



**FINAL PILOT
IMPLEMENTATION
REPORT**



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INTRODUCTION

The aim of the final report is to give an overview of the progress of the pilot implementation within the framework of the INTERREG IV C URMA Project¹ and provide results and lessons learnt so far. In particular, the partners involved who represent Hamburg (Germany), Twente/Borne (the Netherlands) and Lombardy (Italy) followed three objectives that were in focus for the project:

- What is necessary to establish or stimulate more intensive urban-rural partnerships?
- In which sectors can urban and rural actors benefit from a closer cooperation?
- How can urban-rural cooperation contribute to new forms of shared spatial responsibility, solidarity and territorial cohesion?

Pilot implementations form a key element of the URMA Project, because they test and develop new approaches for the creation of urban-rural partnerships, which are still rare on the European level (cf. OECD Study 2013², EDORA 2011³). The pilots therefore play an important role as examples for other URMA partners and stakeholders by providing transferable models and best practices.

In this context, Hamburg aimed to prepare a statistical profile and recommendations for a large-scale cooperation between growth poles, smaller towns and rural areas between Hamburg and northern Jutland (DK) in the field of cluster development. Twente/Borne intended to develop the local and regional food chain in the region of Twente, which will not only serve to strengthen urban-rural relationships between (rural) producers and (urban) consumers, but also increase social integration and public participation. Lombardy envisaged the use of an urban-rural approach to reconcile the demand for urbanisation and preservation of non-built-up, rural and agricultural areas in the metropolitan area of Milan, using the example of projects related to EXPO 2015.

The results of the final report are based on pilot descriptions that were updated by the project partners on a regular basis (at least 4 times a year). Moreover, the results are derived from

presentations given during workshops, study visits and conferences, which took place within the framework of the URMA Project between August 2012 and June 2014 in Szczecin, Krakow, Florence, Hamburg, Milan, Pleven and Enschede, where the persons responsible for pilots reported on their current progress. In addition, findings are included from the study visits to pilot regions in Hamburg (2013), Lombardy (2013) and Twente (2014). Finally, additional data was collected by analysing the respective planning documents, URMA background documents and the internal reports of pilots.

At the time of elaboration of the final pilot report (September 2014), not all pilot activities have been completed; some are not planned to take place until the end of December 2014. Therefore, the report can only provide a snapshot rather than a comprehensive overview of tangible results. This is also due to the definition of a pilot action being „an implementation carried out by one of the partners in order to test a new approach on its territory. It can be related to a completely new experimentation for the concerned partnership. A pilot action can also be related to a transfer of practice from one authority to another authority.“⁴ This description of pilot activities follows an exploratory approach, so that the experience made by the pilot partners is applicable and not only initiates learning among URMA project partners, but also for other regions across Europe that have an interest in setting-up urban-rural partnerships.

The final report is structured as follows: First, the regional context, objectives and expected outputs are presented. Next, the current status of the implementation progress is described. Challenges and lessons learnt from the pilots are summarised in further sections. Finally, the report provides readers with conclusions and recommendations.

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION HAMBURG (GERMANY): „COOPERATION ALONG THE JUTLAND ROUTE CORRIDOR“

Regional context and rationale behind the pilot

The pilot area represents a cross-border region between Hamburg and Jutland where the aim is to create large scale urban-rural cooperation in a functional region of the Jutland route corridor. Geographically, the cooperation covers areas on both sides of the motorway A7/E45 between Hamburg and the northern tip of Jutland. Although there are no formal borders to the Jutland route corridor, the pilot area includes the City of Hamburg, the central part of Schleswig-Holstein and the three Danish regions: Syddanmark, Midtjylland and Nordjylland (Fig. 1). 6.5 million people live in the pilot area and the number of jobs amounts to 3.4 million.

Hamburg is one of the most prominent cities in northern Europe and has a significant impact on the western and central regions of Denmark (Jutland). The city itself, along with other urban centres in northern Germany, such as Kiel, Flensburg, Neumünster and Lübeck, are interested in strengthening cooperation along the Jutland route corridor. In particular, there is potential to combine various activities and initiatives, especially in the field of cluster cooperation, by identifying relevant regional projects and stakeholders. Contacts and the cooperation experience gained during the INTERREG IV A Programme „Syddanmark-Schleswig-KERN“ (Fig. 2) should be expanded upon.

Fig.1: Location of the pilot „Cooperation along the Jutland Route Corridor“ (Jacuniak-Suda/Schwämmle 2013)



1 For background information and objectives of the URMA Project please see: www.urma-project.eu

2 „Rural-Urban Partnerships. An Integrated Approach to Economic Development“, available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/rural-urban-partnerships_9789264204812-en (accessed on 17 Sept 2014)

3 „European Development Opportunities for Rural Areas“, Final report 2011, available at: http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/EDORA/EDORA_Final_Report_Parts_A_and_B.pdf (accessed on 17 Sept 2014)

4 See <http://www.interreg4c.eu/glossary/#p> (accessed on 12 Sept 2014)



Fig.2: Area covered by the INTERREG IV A Programme: Syddanmark-Schleswig-KERN (www.interreg4a.eu, modified, accessed on 16 Sept 2014)

For several years, Danish regions along the A7/E 45 („Jutland route corridor“), led by the Syddanmark region (Vejle) and the City of Aarhus, have expressed particular interest in intensifying cooperation with Hamburg, the Hamburg Metropolitan Region and the northern counties of Schleswig-Holstein. This is expected to compensate for anticipated deficits in perception, compared with the Fehmarn Belt corridor that will follow the future completion of the Fehmarn Belt fixed link. Thus, the focus of interest is on collaborating in specific projects, identifying potentials and engaging in lobbying activities which target national governments and the EU.

