

# VITAL URBAN LANDSCAPES

THE FINAL REPORT OF  
THE SAUL EXTENSION PROJECT 2008



THE SAUL PARTNERSHIP  
2008







VITAL URBAN LANDSCAPES

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VITAL URBAN LANDSCAPES

# Introduction

The NWE IIIB projects SAUL (Sustainable & Accessible Urban Landscapes) and SAUL Plus were successfully completed in July 2006. More than 180 politicians, policy-makers and practitioners attended the SAUL Final Conference in Amsterdam in June 2006.

The published SAUL Final Report (<http://www.saulproject.net/saul/downloads.jsp>) captured that experience and gave a set of Messages to Europe, with our key *Recommendations to politicians and practitioners*. Its Annex, Regional Reports, provided the practical evidence for those conclusions; while the SAUL film (on DVD) conveyed the messages in a very immediate and easily assimilated form. These were the Report's five Messages:

- In Europe's economic heartland, new urban landscapes are now a reality with a vital impact on people's quality of life in city regions. Their unique challenges and opportunities need innovative approaches by drawing transnationally on examples of good practice.
- Sustainable regions are ones where people want to live, now and in the future. Regional spatial strategies, based on visions widely shared, give people a stronger sense of belonging, locally and regionally.
- The impacts of globalisation and social change mean that Europe's citizens increasingly demand to be in the driving seat of shaping their future environment. Partnerships with the people offer a new approach to planning and governance for Europe's urban landscapes.
- Transnational partnerships can unlock learning, transferable knowledge and greater understanding. A strong transnational partnership is greater than the sum of its parts and can deliver shared objectives in Europe.
- Competitive city regions are ones that can attract and retain viable businesses and their employees by offering a good quality of life. New urban landscapes are an essential element in building Europe's future economic structures and social well-being.

New urban landscapes is a definition of a new city region phenomenon, identifying new kinds of spaces that are neither countryside nor urban parks, but which need new approaches to accessibility and management, in order to play a positive and vital role in city region development.

From these outcomes, the partnership focused in the extension project (SAUL 2 EXT) specifically on the last message, while drawing on the experience and evidence underpinning the four previous messages. This looked forward, addressing the relationship between the issues of new urban landscapes and the future competitiveness of Europe. SAUL 2 EXT addressed the following objectives in the period January 2007 to June 2008:

- To develop the evidence base for demonstrating the assumptions in the last, forward looking chapter of the SAUL Report, by illustrating the significance of new urban landscapes to the economic vitality of city regions, engaging businesses in partnerships with public authorities, employees and citizens to recognise the potential impact of current and planned projects.
- To demonstrate the potential value of new urban landscape projects in building social cohesion in city regions, promoting well-being by empowering citizens of all age groups to take responsibility for their future environment.

These objectives were addressed through the following transnational practical action projects, including landscape improvements in some cases. These were led in each case by one partner, with all partners participating through the tested SAUL mechanisms of Joint Planning Groups (JPGs), project pre-appraisals, website exchange of wider evidence on relevant policy and good practice, and continuous learning. JPGs were selected and organised around the specific issues of these objectives, bringing together appropriate specialist expertise from all regions.

Summaries of the transnational practical action projects follow, while more comprehensive reports are available in the accompanying CD, or on the SAUL website. Two personal peer reviews of the outcomes of the SAUL 2 EXT project are also provided.





# OVERVIEW OF TRANSNATIONAL PROJECTS

## London: Wandle Valley Regional Park (WVRP) Spatial Strategy and Implementation Plan

London's Wandle Valley has been a cradle of manufacturing since the Industrial Revolution, with businesses clustered along the river's 13 miles, from London's Green Belt to the River Thames. It remains one of the few centres of modern manufacturing in the city, with housing directly adjacent to light industry and significant pockets of economic and social deprivation.

SAUL has previously funded both environmental improvement and community engagement projects in the Wandle Valley. SAUL also funded the 'London Strategic Parks Project', which took the Wandle Valley as a case study, describing how a new Regional Park could improve access to a network of open space, contributing to the identity of the Valley as a place to live, work and visit. This was taken up in the London SAUL 2 EXT project.

Concrete outputs from SAUL 2 EXT were:

- A Steering Group for the WVRP, operating at a strategic level, was formed with all major landowners and statutory agencies as members.
- The Wandle Forum, operating at a more practical level, continued to meet quarterly and further developed its membership. Several subgroups of the Forum were set up to consider development in particular thematic areas.
- Engagement with the business community, specifically through a 'Visioning Event' held with key business intermediaries. SAUL 2 EXT Joint Planning Group members joined local business intermediaries for a day of structured discussion. The key aim was to identify methods and models for engaging the private sector in the development of the WVRP.
- The 'Visual Youth' film project engaged young people in developing the vision for WVRP. A toolkit was developed outlining best practice for engaging young people in park development.

