

Urban and Regional Development and Planning in Germany: The Emscher Park International Building Exhibition (IBA: Internationale Bauausstellung) as an Innovative Approach

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1. The Emscher Subregion in the Ruhr District: Economic Problems and Specific Conditions

The Emscher zone or subregion is the middle part of the Ruhr Industrial Area (Fig.1-4) which despite the coal crisis (since 1958) and the steel crisis (since 1974) is still the largest conurbation in Europe. The term "Ruhr" suggests a unity or entity which does not actually exist, as "The Ruhr" is neither a geographical nor an historico-political unit. It is a polycentric agglomeration area covering 5,7 million inhabitants. In 1920, the SVR, the Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk-the former Ruhr regional planning authority-was founded. This after 1975 became the KVR, the Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet, an association of local authorities in the Ruhr, and it is the area which since 1920 is regarded as the statistical basis for the region.

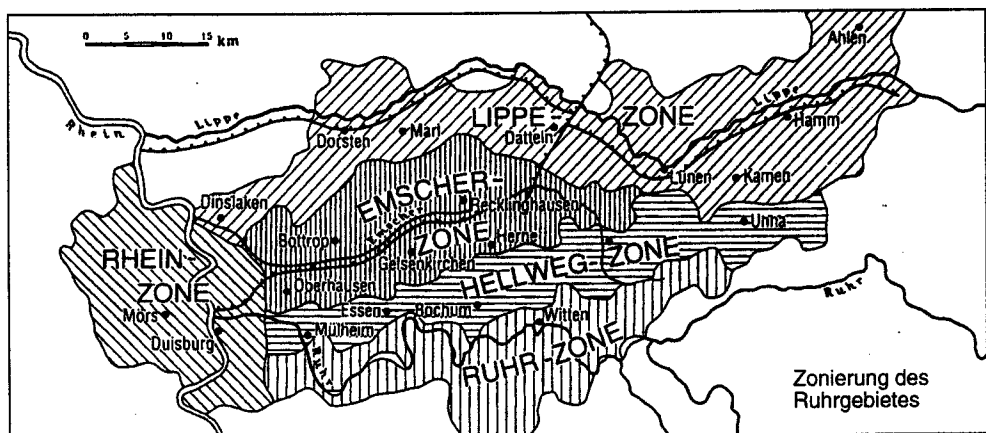


Fig. 1 The Ruhr District and its Different Regions

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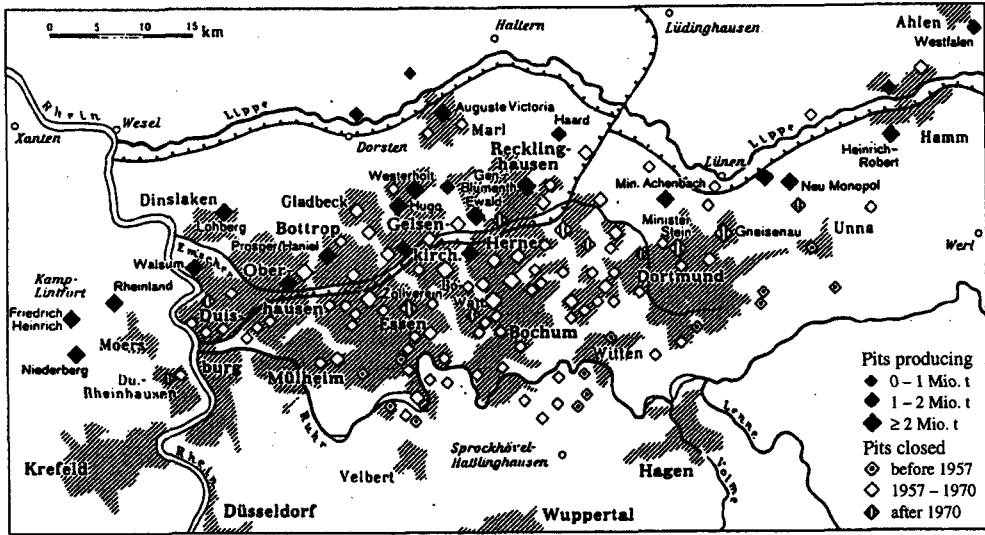