Special attention is dedicated to strengthening the role of towns and rural areas. Rural areas form a relevant bridge between the growth poles along the Jutland route corridor and so should be actively involved in cooperation. In the long term, closer cooperation links should be established between the Hamburg Metropolitan Region and neighbouring German federal states, the region of Copenhagen, south Norway and Sweden towards a stronger territorial cohesion.

Objectives and expected outputs of the pilot

As a first step, a statistical profile of potentials for closer cooperation along the Jutland route corridor, Hamburg, the Syddanmark region and Schleswig-Holstein was compiled with the assistance of consultants (Georg Consulting and COWI A/S). The statistical profile was given the following objectives:

- Identification of opportunities, objectives and tools for intensified cooperation
- Development of approaches for cross-border cooperation in selected economic fields of interest (e.g. renewable energy, tourism, agriculture, logistics)
- Elaboration of policy recommendations and proposals for specific projects for future cross-border cooperation

Further expected outputs of the pilot include:

- Implementation plan (October 2014) with policy recommendations
- Trilingual promotional fact book (May 2015)
- Two workshops, one focussing on renewable energies (October 2014, Flensburg) and the other dealing with city regions (December 2014)
- Two transnational conferences (June 2014 in Vejle (DK); April 2015 in Schleswig-Holstein) with various regional stakeholders and high-level politicians
- Three newsletter issues reporting on the progress of the pilot (March 2014; September 2014; May 2015)

Actors and their involvement

Hamburg's Ministry of Urban Development and Environment was responsible for overall project management of the pilot and acted as the driving force to ensure the objectives and output of the pilot were delivered on time. The team of Georg Consulting and COWI A/S provided assistance to the Ministry. Pilot partners from the public sector included the State Chancellery of Schleswig-Holstein, the Region of Syddanmark as well as Hamburg's Ministry of Economics, Transport and Innovation. The partners installed a steering board responsible for taking all relevant decisions based on consensus. The partnership is temporary and terminates upon completion of the outputs.

The target group to which the outputs of the pilot project will be addressed are various stakeholders (on municipal, regional and federal levels, cluster initiatives, etc.), Danish regions, Hamburg Metropolitan Region, the Federal States of Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg, Project Partnership North as well as the European Commission, which may share an interest in the overall recommendations developed in the course of the pilot.

Progress of the pilot

The first achievement of the pilot was the identification and winning of relevant actors on both German and Danish sides as project partners

in pilot activities. Preparatory meetings between representatives from Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein and the Danish regions collected the expectations and objectives to address in the pilot. The German-Danish workshop held in 2013, during the URMA conference in Hamburg, is regarded as an important milestone in discussion of objectives and contents of the pilot implementation. It achieved a description of the targets, expected results of the expert's analysis and agreement on joint financial responsibilities. A tender was subsequently developed to locate an appropriate consultant. In October 2013, a partnership agreement was signed among the parties involved: The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, the State Chancellery of Schleswig-Holstein and the Region of Syddanmark. The partnership agreement laid down the aims, outputs, governance structure, budget and the obligations and commitments of the project partners. In December 2013, a kick-off meeting was held in Padborg (DK) and a contract awarded to Georg Consulting and COWI A/S with the aim of elaborating the statistical profile, fact book and implementation plan.

In March 2014, during a workshop in Padborg, and in June 2014 at a large conference in Vejle, the interim results of the statistical profile „The Jutland Route Corridor: Socio-Economic Structure and Perspective“ were presented. In addition, a newsletter was published about the idea of cooperation in the Jutland route corridor and a trilingual (German, English and Danish) website about the Jutland route corridor created. In the meantime, a number of internal (steering group) meetings with stakeholders and politicians (chambers of commerce, cluster management, port authorities, etc.) took place to discuss further implementation steps and potential cooperation projects.

According to the Jutland route corridor statistical profile, two thematic fields of large-scale urban-rural cooperation were identified for further examination: 1) Project proposals on developing synergy effects between existing enterprises and research institutions in the renewable energy sector - in terms of construction, technology, research, services; 2) Project proposals for supporting the development of city regions, including urban centres and rural areas in the



Interregional conference on urban-rural partnerships in Hamburg (Sunay 2013)



Study visit in Hamburg Metropolitan Region
Outdoor museum „am Kiekeberg“
(Sunay 2013)

Jutland route corridor. Furthermore, as a part of the statistical profile, individual branches of industry in the Jutland route corridor were analysed in detail and described in fact sheets to support the development of potential cross-border initiatives.

Challenges

At the start of the pilot implementation, finding a common understanding on cooperation objectives and in particular the content of the statistical profile (what aspects need to be analysed, which networks and stakeholders to involve, etc.) was a major challenge. The various expectations, motivations and interests had to be clarified and balanced among the stakeholders who represent different planning levels. The pilot activities required ongoing consultations with regional politicians and their support. In face of the current political focus on the Fehmarn Belt corridor and related construction of the fixed link, there was a need to convince the political stakeholders in Hamburg of the added value of cooperation along the Jutland route corridor. Moreover, stakeholders from non-metropolitan areas (such as individual counties and towns in Syddanmark) showed a stronger belief in the potential added value and the need for cooperation compared with stakeholders in the metropolitan areas.

