

# LAB of Inclusive Urbanism as a Format to Educate Urban Designers

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# Abstract

In this paper we discuss the didactic method known as the LAB, a short intensive programme in urban design developed in the years 2009-2019 by various Faculties of Architecture including the Technical University of Dresden, the Cracow University of Technology and the Czech Technical University in Prague.

The main aim of this contribution is to introduce the LAB format in urban design education, stressing its innovative and inclusive aspects. The LAB includes the formulation of a spatial strategy based on the existing urban identity as well as socioeconomic and demographic conditions of a location; it brings a unique set of participants, collaborators and stakeholders to a site, which is indispensable for an inclusive approach. The LAB provides a valuable format in addition to standard studio projects in urban design education. The preparatory phase involves an analysis of the case study, conducted remotely using geo-data portals and with information provided by the local administration. To foster inclusiveness in this analytical phase, it is necessary to take account of pre-studies as well as particular on-site experience complemented by the knowledge and expertise of local government, NGOs and local residents. In the LAB, approx. 35 to 60 students consider complex historical, political, natural and cultural conditions, placing these in the context of the current spatial and social situation of the city. The added value is also the possibility of exchanging ideas, working methods and individual mapping skills by participants from various universities, countries and curricula (such as architecture, urban design, spatial planning and landscape architecture). Furthermore, the LAB serves as a useful platform for open discussion between local stakeholders and representatives of the administration. It supports objective debate, free of potentially conflicting political and financial considerations.

## KEYWORDS

Inclusive Urbanism LAB, didactic format, strategic approach development, local stakeholders' platform, urban education exchange, mapping presentation methods

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to present the LAB as a new didactic method, examining its historical predecessors, the circumstances of its origins and its subsequent development.

In the search for new formats in urban design education, the idea of bringing together international teams in short, intensive LAB workshops on complex urban issues was born in 2009. The focus of the investigation initially dealt with the repercussions of World War II on the spatial and social structure of cities today. This issue became the general topic of the intensive programme 'Facing the Impact of the Second World War: Urban Design in Contemporary European Cities – FI-WW2' coordinated in the years 2009–2012 by CUT Krakow with the participation of TU Delft, HAWK Hildesheim and HTW Dresden.<sup>1</sup> The issues were investigated for various urban settlements that had undergone relevant structural transformations during and after the war, namely Owięcim, Rotterdam and Dresden (LABs held in 2009, 2011 and 2012, respectively) (Racoń-Leja 2019).<sup>2</sup> Due to the complexity of these issues and the difficulty of applying them to the study cases, the team of tutors started to formulate a new working methodology. Questions which kept recurring were: How can we keep the programme of the LAB workshop coherent when it moves on to other emerging topics? Are we able to transfer the methods developed in the context of the urban history of WWII to other case studies?

These questions became crucial as the programme was further expanded to encompass cities with difficult demographic conditions, such as those arising from Europe's political convulsions after the fall of the Iron Curtain. These activities also received stronger formal support under the aegis of the Competence Center Urban Renewal of the Federal State of Saxony-Anhalt based in Magdeburg.<sup>3</sup> Coordinated by the HTW Dresden, this programme concentrated on two sites: Schierke (a part of the city of Wernigerode/Harz) in 2013 and Halle-Neustadt in 2014. The realization required a much stronger participation of stakeholders (Mensing-de Jong 2010). The spectrum of educational partners was also broadened to include – alongside the HTW Dresden – the TU Delft and the CUT Krakow, the University of Chalmers in Gothenburg and Gent University. Two LABs lasting six days each were carried out in the years 2013–2014.<sup>4</sup>

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1 University teams included: from CUT Kraków (which prepared the EU application and lead the programme), Krzysztof Bieda and Kinga Racoń-Leja (Programme Coordinator) and tutors Anna Palej, Bartłomiej Homiński i Michał Palej; from TU Delft, Marc Schoonderbeek, Micha de Haas, Eelco Dekker and Finnbar McComb; from HTW Dresden, Cornelius Scherzer and Angela Mensing-de Jong; from HAWK Hildesheim, Michael V. Sprysch, Thomas Kauertz and Michael Wagner. FI-WW2 was financed as an Erasmus Intensive Programme; webpage: [www.urbanwarimpacts.eu](http://www.urbanwarimpacts.eu) (access: 10.01.2019)

2 [www.urbanwarimpacts.eu](http://www.urbanwarimpacts.eu) – official program website (accessed: 10.07.2019).