London – The River Wandle





- A GIS (Geographical Information System) spatial information tool was developed and used extensively to record comments on project proposals in specific geographic locations from Wandle Forum members, business intermediaries and members of the public.
- The WVRP website was launched, setting out the vision for the WVRP and offering users the opportunity to map their comments and suggestions on the GIS tool.
- A Spatial Vision and Implementation Plan for the WVRP was produced.
- In order to demonstrate some practical implementation as part of the process, a river habitat restoration project was completed at Morden Hall Park and Watermeads nature reserve, working with the National Trust, the London Wildlife Trust and the Wandle Trust, in preparation for reintroducing water voles to the river.
- The project has been key in raising the profile of the Wandle Valley, contributing to its increased emphasis in the London Plan (Consolidated with alterations since 2004).
- The outcomes of two Joint Planning Groups in response to the following questions:
  1. For the Wandle Valley, what methods/models are suitable to engage the private sector and their employees, alongside other key stakeholders, in the development of a regional park?
  2. For the Wandle Valley, how can the engagement of the private sector and their employees, alongside other key stakeholders, also contribute to social cohesion?

## Saarland: The Urban Landscape as a Place of Work and Production

A landscape shaped by mining and heavy industry, the region is economically weak. In the original SAUL project the challenge was to create new qualities in the urban landscape, improve access and to change the abandoned industrial areas and declining urban landscape into new spaces for both living and working. The Regional Park Saar is the state level instrument through which these developments are co-ordinated.

Within SAUL 2 EXT three further opportunities were explored:

- The urban landscape as a place for training and education.
- The urban landscape and its potential for tourism and regional development.
- Energy generation from the urban landscape.

Work undertaken through SAUL 2 EXT included:

- A youth conference, which resulted in a number of youth projects, including barrier-free playgrounds, football areas and theatre workshops.
- Students received practical training on urban landscape and design. This included designs for a mobile regional park pavilion, a redesign for a permanent pavilion, and the renovation of hexagonal flowerbeds.
- A tour-guide training programme was developed in association with the Saarland Tourist Office. It incorporates information about the park's natural and cultural heritage, the history of landscape architecture, and identifies specific heritage sites in the area.
- A barrier-free hiking trail network was developed for use by disabled and elderly people, a 'unique selling point' for the region.
- A GPS-based navigation system for hikers and bikers was developed and promoted as an innovative approach to developing tourism.



- A case study investigated the potential for biomass production in the urban landscape. It reviewed the ecological parameters and requirements; calculated the economic benefits; searched suitable locations for the biomass plantations (short-rotation coppice); assessed the impact of biomass cultivation on the landscape; and identified possible designs for the plantations.
- The outcomes of two Joint Planning Groups in response to the following objectives:

1. Illustrate the significance of new urban landscapes to the economic vitality of city regions, engaging businesses in partnerships with public authorities, employees and citizens to recognise the potential impact of current and planned projects.

2. Demonstrate the potential value of new urban landscape projects in building social cohesion in city regions, promoting well-being by empowering citizens of all age groups to take responsibility for their future environment.

Saarland – The current garden pavilion and the winning design



NORDANSICHT M.1:50

## Frankfurt/Rhein-Main: The Landscape Gap and European Central Bank (ECB)

In 1992 the local government of Frankfurt protected the area of a GrünGürtel (a green belt of forest area, agricultural area, and meadows around the suburban housing areas) as Landschaftsschutzgebiet, comparable to legally protected areas of outstanding natural beauty. The GrünGürtel main route, which is a bike and walking route of 68km, includes the whole area of the GrünGürtel and the outer urban quarters of Frankfurt am Main.

There is only one missing link in the whole belt – the ‘Landscape Gap’. This stretches for about 2km between the Ostpark and the Main River – varying from 5m wide (a railroad track on a bridge crossing a road) to 90m wide (merging into Ostpark). It is situated between the railroad tracks owned by DBImm on the east and streets and a former railway station on the west. Since some of the railroad tracks are already out of use, informal yet illegal passage by pedestrians sometimes takes place. Recently, DBImm sold the disused railway station building at Danziger Platz to a private developer. Next to the River Main is the site of the ECB. A corridor of 30m between

the ECB premises and DBImm embankment is also reserved for open green space as a link to the Main river banks. SAUL 2 EXT helped to facilitate a different approach in engaging a range of stakeholders – decision makers, politicians, city administration departments, local citizens and businesses in the Ostend quarter, DBImm (the landowner) and the ECB.

The crucial point was to make these stakeholders, whose core interests may be conflicting, meet each other in appropriate contexts and combinations. The key was to design and implement an innovative communication strategy.

Different methods had to be developed for engaging these different groups:

- Activating interviews with individuals, and meetings with various social and business groups were held by consultants to discuss the plans and their expectations. The investigation proved that there is a strong interest in the implementation of the project in the Ostend.
- Use of a mobile site trailer as a meeting point. The trailer was sited at different points along the gap, manned by a social scientist on Saturdays and

Frankfurt/Rhein-Main – Site of the new European Central Bank with the Landscape Gap in the foreground





Tuesdays. Information was provided and comments received from passers-by.

- Two publicly advertised walks in the form of Frankfurt ‘promenadology’ – themed walks under a special headline such as literature, botanical observations, or unexpected visits, incorporating actors, temporary installations, and refreshments.
- Two press conferences, which helped to draw in stakeholders and secure political agreement, as well as publicise the plans.
- The outcomes of two Joint Planning Groups in response to the following questions:
  1. What methods/models can be used to shift the focus from the economic utilization of real estate, to the support of urban landscape and open space as a contribution factor to the City’s economic vitality?
  2. What models/methods are appropriate to bring all of the stakeholders together into the process (residents, businesses, landowners, etc) contributing to social cohesion?