Finally, the most important aspect of concern is the vagueness of the long-term development perspective, especially with regard to the chances of future implementation of recommendations provided in the statistical profile, due to the temporary nature of the partnership.

Lessons learnt

Critical for establishment of the initial governance structures for closer urban-rural cooperation in the pilot area was making good use of the cooperation experience and contacts gained in the INTERREG IV A Programme „Syddanmark-Schleswig-KERN“, especially between regional representatives of the cities of Schleswig and Padborg.

Achievement of an official partnership agreement helped to define the role and tasks as well as ensure the commitment of individual partners for the duration of the pilot.

It was important to ensure from the very beginning that the statistical profile would provide equal benefit for each partner, to minimise the potential for misunderstandings related to expectations and outputs. The results of the study will help identify potentials in rural and urban areas. Their respective roles and competences in a joint cooperation are then more easily defined. As the pilot has developed, the role of the city regions as centres for their rural hinterlands and as links in the corridor has become increasingly vivid.

The Hamburg pilot provides a good example of the potential for large-scale, cross-border urban-rural cooperation and can serve as a model, specifically for those URMA partners located near to national borders (Pleven-Romania, Twente-Germany, West Pomerania-Germany, Lombardy-Switzerland, Małopolska-Slovakia). However, it should be kept in mind that the activities cannot be limited to improved cross-border cooperation; first they need to accommodate aspects of urban-rural cooperation. Each region needs to develop its own individual path for cooperation.

The innovative aspects of this pilot lie in the large-scale perspective of future cooperation in a functional area that crosses regional and national administrative borders. In this respect, the Jutland corridor can certainly be regarded as a prototype.

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION ENSCHEDÉ/BORNE (THE NETHERLANDS): „RESTORATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD CHAINS IN THE TWENTE REGION“

Regional context and rationale behind the pilot

The spatial scope of the pilot covers the Twente region in the Province of Overijssel in the western Netherlands. This pilot is an example of an urban-rural partnership in a metropolitan area with a polycentric structure of villages and towns (Fig. 3). Since 2001, Enschede, Hengelo, Oldenzaal, Borne and Almelo have worked together as Network City Twente (Netwerkstad Twente) to develop strategic visions and jointly set-up regional flagship projects⁵.

The Twente region is characterised by small scale agriculture, structured by its landscape features: narrow plots of land separated by a rich pattern of brooks and valleys, hedges, scattered forest and private estates. This type of landscape offers an opportunity for local farmers to produce high quality products in a sustainable way, by developing regional food chains in the Twente region.

In the Netherlands, business of agriculture has become highly specialised on catering for the world market, resulting in a loss of connection to local and regional consumers. Recent years have shown a growing need to restore the local and regional relations/linkages between producers and consumers. This need stems from an emerging awareness and importance of a more sustainable society. Moreover, the financial crisis has inspired a reevaluation of lifestyle values with an emphasis on quality of life and desire for high-quality food. In addition to growing distances between producers and consumers, recent decades have seen an increasing gap between urban and rural societies. The cultural and economic changes caused by economic crises that have resulted in the restoration of food chains will also lead to a revival of traditional urban-rural linkages.

There is a long history of urban-rural partnerships in Twente. A number of visions have been created in the spatial and economic development fields of



research for the urban fringes, along with urban farming in the territory as part of the framework of European and regional programmes (INTERREG IVB project SURF - Sustainable Urban Fringes, EUREGIO INTERREG VA programme, regional strategies). Since 2008 the EU programme LEADER has also provided a solid platform to rediscover the strength of rural economics, revealing the important influence that rural areas can have on urban zones and the value rural society brings to urban areas. There are three LEADER Action Groups currently in the region. The development of urban-rural partnerships is notably emphasised in the LEADER area of South Twente. By the promotion of regional products and the organisation of local food markets, for example, regional solidarity can be strengthened by taking joint decisions and the involvement in projects. According to Rolf Oldejans, LEADER improved the relationships between the inhabitants of cities and rural society, because it made the cities more aware of their urban fringes⁶. Thus, the re-establishment of local and regional food chains restores further linkages, resulting in new partnerships based on an acknowledgement of mutual benefits.



Fig. 3: Location of the pilot “Restoration of local and regional food chains in the Twente region”
(Jacuniak-Suda/Schwämmle 2014)

⁵ Sijgers, I., Hammer, M., Horst, W., Nieuwenhuis, P., van der Sijde, P. (no year): „Supporting the contribution of Higher Education Institutes to regional development. Self-Evaluation Report of Twente“, p. 8, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/netherlands/35883426.pdf> (accessed on 17 Sept 2014)

⁶ „Cooperation with cities from rural perspective“, presentation given in Szczecin/Poland, 13 Sept 2012

Objectives and expected outputs of the pilot

The aim of the pilot is to restore local and regional food chains by implementation of the following three projects:

- Development of a regional food strategy and a common brand „Regional Food Twente“ as a result of joint cooperation initiatives between local and regional farmers, food industry and related SMEs.
- Establishment of a regional food distribution centre in the middle of the Twente region (municipality of Borne) and a distribution concept „Versroute“ (fresh route) of shorter delivery distances. The distribution centre will combine a food store with an exhibition room and a tourist information centre.
- Establishment of a modern urban-care farm in Enschede to serve as an example of a locally orientated farm that produces food for the urban area that also functions as a skill development workshop for students and persons with disabilities who receive day-care. The urban-care farm will be run by an entrepreneur.

