

# Planning and Participation





## In short

As REURIS is now entering its final phase it is time to look back on the initial ideas of the project and the circumstances that led to the establishment of the REURIS project with eight partners from six cities in three countries.



Considerations by  
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*Development of Implementation  
Methods*

## Project experiences from the perspective of a work package leader

More than three years ago now, town planners, landscape planners, biologists and ecologists from Katowice, Brno, Plzen, Bydgoszcz and Stuttgart met at the Central Mining Institute in Katowice for a very specific task: They wanted to find out whether their experiences as well as their expectations would fit into an idea from Brno's town planners to create an international project on urban river revitalisation within the context of Interreg IV Central Europe Programme.

The participants from Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany first had very different perceptions of what could be reached by an international project cooperation. There were many ideas about the potential aims and objectives and varying visions were discussed what kind of transnational value such a project might create. After a long and exhausting day of talks we realized: Each city represented in the meeting had already developed quite a number of ideas and even plans for urban river revitalisation initiatives. But all these ideas and plans seemed to have in common that they were only plans without any chance to implement and realise them. A first analysis of this situation very clearly showed: Not just lack of money had hindered the project realisation so far. Particularly in the urban context river revitalisation projects belong to the most complex tasks town planners and landscape architects have to handle. Project realisation depends on a good deal of preconditions and it is almost impossible to satisfy all the necessary requirements.

Nevertheless, all attendees agreed that urban river revitalisation is one of the most exciting challenges a planner can have in his or her professional life and it is worth to accept this challenge.

Based on this perception the next step of the project's development was only logical: In any case of urban river revitalisation a proper analysis of all issues the projects are confronted with was needed even before the question of how to finance these projects had to be addressed. Although the participants in the Katowice meeting from Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany gained very different experiences and expert knowledge all agreed that suitable planning systems and planning methods, financing options and economical aspects as well as the involvement of local stakeholders and not the least political support are indispensable for a successful project implementation – besides proper planning and engineering of course. As some of these aspects are beyond the field of experience of



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town planners, engineers, landscape architects, biologists and ecologists it was great luck that sociologists and economists from Leipzig University could join the partners at a later stage of the application preparation. Thus, the REURIS team was completed and established as an international and interdisciplinary team of engineers, planners, and scientists and could successfully apply for funds from the Central Europe Programme.

Today, after two years of project cooperation with work in quite a number of local, national and international meetings as well as countless email contacts the outcomes of the project more and more come to the fore. Through the intensive exchange of experiences mutual understanding could be developed which are the main obstacles that have to be overcome to reach successful urban river revitalisation project implementation. Additionally, a common structure for all project studies could be established. All in all a balance was found between pragmatic approaches from engineers and planners and more scientific strategies from the scientists. The analysis of the state of the art as well as the analysis of best practice examples show that very instructive projects have been realised so far in Poland, Czech Republic and Germany. Although the evaluation revealed some differences in planning systems of REURIS countries more or less the same obstacles for successful project implementation were identified. In addition, the analysis of current financing options very clearly showed that there are hardly alternatives to public financing for urban river revitalisations.

As different the circumstances, the background and the experiences in the countries involved in REURIS are as interesting is the fact that it is possible to elaborate transnationally valid recommendations for proper and successful realisation of urban river revitalisation projects. The results already available encourage the project partners to keep on working intensively on the planned manual and handbook so that planners and decision makers in other river cities will profit from the REURIS experiences.

### Development of Pilot Actions

Whereas the team from Katowice could start the implementation of revitalisation plans the partners in the Czech Republic and Germany had to solve several problems that occurred during the planning process. The questions that had to be answered reach from flood protection necessities in Stuttgart and Pilsen to legal problems concerning property rights in Leipzig/Grimma.

### In short

Most of the REURIS partners concentrate part of their work on the planning and implementation of revitalisation pilot actions.

The update not only shows the different development stages in Katowice, Bydgoszcz, Brno, Pilsen, Stuttgart, and Leipzig but also gives an idea of the specific tasks that have to be solved at the particular sites.