## South Luxembourg: Shaping the Region’s Future

The regeneration of South Luxembourg is one of the major strategic goals of the Government’s national planning programme. As a spatial counterpart to the dominating capital city of Luxembourg, which is the country’s international and financial centre, this urban region is still dealing with the consequences of economic change. The steel industry still impacts on the image and attractiveness of the region.

The work of SAUL 2 EXT has confirmed that it is necessary to develop a coherent image for the South Luxembourg region. This coherent image has been termed “Raumvision”. The “Raumvision” is a tool that helps to define the spatial profile of each municipality in the region and helps to clarify the “spatial” contribution of each municipality to the regional development perspective. One method being used within the “Raumvision” is to conceptualise the region as the so-called “Côte du Sud”, comparing South Luxembourg on a metaphorical level to the sea, with its shores, reefs, islands, beaches, harbours and bays.

Luxembourg – Photo collage from the South Luxembourg Raumvision



Using this maritime metaphor and combining it with a more classic planning terminology, a more “neutral”, playful and creative platform for exchanging ideas and planning visions between regional stakeholders is created. The “Raumvision” is built on several pillars, which together form a coherent document:

- An overall image of South Luxembourg and its neighbouring areas.
- Specific thematic layers highlighting different key spatial elements of South Luxembourg, for example important orientation points such as natural viewpoints or manmade landmarks.
- Visualization of several typical urban landscape characteristics and a description of their spatial qualities including pictograms, texts and atmospheric photo collages.

The “Raumvision” has been a learning process for all of the partners on a national and regional level. This learning process has also been inspired by and transferred to the Luxembourg Joint Planning Group. In particular, two Joint Planning Groups responded to the following questions:

1. How to identify, describe, communicate and develop the specific spatial qualities of the urban landscape as a typical development potential of South Luxembourg in the framework of a regional planning process?
2. How to use spatial qualities in a regional planning process in order to shape the profile of different municipalities in the same region and to strengthen in parallel the social and economic cohesion of a region?

## Amsterdam: Noorderpark, Accommodating the Knowledge Based Economy

In their programme for 2006-10, Amsterdam's City Government recognized that in order to become one of Europe's top five cities, the knowledge-based economy must be stimulated and accommodated; and that since human capital is the key to this economy, safe, green and sustainable neighbourhoods are essential magnets for attracting those who will drive future creative industries. The re-development of the Noorderpark aims to develop a high quality public realm close to the city centre, which will attract the knowledge-based economy. However, a new knowledge-based economy also highlights growing social inequalities. These must be tackled both through education and by constructing accessible public space for interaction and integration.

The former industrialised and dockland area of North Amsterdam, which historically housed blue-collar workers has declined economically and socially over recent decades and is now one of the poorest regions in the Netherlands. Because of its proximity to the inner city (the economic core of the region and arguably, of the Netherlands) with its waterfronts, old buildings and potential for green spaces, the North is one of the few urban areas that could be developed to attract and accommodate new knowledge workers to the area.

Concrete outputs from SAUL 2 EXT were:

- A ‘design studio’ with students of the Technical University of Delft developed designs for roofing over the Leeuwarderweg road. These plans were presented and discussed with local experts, the residential population and the sub city council.
- The ‘Parasite’ mobile building was installed in the park. Events and performances held in the building attracted local inhabitants to the park and informed them about technical and policy outcomes of the Noorderpark development. The Parasite is the first place in the park where visitors can enjoy common activities and cultural events. The council of the borough has now decided to provide funding for a programme of cultural events in the building.



- The children's swimming pool was rebuilt in order to improve facilities in the park and develop it as a meeting place.
- The outcomes of two Joint Planning Groups in response to the following questions:

1. How can the Noorderpark contribute to the economic development of the North part of Amsterdam, adjacent to the inner city, in terms

of positive pull factors for both economic and social settlements?

2. How can the Noorderpark create opportunities for social integration through its design and development? What methods and good practices can be used to involve the diverse population surrounding the Noorderpark?