Cooperation between urban and rural areas will be promoted by these three projects. Initially, the projects aim to encourage an awareness of food production and the necessity of reducing food distribution distances. Increasing regional food production awareness in urban populations will also stimulate an interest in rural areas and local food producing enterprises as well as more general interest in the quality of food. Improving the relationships between urban communities and rural areas strengthens regional solidarity. Urban populations are more likely to support and contribute to more sustainable rural development if they have a better understanding of rural areas and of their own role in regional food chains. Ultimately, this newfound urban-rural awareness will reduce the problems arising from the anonymity of large-scale industrial agriculture in the Twente region. Moreover, it is hoped that by implementing these

activities the characteristic features of the countryside and valuable plots of land in Twente can be preserved from suburbanisation, urban sprawl and other undesirable developments. The pilot ultimately aims at a better knowledge transfer and improved know-how in the region of Twente through the involvement of students from local universities and educational institutes in the development of the pilot activities. In the longer term, it is hoped that students inspired by the pilot's initiatives will eventually start up their own businesses in the region. An implementation plan will be developed in the final stages of pilot implementation to provide recommendations on how the regional food strategy, regional food markets, the distribution centre in Borne and the urban farm in Enschede can continue and remain economically viable in the long term.

Actors and their involvement

The Green Knowledge Portal Twente is in charge of the pilot's management. The organisation was established in 2008 by the municipalities of Borne and Enschede as initiators and with the other municipalities in Twente, the knowledge institutes AOC Oost-Nederland (the East Netherlands agricultural vocational study institute), Van Hall Larenstein, Saxion and Wageningen University, and is supported by the Ministry of Agricultural Affairs and the Province Overijssel. Pilot partners represent the municipalities in the Twente region (Enschede and Borne), the local water board (Vechtstromen), knowledge institutes such as AOC Oost-Nederland, universities of applied sciences (Van Hall Larenstein, Stoas and Saxion) and the Wageningen University. The activities of the pilot are addressed to all local and regional farmers and SMEs share an interest in regional food production, promotion and distribution in the Twente region, and citizens/customers in urban and rural areas of Twente interested in regional food. At present, the activities developed within the pilot are driven by the Green Knowledge Portal Twente, but in the long term they should be the responsibility of local entrepreneurs.

Progress of the pilot

During the course of the pilot, a number of activities towards the development of the three main outputs (regional food strategy; regional food market/distribution centre, urban farm Enschede) took place.

First, a working group to develop a regional food strategy was formed in February 2013. Called „Smaakmakers van Twente“ this working group consisted of Innofood (a cooperation of big food producers in East Netherlands), Syntens (an innovation network for entrepreneurs/SMEs in Twente), Twents Bureau voor Toerisme (the Regional Bureau for Tourism) and AOC Oost-Nederland. Over the course of the project, responsibility for strategy development was passed from the Regional Bureau of Tourism to entrepreneurs.

Second, a feasibility study (business case) undertaken by students of Saxion University concluded that a regional distribution centre in Borne is feasible. A search has been started to find an entrepreneur to lead the centre. A search has also begun for an agricultural property for sale that is strategically placed centrally between the urbanized areas of the Twente region and where regional crops using the permaculture technique (integrating economic, social and environmental aspects) can be grown. If the search is successful, it will form the distribution centre. Meanwhile, a business plan was completed in September 2013. Concurrently, a study to determine an efficient logistic system and a professional business case was being elaborated by students of Wageningen University and Saxion University of Applied Sciences. This was followed by the set-up of an internet platform for distribution „Versroute“ and a promotional film to encourage food producers and customers (mainly restaurants and shops) was also developed⁷. Two independent entrepreneurs are currently working on practical applications of the distribution concept „Versroute“. One of these entrepreneurs runs a shop with regional products alongside the distribution and the second runs a catering and event business with regional products. A cooperative of entrepreneurs for the distribution of food from the „De Viermarken“ urban-care farm (see below) was established in 2014.

Third, a vision for the conversion of an industrial site into a local urban-care farm in Enschede has been realised. A number of entrepreneurs and educational institutes were contacted between January and September 2013, to draw their attention to the urban farm in Enschede. Since November 2013, several urban farming projects in the cities of the Twente region have been launched. A workshop was organised December 2013 in Enschede, involving citizens and local companies, on the topics of food and wasted space in the city with a view to the establishment of an urban farm. Finally, in January 2014, agreements were signed that enable the start-up of the urban farm for sheltered jobs in Enschede called „De Viermarken“. Students of Wageningen University have since developed a marketing plan and regional food strategy for the farm. The goal is to improve communication and cooperation between the parties involved and give sales of the farm's products a boost. Furthermore, a common direction for branding the regional products is drafted in the strategy. In addition to numerous workshops on the topic, a conference on regional food is being organised to take place in November 2014.

Challenges

The people in charge for the pilot assert that neither the Green Knowledge Portal Twente nor the public bodies (e.g. municipalities of Borne and Enschede) are suited to act as the driving force behind implementation of pilot activities in the longer term. They can provide ideas, but the pilot's activities must be conducted by private companies or entrepreneurs that have been convinced to take on the ideas and implement them. Only this will ensure that pilot activities become economically viable and outlast the duration of the URMA Project. However, finding an appropriate entrepreneur presents a challenge and finding ways to motivate entrepreneurs to act as the driving forces need to be identified. As regional products are new and possibly more expensive than the mass products in the supermarkets, they need to be professionally branded, promoted and distributed, which leads to higher business costs. Often, food safety issues and their respective regulations hinder start-up businesses for local/regional products.