Stream bank of Ślepiotka: concrete blocks replaced by wooden elements, August 2010



REURIS information board at Ślepiotka investment site



Area at former Brno Škrobárny factory selected for revitalisation

### Construction Work at Ślepiotka River in Katowice

After the technical design had been finalized in December 2009 and subsequently presented to the local community construction work at the Ślepiotka river in Katowice started in April 2010 only to come to a halt in May because of extreme rainfall and subsequent flood. This rigour had an unexpected, very positive side effect: It turned out to be a proof that the revitalisation site had been chosen properly because the river channel in the pilot investment area was not inundated while most of the historic Ślepiotka floodplain was flooded.

During the summer main parts of the revitalisation activities were implemented. First several dozen tons of rubbish and rubble were removed and replaced by peat soil and invasive plant cover (especially *Reynoutria japonica*) was eradicated over an area of more than one ha. On a total length of more than 200 m concrete blocks were replaced by stone, wood, and plants (see picture) and a storm water outlet was retrofitted with use of natural material like wood and stone. A stretch of 50 m of the old channel was restored as wetland for rainwater retention and habitat creation, a stretch of 180 m was rebuilt as a dry pond. Thousands of seedlings of numerous native perennial plant species were reintroduced. In addition, the preliminary construction of foot-paths and access roads could be achieved. In addition an information board on REURIS and the pilot action has been set up at the investment site.

Some tasks still have to be finalized. For example the enhancement of habitats like riparian forest, dry-ground forest, and flowery meadow is in an ongoing process as well as an orchard arrangement with native forms of fruit trees and shrubs. The valley slope will be prevented from erosion through bioengineering methods and storm water effluents still need beautification. Finally, educational paths and places, view points, and small architecture will complete the footpaths alongside the water.

All in all more than two thirds of the construction work could be carried out until October 2010. The work is expected to be finished until February 2011.

### Finalisation of Revitalisation Planning in Brno and Pilsen

As a first part of the Brno pilot action the *Complex Revitalisation Study of Old Ponávka* was finished in June 2010. During the elaboration of the study three public meetings and more than twenty meetings with local stakeholders, especially owners of adjacent property and real



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estate, and respective authorities have been held to inform and to discuss the proposals. The meetings with property owners fulfilled their purpose and in the vast majority of cases property owners gave their consent to the project intention. As a consequence of this public discussion process three locations could be identified that have greatest potential to be realized soon and a public tender for the elaboration of a detailed project documentation has been initiated. In addition an effort is made to transfer the administrative responsibility of the water stream to the City of Brno.

For some proposed activities, the basic land-use study for the Božkov Island site in Pilsen was developed to a more detailed level of the land-use planning documentation. The most fundamental planned change on the island – a new anti-flooding broad-base terrace and drainage canal – was modelled in the feasibility study (see pictures) so that it would protect the adjacent development and sports pitch from flood runoff up to a five-year high water incidence ( $Q_5$ ). The proposed broad-base terrace will divert water from the mill race through Božkov Island and back to the Úslava River. Two-thirds of this new watercourse will be created naturally with the chief function of developing floral and faunal biodiversity. The central section of the broad-base terrace will offer relaxation and entertainment at a children's playground that will feature interesting water elements. To assess all of the designs, a two-dimensional flood model was set up at the Božkov Island site which made it possible to create a precise technical design for the new terrace and drainage canal that would fulfill the function of providing flood protection.

Furthermore, documentation was drawn up for a recreational in-line skating track that respects as much as possible the greenery on the island as well as for a system of footpaths and exercise paths particularly aimed at senior citizens. From a landscape perspective, a project to revitalise the original mill race was prepared, and a dendrology study was carried out that evaluated the current condition of the greenery and proposed new land-scaping of the greenery on the island. These two intermediate projects are applying to receive a grant from the environment operational programme.

### Difficult Planning Tasks in Stuttgart and Leipzig

The planning of the Feuerbach revitalisation on the former sports field next to Zazenhausen is still in progress. A planning office was assigned to develop the draft to prepare the implementation. The REURIS team, the landscape planner and the representative of the Department of Civil Engineering



Visualization of planned measures at former Škrobárny factory



Broad-base terrace and drainage canal Božkov Island; coordination situation and development concept