Fig. 2 The Spatial Change of Coal Mining

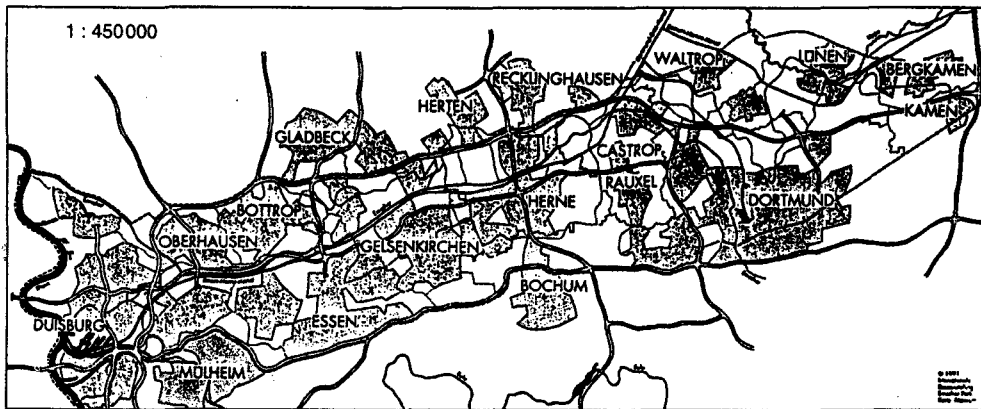


Fig. 3 The Emscher Park International Building Exhibition : Total Area 802km² with 17 Cities and a Population of 2 Million

The main problem resulting from the region’s economic decline was and still is the replacement of jobs in the coal and steel industries with new ones in other industries. Although the employment problem is far from being solved, basic structures have already improved in the Ruhr as a whole. However, economically, ecologically, socially, and particularly with regard to its image “The Ruhr” still lags behind the rest of the Land Nordrhein-Westfalen and of former West Germany.

What is even more striking is the crass imbalance between the subregions within the Ruhr District, particularly the differences between the relatively ‘rich’ Hellweg zone-shaped by historically old cities like Duisburg, Essen, Bochum, Dortmund-and the ‘poor’ Emscher zone. Stretching west-east in the central part of the Ruhr the Emscher