Regional delights on offer at the „De Viermarken“ urban-care farm shop in Enschede (Jacuniak-Suda 2014)

Afternoon quiet time in the Twente countryside (Jacuniak-Suda 2014)



⁷ See http://youtu.be/HQVvk2_8X2hE for the promotional film (accessed on 12 Sept 2014)



Study visit in Twente (Jacuniak-Suda 2014)

There are also difficulties in developing a regional food strategy. When there is no organisation acting as its driver, it is difficult to bring entrepreneurs together to agree the contents of the strategy. Basically, this is due to a lack of strategically thinking stakeholders to promote the ideas of the strategy for their wider regional benefits. In this context, a regional public institution such as the Twente regional planning body could act as driving force.

A further challenge comes from the competition of large-scale producers, who are well established in the Twente region in terms of brand and land ownership for agriculture.

Lessons learnt

A number of lessons can be learned from the pilot so far. First, the LEADER programme provides a solid basis for the establishment of urban-rural partnerships by the provision of existing contacts to local and regional administrations, know-how in the formulation of regional development strategies and projects, SWOT analysis, seed funding, etc. Local events (e.g. food markets, conferences) also serve as exchange platforms to bring together rural and urban stakeholders and exchange know-how and contacts.

Second, the involvement of students in project development (business plan, feasibility study) is an innovative aspect. The projects benefit from their knowledge and creativity, while the students develop a sense of belonging, identity and responsibility for their home region. Young people learn how to use their skills and knowledge in practice and they may eventually start their own

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION LOMBARDY (ITALY): „MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF PERI-URBAN AREAS“

Regional context and rationale behind the pilot

The pilot area is located in Lombardy, in the metropolitan area of Milan. It presents an urban-rural cooperation within an inner-metropolitan area, in particular between the metropolitan core of Milan and its peri-urban areas. It consists

of local businesses, thus encouraging them to stay in the region. In this way, it helps prevent a brain-drain of young people from the region.

In the long term, urban-rural partnerships should be driven by entrepreneurs and not solely by public money and bodies, because the business of regional products is financially viable. Notwithstanding, the development of a system of micro-credits for entrepreneurial activities could be beneficial, especially for those starting their own businesses (students, graduates, young farmers, etc.). So far, two entrepreneurs have proved successful in establishing their own businesses arising from the project. The success of the pilot will depend on the cooperation of entrepreneurs and their enthusiasm to take over the lead.

Overall, the pilot's activities were developed in the quadruple helix approach that allows for all actors involved, representing academia, business, government and interest groups, to bring their various skills, experience and contacts into the joint task: of rediscovering traditional food chains in a modern manner. The pilot incidentally fulfils a social function by providing day care and work activities for those with less regular work (people with disabilities or special needs).

The pilot could benefit from good practices made in Lombardy (e.g. Associazione Buon Mercato di Corsico) and contributions from contacts available. In particular, the persons responsible for the pilot are interested in how the regional food producers and logistics are organized in other regions. Conversely, the URMA-Partner in Kraków is interested in establishing links with producers in Twente, with the aim of establishing a similar concept for the Małopolska Voivodeship in Poland.

of the EXPO area and wider peri-urban pilot area which covers the municipalities of Arese, Rho, Pero, Bollate, Baranzate, Lainate and Milano. This wider peri-urban pilot area reflects relevant territorial aspects such as the water system, land-use, land cover, EXPO-related projects (e.g. Waterways project Via d'Acqua, Parco delle Risaie, Associazione Buon Mercato di Corsico), system of

green areas and agricultural parks (Parco Regionale delle Groane, Parco Agricolo Sud Milano) (Fig. 4). Aspects that characterise the pilot area include:

- The proximity of the metropolitan area of Milan (1.32 million inhabitants in 2014): the URMA pilot area, excluding Milan itself, has a population of about 150,000 and the wider pilot area, which includes medium urban centres (e.g. Rho with more than 50,000 inhabitants, Bollate and Corsico with around 30,000 inhabitants) and smaller centres (Pero and Assago with around 10,000 inhabitants)
- The natural and cultural landscapes with their respective values: natural river bodies, well-structured historical channels and irrigation systems, historical centres and heritage buildings
- The agricultural landscape: the presence of agricultural parks (Agricultural Park of South of Milan), current agricultural production (high percentage of agricultural areas, farms with differentiated agricultural production)

Therefore, the pilot area provides an interesting example for analysis of urban-rural relations for the management and transformation of multifunctional peri-urban areas. In particular, in the face of ongoing urban sprawl, the preservation and future management of rural elements in peri-urban areas is one challenge that was brought into focus by the pilot.