Amsterdam – The children's swimming pool, Noorderpark

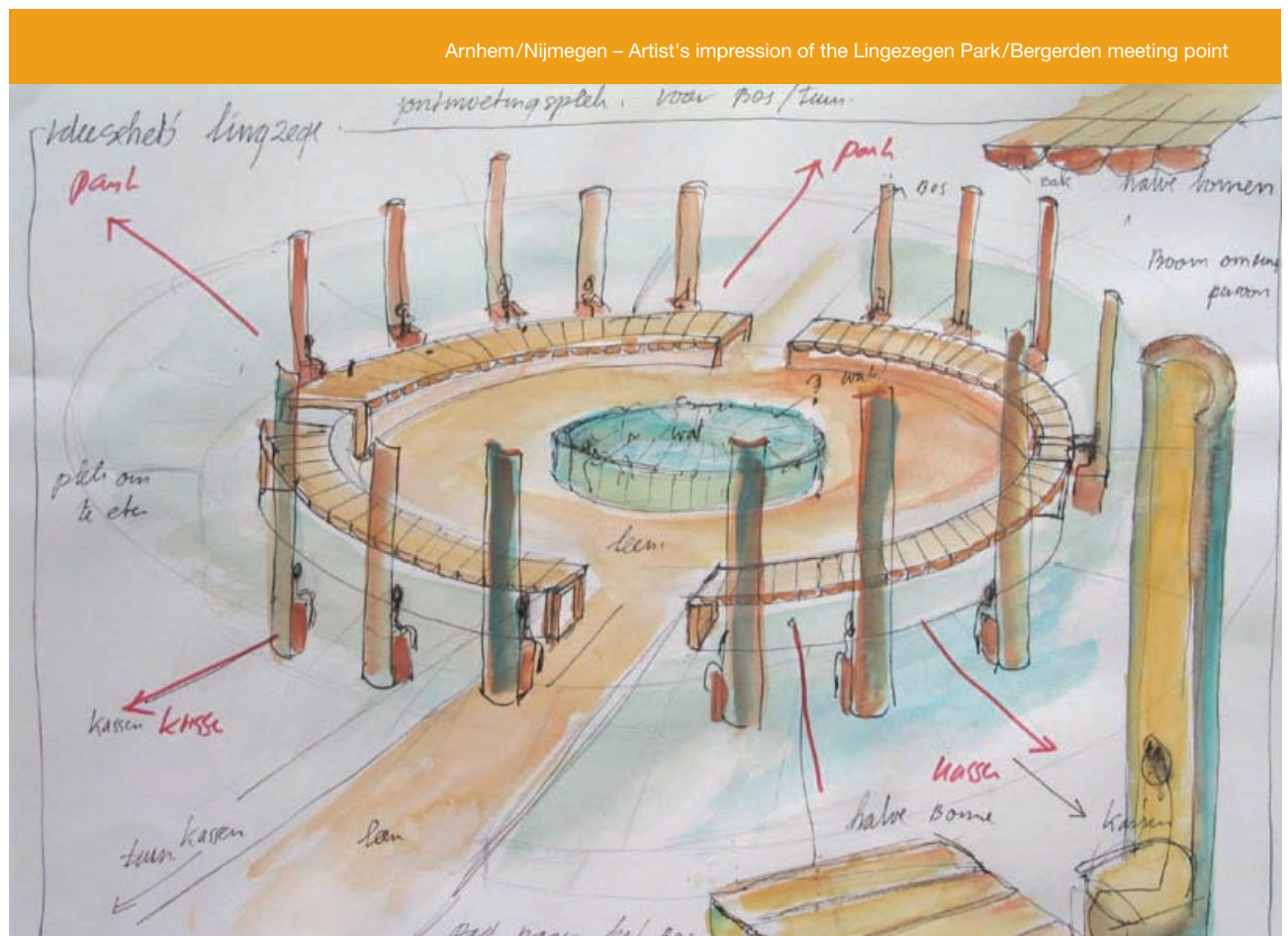


## Arnhem / Nijmegen: Ambitions for the Future – Lingezege Park

As stated in the regional plan 'Ambitions for the Future' (2006), the Province of Gelderland is committed to creating a regional park as a green belt of 1,500 hectares between the two cities of Arnhem and Nijmegen. The Lingezegen Park aims to provide an attractive living and recreational environment by offering an accessible diversity of landscape types. The park will also function as an economic trigger for the rest of the area in terms of recreational development, attractiveness for living and working, and attracting new companies. The Lingezegen Park will be realised in the next 10-15 years.

Work undertaken through SAUL 2 EXT:

- ## Arnhem / Nijmegen: Ambitions for the Future – Lingezege Park
- As stated in the regional plan 'Ambitions for the Future' (2006), the Province of Gelderland is committed to creating a regional park as a green belt of 1,500 hectares between the two cities of Arnhem and Nijmegen. The Lingezege Park aims to provide an attractive living and recreational environment by offering an accessible diversity of landscape types. The park will also function as an economic trigger for the rest of the area in terms of recreational development, attractiveness for living and working, and attracting new companies. The Lingezege Park will be realised in the next 10-15 years.
- Work undertaken through SAUL 2 EXT:
- The Joint Planning Group evaluated the regional park strategy, made a strategic benchmark with the partner-regional park developments and provided advice to the Park Steering Group.
  - A series of workshops and public meetings, accessible for both decision makers and citizens to let the local people become more aware of the value of the regional park.
  - An inventory of local stakeholders provided an overview of all ideas and brought stakeholders together. A jury consisting of local people chose three ideas to be rewarded with trigger money to bring their ideas into practice.
  - An inventory of walking routes connecting the surrounding urbanised areas with the park was developed. Five easy-to-realise routes were identified, and one of these was realised. More will follow next year.
  - In order to connect the huge economic activity of the neighbouring greenhouse district of Bergerden to the regional park and to look for integration of functions, a series of meetings was set up for policy makers, greenhouse entrepreneurs and local inhabitants.





- Practical ideas, solutions and investment projects to connect the park with the greenhouse district were suggested. With the help of creative artists the ideas were developed further and a start was made on creating an attractive meeting point.
- An educational programme was developed for nearby schools in order to involve children in the process of developing the regional park. This concept was new in the education world and 10 schools participated in the 2008 programme. A design contest for children's ideas for the park was held.
- A start was made on a strategy in order to engage immigrant communities to the park. At 'The Day of the Park', special activities for immigrant communities were arranged.
- A communication strategy was developed in order to raise awareness about SAUL 2 EXT.
- The outcomes of two Joint Planning Groups in response to the following questions:
  1. How can the development of the Park be combined with the ongoing greenhouse and other private (agricultural and recreational) developments in the area? How can these contribute to attracting city dwellers to the park (for example by producing regional food)?
  2. How do we involve and engage present inhabitants, especially young people, in and around the park in the park development process? How do we create a positive attitude towards the park?