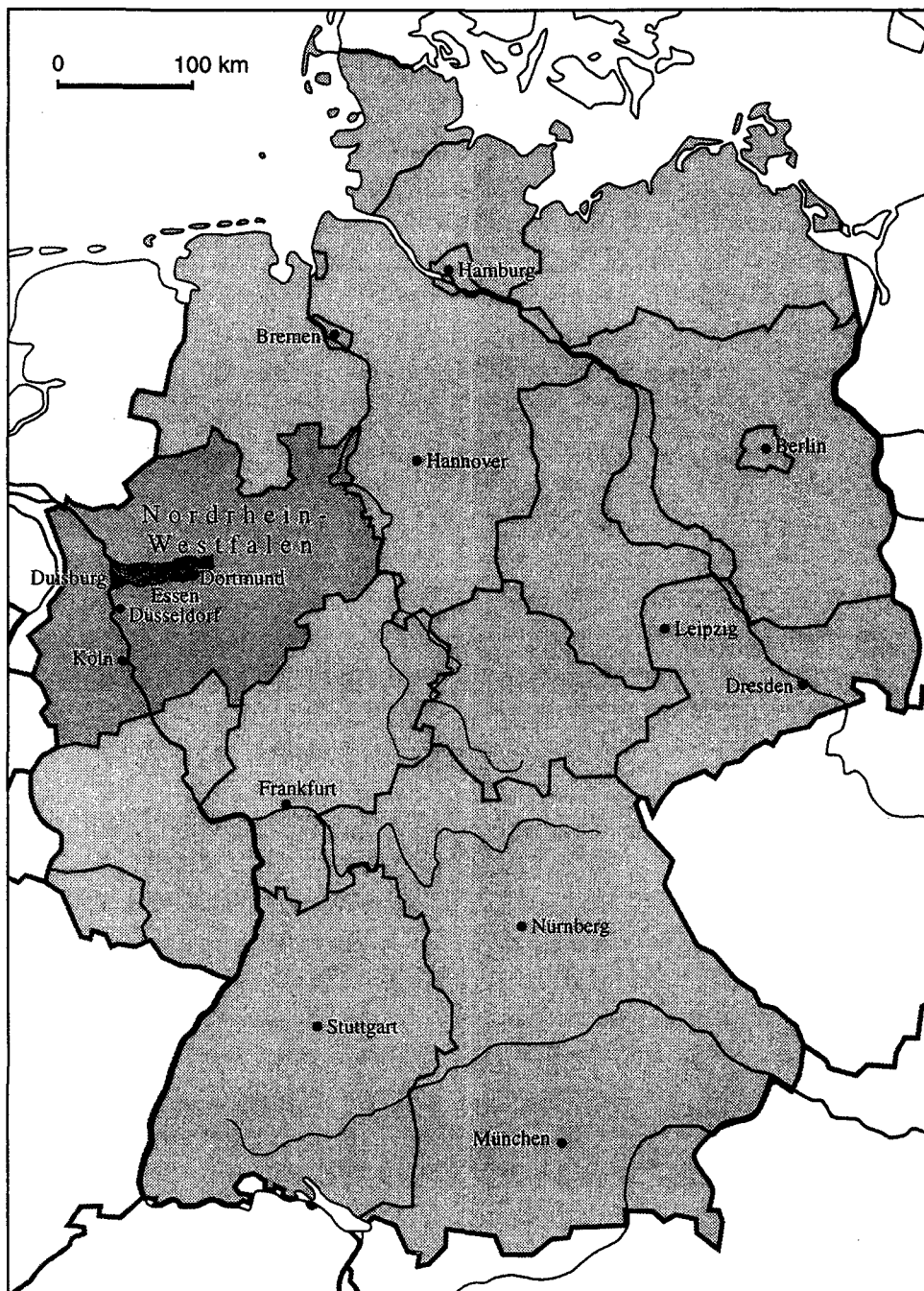


Fig. 4 Location of the Emscher Park International Building Exhibition

subregion covers a land area of around 800 km² with 17 cities and a population of 2 million people. It does not have historical urban centers and is structurally weak in terms of industrial diversification, unemployment, human resources, quality of urban renewal, environmental protection, as well as recreation.

In contrast with the Hellweg zone, industrialization here got off to a late start, but for that it was dramatically rapid, reckless and pursued on a grand scale. The processes of economic decline on the one hand and of social erosion on the other cause severe constraints to the local authorities in the area, because not only does their revenue in local taxes decrease but at the same time they are confronted with having to foot an ever growing supplementary benefit bill ("Sozialhilfe"). This is why the local authorities have virtually become unable to act, let alone effect any structural economic changes (Kilper & Wood 1995: 211). In this depressed subregion with its ravaged landscape, it is important to identify new perspectives for the future.

The IBA Emscher Park has deliberately focussed its activities on this industrial core of the Ruhr.

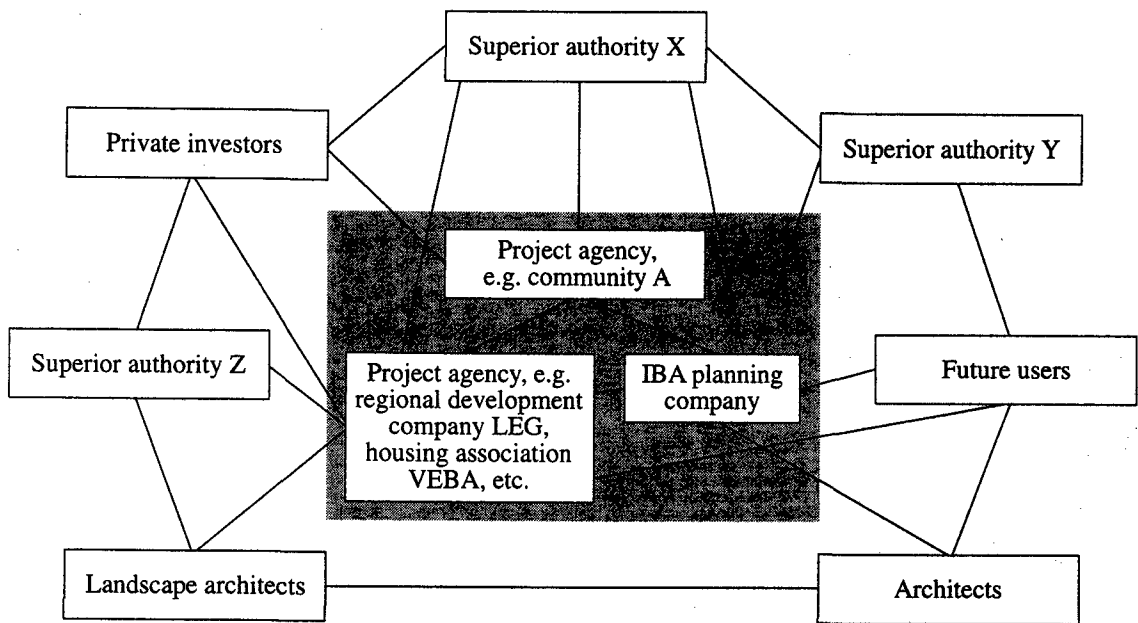
2. The Emscher Park IBA-A Strategy for the Renewal of an Old Industrial Region