Objectives and expected outputs of the pilot

The overall aim of the pilot is to analyse urban-rural relations pertaining to the EXPO 2015 study and find innovative approaches to land management and practices of land use with regard to the environmental protection and valorisation of peri-urban territories. This will be achieved by taking the following steps:

- Formulation of a definition of peri-urban areas by means of a case study area characterisation (identification and analysis of territorial characteristics of the EXPO 2015 area based on thematic maps using GIS analysis)



- Analysis of good practices that underline factors of success and aspects/actions that support the management of peri-urban territories towards environmental, social and economic sustainability. Good practices identified are: Vie d'Acqua (waterways project), Parco delle Risaie (Rice Fields Park), DESR - Distretto di Economia Solidale Rurale del Parco Agricolo Sud Milano (District of Sustainable Rural Economy of PASM - South Agricultural Park of Milan), Associazione Buon Mercato di Corsico (local organic food market of Corsico municipality) and Distretto Agricolo Milanese (Agricultural District of Milan). The pilot includes also the analysis of other informal and bottom-up proposals (related to the urban-rural partnerships / food chain topics) located in the pilot area.



Fig. 4: Location of the pilot „Management and governance of peri-urban areas“ (Jacuniak-Suda/Schwämmle 2014)



Milan and its peri-urban areas
(Jacuniak-Suda 2013)

- Characterisation of governance of territorial system framework: analysis of policies, plans and programmes at regional, provincial and municipal level to support the identification of strategies and actions for the management of peri-urban territories
- Development of „Guidelines for peri-urban areas management/improvement and urban-rural partnerships implementation“ that will be organised in two sections:

Guidelines for the identification and protection of peri-urban areas that include:

- a) method for peri-urban identification (GIS method at municipality level)
- b) method for peri-urban evaluation (GIS method at municipality level and evaluation factors)
- c) criteria for peri-urban safeguards, coordinated/integrated with Lombardy regional policies on reduction of soil consumption

Guidelines for peri-urban areas improvement/valorisation and implementation of urban-rural partnerships that include:

- a) identification of services and functions performed by peri-urban areas
 - b) criteria for functions/services identification in relation to local urban/rural contexts
 - c) criteria for the implementation of urban-rural partnerships (governance instruments - for example: ecological urban-rural agreements)
- Development of the above-mentioned governance instrument „ecological urban-rural agreements“ was proposed to encourage the development of partnerships between involved actors (farmers, associations, entrepreneurs, public bodies such as waterways management and regional administration, etc.).

Actors and their involvement

The Regione Lombardia (Land, Planning and Risk Prevention Department) and its internal expert

consultancy Èupolis Lombardia were jointly responsible for management of the pilot. The partners involved in the implementation of the pilot were as follows: the corporation EXPO 2015 S.p.A.⁸, Province of Milan, DAM / Milan Municipality, and the municipalities of Arese, Rho, Pero, Bollate, Baranzate and Lainate, Parco delle Risaie, Associazione Buon Mercato di Corsico.

The results and activities developed under the pilot should reach the following target groups:

- Institutions and associations promoting local food production (certified local production, production typical of the area, local food distribution), Slow Food and solidarity-based purchasing groups (GAS)
- Representatives of stakeholders and actors in the agricultural production chain (farmers and farming associations, chambers of commerce for the agricultural sector)
- Institutions and associations for environmental protection and improvement of natural/agricultural parks (Italia Nostra Association, Legambiente, and other national and local associations)

Further, various actors were involved in the meetings on specific issues that were organized during pilot implementation. At these meetings, the local and regional stakeholders were involved in identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) for peri-urban areas that will be subsequently integrated into „Guidelines for peri-urban areas management/improvement and urban-rural partnerships implementation“. The involvement of stakeholders was fundamental in the process of identification, analysis and sharing best practices.

Progress of the pilot

The first milestone was conclusion of a contract between Regione Lombardia and its internal expert consultancy Èupolis Lombardia in February 2013. This was followed by an agreement on the pilot’s contents, outputs and timetable. With regards to the content of the pilot, a further milestone was determination of the pilot’s boundaries.

An ongoing activity was the characterisation of the pilot area (EXPO 2015 area and wider pilot area) by means of the elaboration of about 20 topical maps using GIS software. These map topics such as land cover, land use, water system, etc. This step enabled the pilot management team to identify homogeneous peri-urban features characterising the peri-urban area of Milan, formulation of the definition of peri-urban area and identification of the main factors of vulnerability and endogenous potentials.

Further, the Èupolis research team worked on an evaluation and comparison of planning documents in Lombardia. The goal was to identify the positive/negative impacts of each instrument/project/proposal/good practices on peri-urban areas and the actions/instruments proposed (in particular actions supporting urban-rural partnerships). Meanwhile, Regione Lombardia worked on the content and structure of the guidelines for peri-urban areas management/improvement and the urban-rural partnerships implementation, a process integrated within the current revision of the Regional Territorial Plan and Regional Law on Soil Consumption Reduction.

One important output of the pilot was the study visit in Milan (October 2013), which allowed the organisers to promote the URMA project and the Lombardy pilot during a regional conference and therefore initiate debate on urban-rural cooperation in Lombardy. An excursion to the Parco delle Risaie provided a concrete example of a successful preservation of agricultural areas on the fringes of the Milan metropolis that resulted from active urban-rural cooperation between various local stakeholders (e.g. farmers, citizens’ initiatives, public administration).

In order to discuss and disseminate the outputs of the pilot (results of the GIS analysis, definition and functions of peri-urban-areas) and the overall URMA findings, a number of meetings were held involving stakeholders representing institutional, social and economic interests. For example, a presentation of the proposed methods for characterisation of peri-urban areas was given at the „National Meeting on Soil Consumption

Reduction“ in Milan in June 2014 („Instruments and policies toward the reduction of soil consumption“, Marco Cassin). Two public initiatives were organised in September 2014 with a focus on the definition, values, and governance of peri-urban-areas as well as implementation strategies.