Arnhem/Nijmegen – Current landscape of the Lingezegen Park including future site of the meeting point





# EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW JAYNE ENGLE-WARNICK





Jayne Engle-Warnick, AICP, MURP, MBA  
Montreal, Canada,  
April 2008

Making meaningful changes to the way that city-regions internally function and cumulatively affect the health of the planet has become a key issue of our time. Economic vitality and social cohesion are at the heart of that issue. The SAUL 2 EXT transnational partnership project provides compelling demonstrations of how public space, or new urban landscapes, can provide a basis for substantial contributions to social cohesion and economic vitality.

How can public space contribute to economic vitality and social cohesion? Increasingly city-regions realize the importance of stimulating and supporting the knowledge-based economy. Since human capital is the key to this economy, it is imperative to provide desirable living environments to retain and attract a highly skilled workforce. Therefore cities are increasingly adopting policies to achieve high quality public realms. A downside of the knowledge-based economy is its potential to widen social inequities. Welcoming, accessible public spaces that engender sense of belonging and responsibility become more important in this context, as social interaction contributes to social mobility and integration.

If high quality, well-maintained public space infrastructure is essential for improved quality of life, as well as for economic competitiveness and social inclusion, then innovative methods are needed to translate these concepts into policy and practice.

The following examples illustrate how SAUL 2 EXT cuts across these issues to meet project objectives through the lens of three themes:

- Bridging gaps.
- Progressing forward while respecting the past.
- Creative approaches and poetic planning methods.



## Theme 1: Bridging gaps

A strength of the SAUL partnership is its capacity to recognize where gaps exist and to devise innovative ways to bridge them. Partners take an approach that couples **long-term vision with short-term action** in all layers of project interventions to achieve remarkable results.

Bridging **social inclusion and economic development** is essential in Frankfurt, for example, where the development of the European Central Bank has spillover effects on local people and neighbourhoods. The adjacent Frankfurt Landscape Gap is both literal and figurative – literally the last gap spatially in the Frankfurt Greenbelt, and metaphorically there is a gap in the view of real estate as a direct economic use, versus the view of urban landscape and open space as a significant contribution to a city's social and economic vitality.

SAUL partners in Frankfurt have worked to reconcile a complex set of needs of municipal policymakers, the railway company landowner, the European Central Bank as well as local residents and regional users of the Greenbelt. They succeeded in building consensus around a long-term vision, which required short-term action to influence planning decisions in time to create a greenspace around a current regional railway development project.

The ability to bring together people who are not traditional allies, but who sensibly will become partners to contribute to economic growth and sustainability is a hallmark of SAUL projects. The Arnhem-Nijmegen partners provide another example. **Cross-sector working** in the Lingezegen Regional Park brought together policymakers, greenhouse entrepreneurs and local residents to link the park with economic activity of the neighbouring greenhouse district. Besides establishing relationships among groups who have common interests but who do not typically come together, a direct result of this SAUL activity is the creation of a meeting point where the park intersects the greenhouse district, that features information portals, installations by local artists, and a look-out point.

All SAUL Joint Planning Groups (JPGs) have demonstrated keen capacity to link **theory with tangible projects** and **policy with practice**. JPGs examine complex objectives and creatively adapt projects to local contexts. The JPG model has proven effective in bringing a fresh, external approach to contribute to local expertise, not simply on a one-off basis, but over a sustained period to allow for meaningful dialogue and contributions that require follow-up and on-going interaction.

The JPG model has also effectively linked **the transnational with the local**. All partner regions have experienced the benefit of transnational working raising the local profile of projects, both politically and among area stakeholders. For example, the profile of London's Wandle Valley has risen among local people, the business sector and politicians during SAUL 2 EXT as evidenced by the emphasis put on the area in the revised London Plan of 2008.

The JPGs have demonstrated an understanding of how urban landscapes can play a role in reconciling the paradox of adapting public spaces to support the **knowledge-based economy** while providing opportunities to enhance social cohesion and sense of belonging among **marginalized demographic groups**, such as immigrants and young people.

## Theme 2: Progressing forward while respecting the past

SAUL partners share the aim to engage residents, businesses and policymakers in creating and improving urban landscapes that contribute to economic vitality and social cohesion. Partners recognise, however, that each region must devise a distinct approach that draws on transnational contributions and new methods of public and business engagement, while respecting regional heritage and local sense of place.

SAUL projects have given **particular attention to traditionally under-represented groups** – youth and immigrants. Believing that engaging these groups leads to innovation and long-term sustainability, partners learned techniques from each other and then each tailor-made involvement processes to suit local situations.



Regional Park Saar partners, for example, organized a youth conference to inspire young people to dream up their own projects for the Warndt area urban landscape. The project included student training and design of a mobile regional park pavilion. As a region that many young people leave for work or education, Saarland is keenly aware of the importance of 'grounding' young people and instilling a sense of belonging and responsibility.

London partners engaged young people in developing the vision for the Wandle Valley Regional Park through a film project called 'Visual Youth'. They then produced a best practice toolkit for engaging young people in park development.

Inspired by JPG working, a workshop was held with students and architects focusing on designing the covered roof of the Nieuwe Leeuwarderweg for Amsterdam's Noorderpark and a workshop for children on ecology and environment. In Arnhem-Nijmegen, a design contest was held to showcase children's ideas for the regional park.