The history of building exhibitions stretches back to the middle of the 19th century when it became common practice to present innovations in building technology at exhibitions, especially at world fairs. Building exhibitions in the classical sense are an instrument with a long tradition in German architectural circles-established in 1901 by the exhibition staged in Darmstadt-Mathildenhöhe. However, the IBA Emscher Park covers more than that. It is regarded as a major step towards the advancement of a depressed region and focusses on town-planning and social policy issues.

As a structural programme of the Land Nordrhein-Westfalen the Emscher Park IBA was established in 1989 and is scheduled to run for ten years until 1999. It is a comprehensive strategy intended to meet the challenge of restructuring economically, socially, ecologically, and culturally. In selecting the Emscher subregion the IBA has taken a corridor of land some 80 kilometers in length and several kilometers wide to highlight ecology as a central issue-according to its principles that a widespread ecological renewal must precede any lasting economic perspective. The term 'park' combines the connotations of nature and of a shaped environment-as in a nature 'park', a leisure 'park', or an industrial 'park'. International competitions are carried out to bring together the best ideas coming from architects.

The strategy of the IBA does not focus at external large-scale investors for prestigious megaprojects. Its 'philosophy' aims at a renewal from "within the region" by mobilizing existing regional potentials, institutions and actors for new orientations, methods and ways of cooperation, for new interlinkages and network structures. The main regulatory instruments of the programme are the social, ecological and architectural standards, as well as the quality standards of town planning and design the projects have to meet if they want to qualify for inclusion in the IBA.

"Workshop for the Future of (Old) Industrial Areas": This official subtitle of the IBA reflects a variety of aims like new brainstorming methods, integrative thinking and planning, new forms of co-operation and co-ordination, new methods of participation for citizens' initiatives. Such innovations are to be testified in the planning phase for enabling an intensification and shortening of both planning and implementation processes. Another component of the IBA model of planning and regulation is the horizontal self-co-ordination 'from below' in decentralized planning groups (see Fig. 5), whereby 'from below' means self-co-ordination within the project groups with continuous supervision and intervention in points 'from above' (mainly the IBA Planning Company).