Eventually, after completion of the GIS analysis the „Guidelines for peri-urban areas management/improvement and urban-rural partnerships implementation“ will be elaborated, based on ecological urban-rural agreements.

Challenges

The main challenge perceived by persons in charge of the pilot was to activate a dialogue among stakeholders who have different competences, objectives and resources, and who represent different territorial scales (from the regional to the local management of peri-urban territories). Furthermore, understanding the thematic complexity in the context of the EXPO 2015, such as the various projects, proposals, multifaceted experiences and identification of strengths/opportunities, presents both opportunities as well as difficulties. In particular, it is difficult to understand the local transformation dynamics/trends in terms of local urbanisation pressures on peri-urban areas, for example in the fields of residential settlement and business activities. The management and governance of peri-urban areas calls for an integrated approach, by means of cross-cutting policies and initiatives. However, this is a challenge to develop and implement in practice. All in all, it is problematic to find the most appropriate compromise between local needs, regional political objectives and INTERREG IV CURMA project objectives. Moreover, the coordination between planning instruments within the governance framework is also complex.

Lessons learnt

The pilot shows that large international, national or regional events such as for example EXPO 2015, but also other regional events like garden exhibitions, building exhibitions, can serve as a driving

Rice harvesting at Parco delle Risaie in Lombardy
(Jacuniak-Suda 2013)



⁸ Ownership of the Expo 2015 S.p.A. is structured as follows: Government of the Italian Republic (Ministry of the Economy and Finance, 40%), Region of Lombardy (40%), Municipality of Milan (20%), Province of Milan (20%), Milan Chamber of Commerce for Industry, Agriculture and Handicraft (10%), available at: <http://en.expo2015.org/transparency/about-us> (accessed on 17 Sept 2014)



Presentation of pilot results at the URMA steering committee meeting in Milan. (Jacuniak-Suda 2013)

force and incentive to establish urban-rural partnerships. They provide platforms for urban and rural actors to exchange know how and develop joint initiatives. Besides, events often exhibit regional or local endogenous potentials such as innovative approaches, solutions or products. At the same time, at least in case of EXPO, it is important to pay attention to small local bottom-up projects as they can act as model projects for urban-rural cooperation for the whole region (e.g. Parco delle Risaie, Associazione Buon Mercato di Corsico). Further, GIS-based analysis proved to be a useful tool to map values of the areas as well as vulnerable and degraded areas in order to develop measures for their protection and valorization. In addition, it enabled the identification of possible adequate/compatible functions provided by peri-urban areas (e.g. integrating the agricultural production) and prevention of further urban sprawl. A similar analysis could be conducted in the Florence Metropolitan Area, the West Pomerania and the Krakow Metropolitan Area which all struggle with urban sprawl. In the course of the pilot implementation, it had become increasingly

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The definition of urban-rural partnerships as set out in the context of the URMA Project refers to project-oriented cooperation initiatives between various actors in metropolitan areas and their rural hinterlands with the aim of establishing stable and flexible cooperation structures. A precondition for the emergence of urban-rural cooperation is the mutually perceived need for more effective cooperation among the involved stakeholders, based on an acknowledgement of mutual benefits. This need arose in the pilots in response to various threatening circumstances: pressures for large-scale supra-regional cooperation, problems of unsustainable and regionally decoupled agricultural production, the threat of rampant suburbanization and the loss of value of peri-urban areas.

clear that integrated cross-sectoral approach is much needed for the further implementation of proposed measures due to the multi-functional character of peri-urban areas. Pilot activities and especially good practices showed that a proactive and critical involvement of various stakeholders at the local level following the bottom-up approach is crucial for a communal grounding. This thus serves as an anchor ensuring the activities are implemented and well maintained in long-term. Innovative aspects of the pilot include a multi-scalar and holistic methodology including GIS analysis for the investigation of numerous functions of peri-urban areas. The proposed operating instrument of „ecological urban-rural agreements“ presents an innovative tool to set up urban-rural partnerships. A novelty also presents an identification and elaboration of different typology of spatial categories for Lombardia (regeneration areas, transformation areas) based on the regional data analysis. For the first time the particular functions and values of peri-urban areas in Lombardy were scientifically examined.

In particular, the **Hamburg pilot** initiated by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg is a large-scale cross-border urban-rural initiative, anticipating fields of cooperation in renewable energy, tourism, agriculture/food industries and logistics. In addition to the Fehmarn Belt corridor, a closer urban-rural cooperation along the Jutland route corridor (A7/E45) will support the development dynamics between northern Germany and western Denmark. The primary focus of the pilot is to identify the role of rural areas and small to medium sized towns along the Jutland route corridor. The secondary focus deals with the question of what cooperation potentials and impulses – also for rural areas – arise out of growth poles such as Hamburg, Kiel, Flensburg, Aarhus and Aalborg. An evolving urban-rural cooperation in the Jutland route corridor can serve as a prototype

for a transnational functional area. The output of the pilot consists of a statistical profile for the Jutland route corridor and a trilingual fact book, which is for promotional purposes. Policy recommendations will be formulated and included in an implementation plan that also contains proposals for concrete projects to be implemented. The output will be useful for the future development of smart specialisation strategies; for the Jutland route corridor as a whole as well as for its sub-regions. One obvious innovative aspect is that the actors representing the public sector and regional politics showed a true understanding of the needs for cooperation across administrative borders. They regard the Jutland route corridor as a large functional cross-border space, where both development potentials and development gaps need to be addressed for mutual benefit. Even so, the temporary nature of the partnership that exists solely at the regional and public sector levels gives rise to concerns about its future implementation. The additional involvement of stakeholders (mayors, entrepreneurs) at local levels is crucial, for this is where the various cluster initiatives develop.