JPGs have made the most of their transnational stature by making recommendations that could have been politically risky for local partners and by going beyond traditional social engagement structures. For example, local SAUL-partners made the Steering Group of Park Lingezegen aware of the lack of immigrant representatives in their consultation group. A special task was given to the secretary of the Sounding Board Group to see whether more places for other groups (immigrants) could be reserved in that group.

**Several partners have developed innovative technological tools.** In Saarland, a GPS-based navigation system has been set up for hikers and cyclists in which Saarkohlenwald trail information and maps can be run on GPS-handhelds, palmtops and smartphones. London partners have used geographic information systems (GIS) extensively to document public input on project proposals for the Wandle Valley regional park.

Saar JPG partners focused on the interplay between sustainable subsequent uses for former mining sites and **potential new uses for urban landscapes in producing renewable energy.** The project explored the potential

risks and rewards of biomass production in balancing local implications with European energy policy goals to increase renewable energy sources.

As SAUL partners look forward to adapt landscapes for future generations, each group also values its own **sense of place and local heritage.** Some partners, such as Luxembourg and Saarland, are exploring **new regional governance structures** that recognize the strengths of existing institutions while adapting them to better accommodate regional needs of the future, particularly with respect to new urban landscapes.

A deviation from traditional governance is evident in **SAUL's own internal structure.** A non-governmental organisation, Groundwork UK, is lead partner, and most other main partners are governmental bodies. The partnership itself is a cross-sector model, which has stood the test of time and shown a flexibility that could be lacking in a more conventional government-only project.



### Theme 3: Creative approaches and poetic planning methods

SAUL partners demonstrated an artful capacity to capitalise on transnational processes of approaching projects differently through the use of metaphor, design engagement, visioning processes with business leaders, and translating the complex to the simple.

In South Luxembourg, SAUL partners effectively involved local policymakers in a process that they formerly had not engaged in – regional planning. Together they completed a Raumvision (spatial vision) as a first phase of the development of a formal regional plan. By **combining transnational and metaphorical facets** in the Raumvision, SAUL partners were able to engage local stakeholders in a way that had not previously been possible. The Raumvision, artistically and through metaphor, brought the notion of maintaining and enhancing landscape aesthetic qualities to the regional planning process. With the region's industrial past still evident in the landscape, partners felt it important to emphasize the value of providing an attractive living and working environment for the future. The Raumvision and associated process contribute to a new social capital in the region that the partnership can continue to build on. Several interesting techniques were used to **engage residents and businesses in project design**. Carried out within the JPG framework, the projects had a transnational profile that made them more attractive to local people. For example, Amsterdam partners took a design studio approach in Noorderpark, to build on their premise that attractive public space provokes creative interaction. In Arnhem-Nijmegen's Lingezen Park, SAUL partners launched a call to local people for park investment ideas. Instead of using a traditional expert jury to choose the winner, a jury including local citizens decided which three projects would receive seed funding.

In terms of economic development, SAUL partners understand the benefits of urban landscapes and regional parks as catalysts for job creation, and of **engaging business people by tapping into their creative mental (and not only financial) resources**. Arnhem-Nijmegen and London partners organised visioning processes that encouraged business leaders to dream and to champion urban landscape projects.

Businesses were more motivated to participate because practitioners from other countries (JPGs) took time and interest to be involved in their projects. **Partners attributed the success of the visioning events to the involvement of 'outsiders'** who gave an added perspective and interest for local stakeholders.

Partners in Saarland developed new approaches of linking job training and education with new urban landscapes, particularly through the biomass energy production initiative. Amsterdam partners engaged creative sector businesses in Noorderpark planning and activities.

SAUL partners in each region creatively **capitalised on having external, transnational perspectives** brought to their projects. By combining outsiders' views with local practitioners' knowledge, the JPGs developed an art of planning and policy advocacy of boiling complex political issues and local dilemmas down to simple elements that when taken together, have synergy.

Frankfurt SAUL partners were faced with a multi-layer dilemma and responded with an innovative approach that involved seemingly simple concepts, including the act of walking. A set of 'promenadology walks' were organised for local people and interest groups, and an 'official site walk' involved policymakers. The result of the official site walk was that the policymakers were convinced of the need to bridge the gap and this led to more meaningful communication with the DBImm and ECB. For the latter event, the JPG invited key leaders for a walk to share their external perspective on the attractiveness and potential for the project area and to persuade leaders to support the proposed open space solution. Both sets of activities proved to be critical 'steps' to the success of the Landscape Gap project.



## Weaving a sustainability tapestry into more competitive city-regions

Many layers of engagement are essential to improving global sustainability, within which enhanced economic vitality and increasing social inclusion in city-regions play a part. The actions and policies of players on the various layers interweave to create a tapestry that is ever-changing and, with the right interventions, becoming more sustainable over time. A range of societal participants are integral to processes of change, from individuals, neighbourhoods and businesses to municipalities, regions, national governments and transnational bodies. With demonstrated capacity to intervene at all levels and produce results, SAUL projects contribute to more sustainable, more competitive city-regions. Following are recommendations to further strengthen this work in future Interreg projects and European programmes.