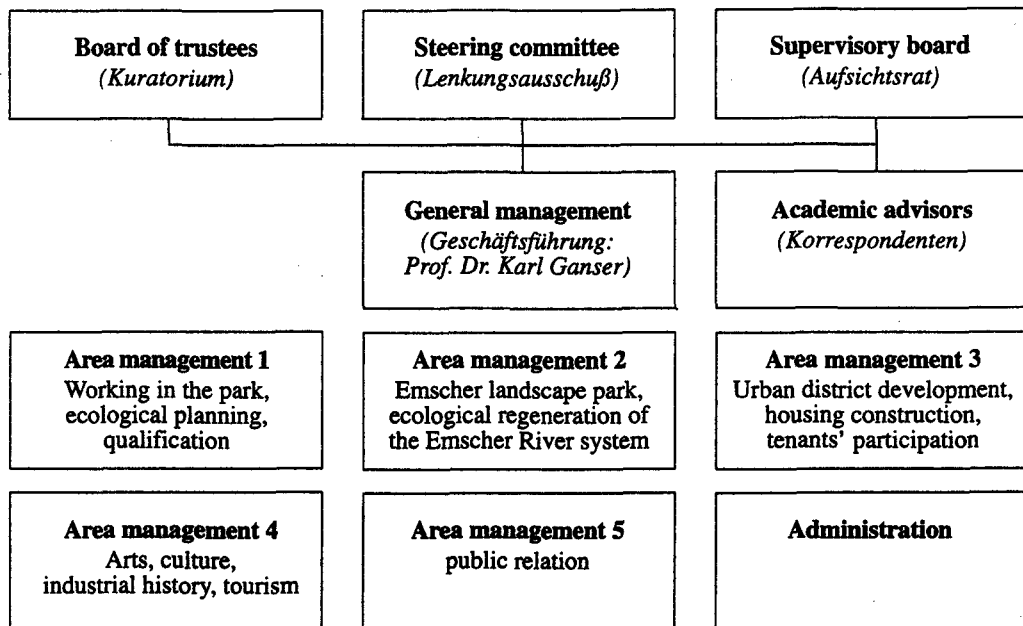
Source: Kilper & Wood, 1995, p. 224

Fig. 5 The Emscher Park International Building Exhibition : Project Planning Groups

3. The Emscher Park IBA-Organization, Institutions, Finance

The Land Nordrhein-Westfalen founded the Emscher IBA Ltd (GmbH) as a private enterprise-officially, in reality as a public corporation - with its headquarter in Gelsenkirchen (at the site of the former Rheinelbe colliery) and a budget of DM35 million.

The organizational structure of the IBA is characterized by four subdivisions(see Fig.6):



Source: IBA-Memorandum 1996-1999, 1996, p. 60

Fig. 6 The Organizational Structure of the IBA Planning Company

-the steering committee (Lenkungsausschuß), chaired by the Minister of Urban Development, Culture and Sports, is the central decision-making body of the IBA which decides on the inclusion of projects and makes policy decisions on contents, strategies and quality standards. Member of this committee are representatives of the Land government ministries, the 17 cities affiliated, industry, the trade unions and nature protection, planning and architects associations

-the board of trustees (Kuratorium) headed by the Land Prime Minister includes celebrities from public life who share an interest in promoting the IBA and supporting the final presentation. Its function is to secure political legitimacy

- the supervisory board (Aufsichtsrat) chaired by the Land's Ministry of Urban Development, Culture, and Sports

-the general management : headed by the managing director (Prof. Karl Ganser), it employs a full-time staff of nearly 30 people. Immediately accountable to the general management are the departments for area management including departments for public relations and administration. The work of the IBA is supported by a board of academic advisors consisting of 18 experts from various disciplines. The task of the IBA Planning Company is to prepare and conduct competitions for architects and planners, to work with project organizers to implement the results of competitions, to act as an intermediary throughout the construction process and to supervise the final

presentation of the building exhibition.

The projects of the IBA Emscher Park are financed from the existing aid programmes of the Land combined with structural development aid from national government and the European Union. The projects receive monies from a total of 36 State aid programmes. These include the classical programmes such as urban renewal and business and housing aid as well as funding for training schemes, the Emscher-Lippe ecology programme and the action plan for the coal fields. No extra funds have been made available to finance the projects. It is hoped that this fusion of funding mechanisms and the interlinking of investment schemes will boost the structural policy impact. So far approximately DM 2,5 billion have been injected into IBA projects, about two thirds of this coming from the State and one third from private investors.

4. The IBA-Five Central Working Fields

The Emscher Park IBA gives a thematic definition of its activities in five central working fields which are currently being developed in 104 projects. Responsibility of the projects lies variously with local authorities, private companies, action groups and organizations from the region.

4. 1 The Emscher Landscape Park (Planning time-scale: 20-30 years)

The ambitious plan to create an Emscher Landscape Park is the further development of a plan to create seven 'regional green corridors' which was first elaborated back in the 1920's by the Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk (Ruhr Regional Planning Authority) but was never fully realized. Taking up this earlier idea, the individual north-south corridors are being expanded and linked to a new east-west corridor to form a complete park system of European significance.