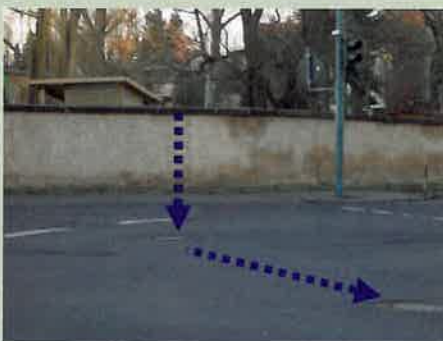
Aerial photo of the Feuerbach Valley: actual planning area (red ellipse) and area of revitalisation measures in preparation (blue ellipse)

continuously discussed the demands and revitalisation options as several aspects had to be considered closely: For instance, the original stream bed had been filled-in in the 1930s. Therefore, planning has to pay attention to the possibility of contaminated areas at the site. Furthermore, in case of heavy rain the run-off can rise very quickly from about 0,01 m<sup>3</sup>/s up to 83 m<sup>3</sup>/s causing *ecological stress*. This means that populations of aquatic animals cannot develop continuously but are washed away by the floods again and again. Thus it is considered to split the river bed into two branches – one for the low and mid water run-off and one serving as a kind of naturally modelled flood channel. In addition the REURIS team has to solve land use and land property questions. As the disposition of an additional site could help to implement a more suitable solution it is intended to purchase this plot of land.

The renaturation project shall be the starting point of a long-term, sustainable revitalisation process in the Lower Feuerbach Valley. Thus the prospects of continuing the revitalisation activities have to be examined today. Three variants requiring different amounts of land have already been developed and are discussed with stakeholders in order to find a consensual solution.

During the past months the revitalisation activities of the Aufbauwerk Leipzig had been affected by several difficulties. First, permission for using the vehicle access to the Thostcreek (Thostgrundbach) in Grimma which shall be reopened after decades of being walled in is needed from the responsible authority. After a long lasting administrative process the necessary permission is expected to be due any day now. Second, part of the revitalisation site belongs to a community of heirs that was difficult to negotiate with. Thanks to the help of the landscape planning association *Landschaftspflegeverband Muldenland e. V.*, however, an agreement could be reached between the City of Grimma and the community of heirs concerning the measures at the Thostcreek.

With respect to the current state of permissions in a first step approximately 35% of the covered Thostcreek will be rebuilt. The stream is to be re-opened and reconstructed, so that the natural retention can be rebuilt. In connection with the creation of optimized rainwater reservoirs the partly restoration of the Thostcreek will be a contribution to improved flood prevention for local areas and the river Mulde. Another aspect is important for the revitalisation investment, too. The river valley is a very popular address for walking tours from the adjacent city districts Rappenberg, Hohnstädt, the West as well as the city center of Grimma. Thus the Thostcreek revitalisation substantially adds to the public attractiveness of the area at any time of the year.



Course of the covered Thostcreek in the city centre of Grimma



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After having solved all administrative and legal problems the binding procedures are expected to begin in autumn 2010. Following this time schedule the realisation of the pilot action at Thostcreek will be completed by the end of the project duration in August 2011.

### REURIS Addressing its Stakeholders

The support of the stakeholders is essential for the success of the revitalisation efforts in all partner cities. Thus it has been important to keep the stakeholders informed from the very beginning of the project. In addition, the stakeholders' continuous participation and expertise is needed for a sustainable development and implementation of revitalisation measures. All partners pursue these aims as the following reports of experience illustrate. Addressing and involving target groups not only gives stakeholders their appropriate role in the revitalisation process but also has learning effects for the project partners.

#### Intensive Cooperation with Stakeholders indispensable

In Pilsen the pilot action at Božkov Island offers a relatively expansive and demanding list of proposed elements and objectives. It was absolutely essential that the key players work together closely in the planning phase. From the outset the broadest scope of specialists, relevant organisations as well as owners and users discussed and worked on the objective. Many meetings, professional consultations and public hearings were held. Thanks to excellent cooperation, the project is here with this degree of detail in such a short period, and hopefully it is heading towards successful gradual implementation.

The experiences with private owners have been varied. Most of Božkov Island was the property of the TJ Božkov sports club. The city and the owner successfully agreed on mutual cooperation and a property settlement. One plot of land owned by a private individual, however, could not be purchased or swapped. As a result, the proposal had to be adapted so that this plot of land would not be affected. Close and successful cooperation was also forged with the private owner of the original mill race. The project to revitalise the mill race is entirely essential in order to build the anti-flooding broad-base terrace and drainage canal across the island. This documentation was submitted all at one time and the design engineering work coordinated successfully. But behind all of

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Involving the public on all stages of the revitalisation process is one of the main goals of REURIS. The experiences from Pilsen, Stuttgart, Leipzig and Brno show how important negotiations with and information of particular stakeholders are. The value of including the broad range of stakeholders as early as possible becomes clearly visible in Katowice.





