration, or can mitigate the impact of undevelopable Brownfields. Balancing the use of Brownfields and the Greenfields, creating job opportunities, strengthening local communities and preservation of historical heritage are just few examples how Brownfields can be integrated and reflected into local or regional policy and planning regimes.

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[12] http://eusoils.jrc.ec.europa.eu/data.html (last accessed 15.1.2013)