The Emscher Landscape Park as the basic framework of the IBA is intended to provide the core of a new infrastructure for the subregion. The Landscape Park will take shape over a potential area of some 300 km² around a west-east axis between Duisburg and Bergkamen. In order to bring this about it will be necessary both to connect the existing but 'isolated' green areas and open spaces, and also to reclaim and rehabilitate industrial wasteland. The range of projects stretches from the development of large areas of derelict land right down to small-scale activities such as the creation of biotopes or the planting of trees.

Responsibility for the master planning of the entire project is given to the Kommunallverband Ruhrgebiet (KVR). Since 1990, the 17 cities and urban districts involved have formed intermunicipal project groups to undertake the planning. There are a total of seven intermunicipal project groups for the regional green corridors 'A' to 'G', each

with its own character and assignment. In each of the corridors the KVR has anchored a model project exemplifying the various themes and approaches adopted in the Emscher Landscape Park.

4. 2 The Ecological Regeneration of the Emscher River System (planning time-scale: 20-30 years)

Over the decades the Emscher river which flows for 70 kilometers from east to west through the Emscher zone, has had and still has the unenviable reputation of being the open sewer of the region, as is also true for its many tributaries. The reason for this was that the use of underground pipes, as is customary in other urban areas, was not possible because of coal mining, the danger of subsidence and the resultant fracturing of the pipes. However, nowadays when coal mining operations have moved further north, eliminating the risk of subsidence, it is possible to use underground pipes for sewage and allow the rivers and streams to return to a more natural state. In the years to come, the entire Emscher-river system-over 350 kilometers of rivers and streams-is undergoing ecological restructuring which involves three aspects:

-Efficient decentralized sewage treatment plants which will take the strain off the biological treatment plant at the confluence of the Emscher and the Rhine and improve upstream water quality.

-The separation of clean and waste water by transferring the waste water to sewers and the creation of a more natural river bed will help 'reclaim' adjoining areas of countryside and make the urban landscape more attractive.

-The possibility of opening up sealed surfaces in the catchment area of the Emscher tributaries to allow greater natural seepage of rainwater will be investigated.

A long-term investment and finance programme has been approved by the Emschergenossenschaft (a cooperative organization consisting of the local authorities and the mining and industrial companies in the region). For the total planning period, it envisages an investment volume of DM 8.7 billion.

4. 3 Working in the Park (realization time-scale: 5-7 years)

The entire Ruhr district and in particular the Emscher zone provide a number of favourably located sites which became available for new uses following the decline of the coal and steel industries. Under the auspices of the IBA Emscher Park work is under way at 22 different locations covering a total of 500 hectares to create a number of modern commerce, services and science parks under the motto of 'Working in the Park'. These projects are all being implemented as joint ventures between public and private investors, have a high proportion of open and green spaces in common, and a

high standard of ecological and architectural quality.

These 'Working in the Park' projects are concerned exclusively with former industrial sites, each with its own development plan related to the particular sector involved. This is reflected in the detailed design of the sites close to town centres.

4. 4 Housing Construction and Integrated Urban District Development (realization time-scale: 2-5 years)

Housing projects have a central role to play in urban development, in the reuse of vacant sites, the supply of new ideas for urban planners and architects, and the development of residential and commercial parks in central locations.

At present, there are some 3,000 new flats in the planning or construction stages and a further 3,000 existing ones are to be refurbished. Some 75 % of the new housing will be public sector rented accommodation.

The involvement of national and international architects and planners in the various competitions and implementation stages is an important factor in ensuring that abstracts idea of 'quality' are actually translated into on-site-reality.

In those areas where people are expected to live it is particularly important to reach early agreement on the plans with the future residents and to organize active participation in the planning process. Both in the existing settlements and in the larger new housing projects 'district architects' are responsible for coordinating the planning process and involving the tenants in the implementations. The 'translation' of technical concepts-plans, drawings-into a language comprehensible to the laymen plays an important part here. For only when there is a proper understanding of the facts can the individual contribute to the discussion. Special significance is attached to the development of social networks and neighbourhoods which are expected to carry the project forward on completion of the building work. In this context, communal facilities are a standard feature of IBA housing projects.

Recently stronger emphasis is given to the encouragement of home ownership, according to the motto 'self-build with simple methods'. The aim behind this principle is to make house ownership possible at significantly lower costs. Simpler designs which permit self-help and building work by the future occupiers are essential for this.