3 <https://www.kompetenzzentrum-stadtumbau.de/> (accessed: 10.07.2019).

4 Universities were represented by: from HTW Dresden, Angela Mensing-de Jong and Cornelius Scherzer

Their success led to the continuation of the format in 2018 in Gothenburg (Racoń-Leja 2018) and 2019 where the focus on cross-border cooperation was on border towns of Selb (Germany) and Aš (Czech Republic). The last LAB was coordinated by the TU Dresden with the participation of TU Delft, University of Chalmers Gothenburg, CUT Krakow, CTU Prague and ENSA Strasbourg.<sup>5</sup> New challenges helped to develop the method further, revealing huge possibilities for the implementation of results.

Many elements of the developed format require ongoing evaluation and clarification, including the source of funding, the duration of the programme or the possibilities of subsequent applications by the studied cities and their institutions. European funding programmes had a significant impact on the formation of the LAB and its development. The opportunity of raising funds through Erasmus Intensive Programmes, distributed by national agencies (as in the case of FI-WW2), further supported the initiative. Today, financial support for workshops has been limited within the new formula of Erasmus Plus, rendering more difficult the realization of short programmes.

Regardless of the genesis of a theme and the site for an urban LAB, we tend to involve different stakeholders from the outset. Jointly implemented activities are often funded by local authorities and regional programmes, with external institutions involved in revitalization processes. In the case of the two LABs in Saxony-Anhalt, the Competence Centre for Urban Renewal of the Federal State served as a client for the cooperating universities. For the 2013 LAB, the Centre signed a MoU with the HTW Dresden to develop a short intensive programme on urban issues with international partners for the former mountain resort of Schierke. Halle-Neustadt followed in 2014. The costs for the accommodation of students and tutors as well as the workspace were in both cases financed by the Competence Centre. This issue was of particular importance due to the limited financial resources that the universities have for extra activities and also the shortage of Erasmus funds for these formats. While the financial involvement of a city and a state placed more pressure on the dissemination of final results, this also strengthened the possibilities of their implementation (Webel 2014).

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(Coordinators); from TU Delft, Micha de Haas; from CUT Krakow, Krzysztof Bieda, Kinga Racoń-Leja and Przemysław Kowalski; from Ghent University, Pieter Uyttenhove and David Peleman; from the University of Chalmers, Michael Ekegren.

5 The academics involved were: from TU Dresden, Angela Mensing-de Jong (Coordinator); from TU Delft, Micha de Haas; from CTU Prague, Jiri Klokocka, Jana Zdráhalová and Henry Hanson, from CUT Krakow, Kinga Racoń-Leja; from the University of Chalmers, Michael Ekegren; and from ENSA Strasbourg, Denis Bocquet.

## 2. The LAB Format

In recent years, there has been much international debate on contemporary approaches to urban design education<sup>6</sup>, the current state of the discipline (The History of Urban Design at Schools of Architecture 2017) and practical experiences in urban design from countries with different social, cultural and economic conditions (Christiaanse 2018). One outcome of the fruitful discussions has been to rethink the educational aspect of urban design. Universities face the challenge of ensuring that students do not view the future as a mere projection of the present but, instead, to consider alternative ways of urban living, leisure or modes of work. To this end, academics are searching for an innovative way to teach urban design.