1. Take forward the Joint Planning Group model of locally-embedded groups with ongoing transnational input in order to raise continually the quality and innovation of projects.
2. Continue existing relationships and organisational connections in future projects, and further engage the spectrum of players, from individuals and communities to policymakers and businesses, in addressing European and global sustainability issues including climate change.
3. Build on cross-sector working and facilitate further interventions by civil society and non-governmental organisations, including in leadership roles.
4. Extend learning partnerships, including the SAULmates network, within and beyond northwest Europe and widen the scope of ongoing transnational engagement in projects.
5. Examine to what extent current policies and practices result in decentralisation of spatial formations that are reminiscent of North American sprawl. Strengthen the role of urban landscapes, regional parks and greenbelts to help avoid the set of mistakes that lead to large-scale urban sprawl.

SAUL 2 EXT has demonstrated that transnational interventions lead to better projects and results in contributing to economic vitality and social cohesion. Furthermore, Joint Planning Group partners have shown capacity to act strategically to change the way that planning and participation processes typically happen, thereby contributing to affect changes in planning culture.

In my view, the overall effects of SAUL are greater even than the substantial sum of their parts. One effect is the project's influence on the world-views of hundreds of participants, from children and citizens of local neighbourhoods, to practitioners, business people and policy-makers at all levels. This is truly a European project where members contribute as equal professionals with different backgrounds, perspectives and experiences.

I believe it is fair to say that the impacts of SAUL 2 EXT are profound and will reach far into the future. SAUL has indeed revealed its soul.

Frankfurt/Rhein-Main – Disused railway lines forming part of the Landscape Gap





# EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW

## KATHRIN FEIGS





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April 2008

In the following review the six transnational projects Amsterdam, Arnhem-Nijmegen, Frankfurt, Luxembourg, Saarland and Wandle Valley are assessed with regard to their work on the two main SAUL objectives – the promotion of social cohesion and economic vitality. The intention was not to look at individual instruments and assess them in terms of their effectiveness, but to look at the overall approaches and the mix of measures in the context of local conditions.

## Introduction

The immediate goals that are pursued in the six projects vary from the making of regional plans to the development of green spaces in the context of regional parks. Underlying in all projects are three major objectives: to promote social cohesion, to foster economic vitality and thus to raise the overall quality of life.

Characteristic of the SAUL project, the objectives are looked at comprehensively and are viewed as deeply connected. In practice this means that a lot of measures serve to address both economic and social purposes at the same time.

The practical approach in all projects is thus a comprehensive and participatory one that far exceeds the mandatory requirements of planning processes. This approach reflects the fact, that the projects take place not on the greenfield but in existing cities and regions – the urban landscape with its various groups of stakeholders. A significant feature of all projects, even though they are very different, is that they work with “what is there”. They realise how important it is to take

into consideration the complex system of relations between the different stakeholders and their surroundings. Consequently the approach in all six projects can only be a comprehensive one.

A general conclusion is that in all projects the SAUL approach of planning in partnership was tested and found to be very useful in tackling social and economic objectives at the same time, bringing them together and thus promoting an increased quality of life in the region as well as increasing the region's competitiveness. In the following chapter, the elements are identified that are seen to play a major role in the SAUL 2 EXT pursuit of the two objectives.

## Key features in the projects' approaches

### Stakeholders and involvement

Communication – in all kinds of different forms – is considered to play a key role in all projects when it comes to promoting social cohesion and economic development. Communication is important within the region itself as well as in the interactions with the “outside”.

The communication with the “world outside the region” in most projects takes place with the objective of stimulating economic vitality. The aim is to raise awareness, to promote a more positive image of the region in order to attract new businesses (e.g. in Luxembourg) or to promote tourism (e.g. in Saarland). This is seen as a good tool to improve the position of the area in the European competition of regions for the allocation of businesses.

In the region itself communication in the projects is more complex. Communication on this level serves both objectives, economic development and social cohesion. The aims are to have stakeholders communicate with each other in order to build mutual trust by making stakeholders see, understand and accept the other stakeholders' objectives, to try to use synergies and to develop win-win situations.

In the projects, the raising of awareness amongst stakeholders is seen to be an important prerequisite for a successful communication to take place. Stakeholders need to be made aware not only of the overall aim of the project (e.g. developing a regional park). They also need to be shown that they could benefit from the project, and that they can have an influence on the region's development. These two latter factors are key in order to motivate stakeholders and make participation meaningful to them, which is of importance when aiming for long-term involvement.

Target groups for communication were not just one special group but always involved a wide range of people, institutions and other stakeholders. All projects strongly recognised the fact that the groups involved in

processes differ from one another in terms of their interests, the way they are organised, their means of action and their power. Target groups included mostly the local population, businesses and landowners, elected councils and municipalities. Many projects like Saarland, Wandle Valley and Arnhem-Nijmegen had a special focus on young people, considering this group to play an important role in the future social and economic development of a region.

The challenge in all projects was to recognise the different roles of stakeholders and groups and find ways to involve them in a manner that is meaningful to them and beneficial for the whole project. This called for a mix of different methods. The development, identification and choice of adequate measures played a key role in all projects. SAUL funding helped the projects to be creative and test all kinds of different approaches, such as interviews, an on-site community consultation trailer/caravan and press conferences in Frankfurt; open discussion forums and workshops in Luxembourg; an open contest for project ideas and educational programmes in schools in Arnhem-Nijmegen; forums and a Visioning Event in the Wandle Valley; web-sites and design studios with students and the local population in Saarland, and cultural events in Amsterdam. Significant is the fact that the methods were customised, with the targeted group of stakeholders in mind.