4. 5 New Uses for Industrial Buildings (realization period: 2-5 years)

An important task of the IBA is finding new-uses for industrial and colliery sites and the architectural monuments they contain. It is particularly important for the architectural identity of the Emscher zone that industrial plants, collieries, foundries,

waste heaps, transport facilities and warehouses should be preserved, as they are the only relics of the history of this industrial landscape.

Many outstanding industrial monuments in the Emscher region are included in the projects being implemented as part of the IBA, either within the framework of the Emscher Landscape Park or as part of the 'Working in the Park' project.

The decision whether to preserve such landmarks of industrial history or to allow them to disappear is a difficult one. Another challenge is of more technical and economic nature: 20th century industrial buildings, by virtue of their sheer size and their steel-and-iron architecture, pose particular problems in terms of monument preservation. Furthermore, it is quite difficult to estimate the costs involved in preserving and maintaining such large industrial complexes. Inevitably, only some of the truly typical and most significant sites in terms of industrial history can be selected. There is also a need for new forms of organization for such projects which bring together old and new companies operating in the Ruhr district as well as public bodies.

5. The IBA - Actors, Finance, and Decentralization: Comments and Questions

-Funding priority for a decentralization retaining central power

When founding the IBA the aim of the Land government was to decentralize State policies on the one hand and to retain power to determine the guidelines within which the IBA and its projects are expected to operate on the other (Danielzyk 1992). To make sure this set-up works, IBA projects are given funding priority within the mainstream State programmes. There is a strong political will in the Land government, the Federal government and the European Union to earmark considerable sums for the Emscher region. This is why the IBA proves to be astonishingly crisis-proof-despite the dire financial situation of the State in the wake of Germany's unification (Kilper & Wood 1995, pp. 213, 226). By getting money accessible through IBA projects the different actors in the region, particularly the local authorities, are stipulated, due to their dire financial situation, to co-operate and to accept the State's role of controlling the restructuring processes and of securing that certain ecological, social and other standards are met.

-The Emscher Park IBA as a new actor in the "Ruhr" stimulating endogenous development planning

The IBA model of planning and regulation reflects the vision of the State as a partner of autonomously acting and interacting actors on the (sub)regional level (Kilper & Wood 1995, p. 226). As the driving force promoting innovation strategies the IBA

Planning Company mobilizes ideas and know-how and brings a 'fresh breeze' into the Ruhr. It is a new, dynamic actor in a region which generally is characterized by 'ossified' structures and inertia-exemplified by the dominant political powers and institutions— "a ruling coalition of mining capital, trade union, local Social Democrats, and local bureaucraties" (Schmals 1991 in Kilper & Wood 1995, p. 217). However, just these organizations are members of the IBA steering committee. The IBA as a catalysator and moderator of project ideas tries to solve the problem of introducing innovation to non-innovative milieus by mobilizing new actors and developing model solutions at many decentral locations. Its "strategy of thousand flowers" can be characterized by six points: process orientation, convincing rather than forcing the actors, participation and cooperation, no ideal solutions, problems regarded as potentials, coordination (Häußermann & Siebel 1994, p. 60). Taken together it focusses both on horizontal self-co-ordination 'from below' as well as on mobilizing endogenous potentials 'from above'.

- Theory: "Perspective Incrementalism" as a new approach for urban and regional planning?

In Germany the era of 'closed' comprehensive planning systems (ca. 1960-75) related to economic growth, rationalization, 'method', 'implementability', progress oriented 'positivism' has been replaced by what can be called a new 'cultur' of planning described by "perspective incrementalism" (Sieverts/Ganser 1994, pp. 253-258). Facing economic stagnation it focusses on a 'new sensibility' favouring ecology, town conservation as well as a new urban and regional planning: 'planning' which obeys the rules but which is less oriented to the question if it is absolutely perfect according to law rather than if it is both economically efficient and ecologically acceptable: an 'informal planning' based on short-/mid-term 'projects' which are regarded as being concrete, demand-oriented and creating innovative milieus rather than on long-term 'programmes' which are supposed to be too less flexible and to be realized, if at all, after a too long time. What is called "perspective incrementalism", may it be interpreted for nothing else but only as a surrogate towards a 'new planning culture'?

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