In Stuttgart, REURIS workgroup *administration* met with experts to discuss strategies for public participation and cooperative planning, July 2010



Planners meeting in Grimma, August 2010

these successes, there was a lot of work, unflagging efforts and plenty of patience on the part of all those who were involved.

The Stuttgart REURIS team decided to concentrate public participation on the intended extension of revitalisation beyond the area of the pilot action accompanied by continuous information on the proceeding of the pilot action. Progress of the pilot action was discussed with the workgroup *administration* which was set up in the context of REURIS. For the first time staff of different departments dealing with revitalisation projects met regularly in order to discuss planning and implementation methods and to think about future scenarios and ways to improve cooperation. The workgroup members appreciated the initiative and expressed their hope that revitalisation projects could be fostered by a better cooperation of the departments.

Meetings on future revitalisation plans were held with district mayors and district councils as well as with the workgroup *biotope network planning* and the local farmers' association. These meetings aimed at raising awareness for the benefits of river revitalisation, explored revitalisation options and limits and searched for consensual solutions. Basically all stakeholders agreed to the planning. The members of the workgroup *biotope network planning* developed a paper outlining long-term aims for the development of the valley and serving as a basic information for decision makers. The farmers who's land would be needed for further revitalisation investments showed their willingness to cooperate provided their compensation by payment or land exchange.

In preparation of the implementation of the pilot action at Thostcreek in Grimma the Aufbauwerk Leipzig representative met with Lutz Simmler, director of the landscape planning association Muldenland *Landschaftspflegeverband Muldenland* e.V., and the partner's expert Dr. Bormann. The participants exchanged information about the administrative procedures and defined further steps. In addition the participants prepared the excursion to the site of the pilot action that will take place during the REURIS partner meeting in Leipzig in October 2010. It is planned to also visit the river Mulde in Grimma, where a lot of initiatives for flood protection have been established. Afterwards the group will be given an overview of the planned activities at the Thostcreek.

In Brno more than ten official meetings with representatives of relevant property owners took place during the preparation of the *Complex Revitalisation Study of Old Ponávka*. These meetings were held during the research and analysis phase



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as well as during the design phase and were attended by the project coordinator and the study design team. In some cases the deputy lord mayor responsible for project implementation also took part. The meetings with the owners of real estate were especially important and turned out to be very successful as in the vast majority of cases the property owners gave their consent to the project intention.

### Successful Stakeholder Contacts from the Beginning

The Katowice team drew important experiences from the numerous meetings held until February 2010 with the local support group (local councillors), with citizens living in the vicinity of the Ślepiotka valley as well as with professionals and decision makers from different departments of the Katowice City Hall and other institutions of interest. The meetings emphasized that REURIS is the first serious attempt to establish local partnerships for urban space improvement in Katowice. Furthermore there is no appropriate organisational framework for the creation and maintenance of partnerships between institutions or communities involved in river space management. And finally, both, decision makers and local citizens proved to be highly interested in the elaboration and implementation of a blue-green Ślepiotka corridor but they lacked the knowledge of how to get organised and how to achieve consensus.

Between February and July about twenty meetings of small groups of local citizens and individual decision makers could be organised. Apart from the presentation of the REURIS project in general the idea of a Ślepiotka corridor, opportunities and challenges for revitalisation of the Ślepiotka valley as well as the significance of the pilot action were discussed. In addition the Katowice team could introduce REURIS and the pilot action to local secondary schools. As a consequence of the meetings citizens and some decision makers appeared to be well prepared for workshops dedicated to planning methods and consensus procedures. These workshops were held in August and September and had two main results: First, a long-term vision for the Ślepiotka valley shared by all participants could be elaborated, and second, a consensus on the further development of a partnership and cooperation system was achieved. As a subsequent step of public involvement the results will be presented and discussed in open meetings.



Workshop with local citizens:  
elaborating consensus on target vision  
of Ślepiotka corridor, September 2010



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