The SAUL partners who were leading the processes also understood themselves to be equal stakeholders who put their ideas up for discussion, who were willing to learn, rethink the process and objectives and thus adapt their planned action accordingly. They see themselves as part of the 'learning region'. This is a very different understanding of planning than what is reflected in the formal planning law of most countries, where formal plans often override individual interests. So when decisions were taken not to proceed with some plans, such as the IBA-idea for Lingezegen Park in Arnhem-Nijmegen, this is not seen as a setback but as a positive result in terms of a meaningful participation.



## Time, process and product

In all projects, time and process play an important role. A lot of attention is paid not only to the immediate goal, e.g. the development of a park, but also to the process that leads to this development, for the following reasons: Firstly, change is seen as an ongoing process: The way the urban landscape looks today is a result of many changes, and changes will continue to be the characteristic aspect of development in the future. So in most projects the immediate goal of the project (e.g. development of a park) is not seen as the final result in the urban landscape's development, but as one step in an ever-continuing process of change in a region.

Secondly, true partnerships need time to develop: Cooperation between stakeholders requires mutual trust. Mutual trust requires getting to know each other and consequently takes time, especially when stakeholders have different objectives.

The projects' experience, for example in the Wandle Valley and in Luxembourg show how much better the chances for the implementation of a plan are when stakeholders were involved in the process in a meaningful way and feel that they are part of process.

Luxembourg – Excursion as part of the development of the Raumvision



All projects in the SAUL partnership are designed with a strong focus on the process and sustainable partnerships in mind. But for people to stay involved over a longer period of time, there is a need for them to see the results of their involvement. So “quick wins” like small projects being implemented are necessary in order to show that there is momentum behind the process and give all involved a sense of accomplishment. This serves to foster motivation, and thus promote sustainability of the processes. Examples of ‘quick win’ projects can be found in Arnhem-Nijmegen, Frankfurt, Saarland and in Amsterdam where a ‘parasite building’ located in the Noorderpark became the first new facility in the park and will host a rich program of activities and events for the neighbourhood from May 2008.

## Green public open space and Identity

The development of parks is a major objective especially in the Frankfurt, Saarland, Arnhem-Nijmegen, Amsterdam and Wandle Valley projects. In the context of SAUL, green public open spaces are considered to play a key role in the pursuit of different objectives:

Public open spaces provide people who live and work in the surrounding areas with unrestricted opportunities for meeting and communicating. Through the experience of common leisure activities people can develop a strong sense of belonging and identity. Thus public open spaces promote social cohesion.

Green open spaces are seen as an important factor determining the quality of life in an area. Businesses often use the image of a park in order to attract employees, and cities and regions use attractive green space to attract new businesses.

Green public open spaces also help to shape an area's identity. A clear identity is seen to be beneficial to both objectives, social cohesion, but especially economic vitality:

From the social point of view a clear identity provides people with a sense of belonging, because it raises their awareness of their region's assets, makes them proud to live there and thus contributes to social stabilisation. This can be seen clearly in the Amsterdam and Wandle Valley projects.

From the economic point of view, a clear identity and 'brand' is important for attracting business investment from within and outside of Europe. Specifically the Wandle Valley, the Luxembourg, the Saarland and the Amsterdam project, see branding and marketing as a very important tool for the future development of their region. Unique elements of the landscape can serve as a good "peg" for branding and identity building, because they often form a very clear image with a positive notion.

## SAUL's influence on the two objectives



SAUL contributed in two major ways to the projects and the way they were carried out:

Firstly, it provided projects with funding and allowed them to test new, innovative and creative approaches to planning and participation.

Secondly, it promoted the exchange of experiences between regions, which is seen as a great benefit by the partners. But also the fact that the findings were recorded can be seen as an important gain – not so much for the project-partners themselves (they won't forget because they have done "learning by doing"), but for other projects outside of SAUL who have the chance to use and build on the SAUL experiences.

From the economic point of view, the output of the SAUL projects in a lot of cases is not yet measurable in terms of businesses allocated or jobs created. That does not mean projects were not successful, but that indicates the different – comprehensive and

sustainable – approach: The aim was much more for improving the quality of life and the image of an area as a major prerequisite for the allocation of businesses and economic stability.

From the social point of view, the perspective is similar: The projects were about raising the quality of life and the opportunities for different groups of people to be involved into the community and its development in a meaningful way.

The reports indicate the success of the approaches in the pursuit of both objectives so far. They show the appreciation and even the enthusiasm of all involved for this "different" approach to planning and development. By its funding, SAUL enabled the projects to carry out this time-consuming and costly approach to involving people.

For the future, time and process play an important role. What has been accomplished so far in the projects certainly is a major step forward in the individual region's development, but only a step in a longer process, which must be continued. The challenge will be to keep this enthusiasm up, to take the process one step further, to nurture existing and build new partnerships and relationships.

But time has worked for the projects already. Most of them have been using the SAUL approach for some time now, with the result of trust between stakeholders and networks developing. Stakeholders have come to appreciate the results of the participative processes and want to take it further. Examples like 'SAULmates' in Arnhem-Nijmegen or the commitment of executive and elected council members and strategic bodies in the Wandle Valley indicate that a broad range of people and institutions have been motivated to carry the SAUL approach into the future.









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