The **Twente pilot** represents urban-rural cooperation in a metropolitan, peri-urban area, focusing on the re-establishment of local and regional food chains. In particular, the topics of innovation and knowledge transfer are examined. It is hoped to strengthen the regional economy and preserve the characteristic landscape patterns from large-scale agriculture. The pilot can contribute to the establishment of urban-rural partnerships by revival of direct relationships between producers and consumers, and so between farmers, entrepreneurs and urban residents, as well as improve awareness of food production. It is important to recognise the role of the LEADER programme and other programmes that have provided contacts and know-how for the rediscovery of the value and potential of rural areas, which can now be used for urban-rural partnerships. The outputs of the pilot include a regional food strategy, regional food market/distribution centre in Borne and an urban-

care farm in Enschede. An innovative aspect of the pilot is the involvement of students from regional universities in the development of the individual pilot activities. The pilot contributes to more sustainable regional development: economically, by producing high quality regional products, creating and retaining added value in the region, socially, by job creation (inclusion of all parts of society, preventing the outward migration of young people, involving people with handicaps); culturally, by preserving the cultural landscape, recreation areas and regional identity; ecologically, by promoting shorter transport routes. With its cooperation between the public sector (municipalities of Borne and Enschede), the private sector (entrepreneurs), the third sector (Green Knowledge Portal Twente) and the academic sector (universities, schools), the pilot is a model for using the quadruple helix approach for the creation of urban-rural partnerships. In particular, the positive outlook with regard to the long-term economic grounding of the pilot is due to the firm involvement of entrepreneurs and cooperation with universities, in terms of innovation and knowledge transfer.

The **Lombardy pilot** represents urban-rural cooperation within an inner-metropolitan, peri-urban area of Milan as well as in connection with the wider functional region and its planning framework. The increasing threat of urban sprawl was an incentive to develop methods to permit the examination of characteristics and functions of peri-urban areas. The EXPO 2015 area and its surroundings provided an excellent case study for analysis of the management and transformation of peri-urban areas, but options for the preservation and future management of rural elements in direct proximity to urban areas present a challenge and should be further examined. Using innovative peri-urban management approaches, the links between urban and rural aspects strengthened and urban-rural partnerships could develop. The Parco delle Risaie is an example of a multi-functional area used for agricultural, leisure and ecological (rainwater retention and climate regulation) purposes that emerged as a completely bottom-

Brainstorming session on the three pilots during project meeting in Pleven (Korb 2014)



up initiative. One innovative aspect was the multi-scale holistic methodology used in the pilot to examine the nature of peri-urban areas of Milan. Specifically, the GIS analysis („status quo“) helped to recognize the values, strengths and weaknesses of peri-urban areas. The main output of the pilot is the document „Guidelines for peri-urban areas management/improvement and urban-rural partnerships implementation“ that will be integrated into Regional Law on Soil Consumption Reduction and the Regional Territorial Plan. In the long term, these guidelines will support the development of local bottom-up initiatives and preservation of the multi-functional aspects of these areas using „ecological urban-rural agreements“ that were proposed as a result of the pilot.

The following recommendations can be derived from analysis of the three pilots:

- It is important to use the experience from previous and current EU and national programmes (INTERREG, LEADER, MORO⁹) as a source of contacts and regional know-how when establishing urban-rural partnerships.
- International, national and regional events (EXPOs, building exhibitions, garden exhibitions) should be used as an incentive and opportunity to instigate urban-rural partnerships.
- It is crucial to encourage local political leaders (mayors, councillors), NGOs and entrepreneurs to become actively involved in urban-rural partnerships. Entrepreneurs in particular should take charge of projects once underway and act as their driving force.
- Involving young people and applying the quadruple helix approach in the development and implementation of urban-rural partnerships represents a way of achieving innovation in terms of methods, products and topics in the regional context.

- Projects that foster urban-rural partnerships may already exist, but they are possibly unfamiliar to regional policy makers and administrations. Therefore, there is a need for better information exchange between regional and local planning levels, to ensure the right support and transfer of good practices to other areas.
- A flexible cross-sector funding should be introduced, due to the thematic diversity and complex interlinks that characterise urban-rural partnerships. There is a need to raise awareness of the benefits of the ITI (integrated territorial investments) and the CLLD (community-led local development) instruments among regional and local policy makers.
- As the pilots show, the functional interrelations between urban and rural areas cross administrative and often national boundaries. For this reason, the respective functional areas should be reflected in national / regional spatial plans so that spatial planners can take account of the related development gaps and potentials from a joint development perspective and any disparities can be addressed.
- The pilots have proved effective in activating dialogue and stimulating a spirit of co-responsibility and regional solidarity among the involved actors (citizen groups, NGOs, local and regional administrations, students). When the URMA Project ends, it is recommended that local and regional governments should continue to support the pilots.

URMA - Urban-rural partnerships in metropolitan areas

www.urma-project.eu

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