The pioneering 'inclusive' approach was introduced by the ILA&UD programme, which ran from 1974 to 2004.<sup>7</sup> Established by Giancarlo De Carlo as a reaction to the Modernist movement (De Carlo 1992), it brought students from around the world to work on cities. The collaboration took the form of a Laboratory, in which great attention was paid to a contextual approach as well as fieldwork and mutual discussion. Outcomes in the form of various architectural and urban solutions were presented to the public, thereby contributing significantly to the inclusiveness of the process (De Carlo 1992). The discipline of urban design has gone on to incorporate the participatory approach (Moore-Cherrya, Mccarthy 2016), contextual and heritage-based thinking (Embaby 2019) as well as the combined use of qualitative-quantitative methods (Berta, Bottero, Ferretti 2016). The future of urban design workshops was discussed at the seminar 'The Role of International Workshops in the Process of Architectural Education' (Franta ed. 2016) hosted by CUT Krakow in 2013. One innovative approach has been the EcoRehab workshop network (2010–2014), which introduced new concepts for revitalizing areas of mass housing (Gyurkovich ed. 2012).<sup>8</sup>

Within the field of urban design, education workshops are a particularly useful tool. They offer participants from diverse backgrounds the conditions of an on-site laboratory, which cannot be offered in a standard curriculum. The particularities of the applied methodology can vary from programme to programme, depending on the collaboration of universities and local partners, their interests and challenges. The involvement of professionals, urban designers and city planners will influence the educational outcomes. Inclusiveness is a critical aspect of the urban design workshop, as this can significantly expand the spectrum of possible dissemination. The cities which we

6 Contemporary urban design education. AA School of architecture (2016), source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USSV-DBdBZU&t=3237s> (accessed: 10.05.2019).

7 <https://radical-pedagogies.com/search-cases/i08-international-laboratory-architecture-urban-design-ilaud/>; <http://www.team10online.org/team10/carlo/index.html>; (both retrieved on 27.08.2019).

8 Involving UAUIM Bucharest, PoliMi Milan, CUT Krakow, FH Frankfurt am Main and UPC\_BarcelonaTECH.

have worked on since 2009 present complex historical, political and social settings. We quickly realized that regular revitalization and urban redevelopment projects would be insufficient in such cases. Therefore, the new LAB format was created to offer students an educational and intellectual environment that would foster intensive study of the complex problems and aid the search for the best responses.

LAB is a workshop format specifically designed for the modelling of alternative urban strategies and to enable directed comparative analysis. The specifics of the LAB idea as formulated by the university teams allow for the parallel development of various spatial-social concepts, each representing one potential urban model. The models developed by the teams are carefully devised to permit final comparisons of various trends and development possibilities of the studied city cases. Inspired by the ILA&UD, we also included methods of a participatory or multi-disciplinary approach to allow for an intense site analysis and strategy-based thinking as the foundation for further urban development. The process – on site and with the support of various stakeholders – required an inclusive approach (Mensing-de Jong 2010). By replacing conventional design thinking with multi-faceted strategies, the innovative LAB format extends the potential areas of application.

### 2.1 The main features of LAB

The direct implementation of the Erasmus Intensive Course within the FI-WW2<sup>9</sup> formula enabled us to initially conduct the LAB as a two-week programme. This included urban analysis and formulation of the urban strategy with some ‘zoom-in’ examples as well as two public presentations at the end of each week. The limited availability of teachers and difficulties in acquiring external funds prompted us to reduce and intensify the programme to a 6-day LAB format from 2013. The LAB often falls in different parts of the semester, compounded by the fact that universities do not start their academic year at the same time. Nonetheless, we try to link the workshop to a design studio and work with students for the remainder of the semester in order to develop strategies and ideas into more detailed proposals.

Due to the involvement of different universities and the complex problems that the LABs address, an intensive preparatory phase is required before the actual work with the students. It is crucial that the participating academics formulate the specific tasks for each LAB. The on-site visits are used to meet the local authorities, architects and community representatives. Such visits also help us to learn how the professionals and the municipality understand current urban problems and challenges, as well as what their visions are. These direct site inspections contribute significantly to a more accurate

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<sup>9</sup> Here and elsewhere in the text, FI-WW2 refers to the programme ‘Facing the Impact of the Second World War: Urban Design in Contemporary European Cities 2009-2012’.



which focused on cities with a ‘space of conflict’, including Nicosia, Belfast or Rotterdam (Schoonderbeek 2010). This influenced the LAB format by introducing unconventional tools such as mental maps to create ‘Atlas’ drawings of subjective observations [see Fig. 1], thereby mapping places of ‘collective memory’ (Frijhoff 1989, Meyer 1999). In-situ studies using experimental exploratory techniques were also a significant achievement and one pillar of the urban laboratory. To this end, we supported students in exploring various unconventional approaches using data drawn from the Internet as well as on-site observations to map the activities of local people in Rotterdam [Fig. 2].

In formulating the urban LAB, we abandoned the traditional approach of applying the results of the workshops to concrete urban design projects – understood as defined spatial solutions. Instead, the teams’ work focused on the development of urban strategies for selected areas or the entire town or city. Emphasis was placed on the application of an appropriate programme by means of ‘toolboxes’ to attribute functions and spaces to particular social groups. We also considered the scheduling of various time stages – as in the case of Halle-Neustadt or the Ringön-Gothenburg area (Racoñ-Leja 2018). The academics conducting the work concentrated on encouraging the teams to differentiate their strategies. The proper running of the various elements of the LAB format had a positive impact on the development of a broader spectrum of strategies, which was appreciated by the cities and local stakeholders. Their juxtaposition could be treated as a proper urban planning laboratory, providing six to seven different development strategies (models) for a given area or city.

## 2.2 The LAB process

The methodology of the ‘LAB of Inclusive Urbanism’ developed by the team members of the partner universities consists of a three-step formula covering the preparatory-analytical phase, an intensive on-site programme and a closing phase in which students and academics continue their work throughout the semester. Its most substantial element is the formulation of sophisticated strategies developed during an intensive on-site workshop.

The LAB formula has been carefully scheduled step by step. An introductory session on the first evening is a chance for the students to discuss their preparatory activities. On the next day, the local stakeholders and partners present and explain their points of view and expectations of the LAB. Planned as a public event, other groups and citizens are encouraged to attend and discuss the issues from their perspective. In the afternoon, students and local representatives visit the site. On the second day, the teams start working on their perception of the site, revising the introductory package, developing methods of analysis as well as initial concepts. The tutors encourage the teams in their approaches before an intermediate public presentation on



the afternoon of the third day. This presentation enables a comparison of the various concepts as well as a discussion of the approaches with local stakeholders. There is also the opportunity to refine the ideas of the teams to encompass a broader range of approaches or to focus more on particular issues. Another day of full work follows. On the fifth day, the teams present their strategies at a public venue and prepare a poster exhibition. The local authorities, planners, residents and tutors can discuss the outcomes by examining the posters. Such critical feedback leads to valuable later modifications of the presented concepts as part of the course or diploma projects of the students.

### 2.3 Inclusiveness: essential to the LAB context

One of the inclusive aspects of the LAB is the collaboration of students from diverse backgrounds and educational experience. By means of short programme formula, it is possible to link the activities of individuals from different universities and disciplines such as architecture, urban design, landscape architecture or urban planning. The core element of the LAB, namely the joint workshop, requires precise preparation and coordination. The 35 to 60 students participating in each LAB are divided into groups of five or six in order to bring together persons from different universities and disciplines. Their experience of these multidisciplinary working teams is a substantial asset for the students, preparing them for their professional career.

Another cornerstone of the LAB inclusive approach is the selection of the topic itself. The LAB themes always reflect the shared European history of the analyzed countries (Mumford 1961). In particular, the selection of the investigated urban areas takes into consideration the political, social and economic past, thereby enabling the comparison of diverse impacts that the historical factors had on individual countries, regions and even parts of a town or city.

Previous topics addressed by LABs have ranged from the repercussions of WWII on cities (FI-WW2), shrinking cities or the disparate development of settlements on the border region between the former East and West blocs. The goal of the programme has been to strengthen European identity through a coherent and multi-faceted approach to urban design. Activities have been based on thorough multilateral studies of the urban context supported by study of the history of urban design. The approach to the analysed cities has gone beyond the traditional spectrum of work. Instead, the analyses have been supported by research into social and environmental issues as well as knowledge of our shared European heritage to co-create the broad project context. An inclusive approach to the subject has involved connecting technology and science with the humanities. The specific areas of research within LAB have included: architecture, urban design, building construction, landscape architecture, history and the history of urban design, social sciences, heritage protection and economic issues (Bieda, Racoń-Leja 2008).

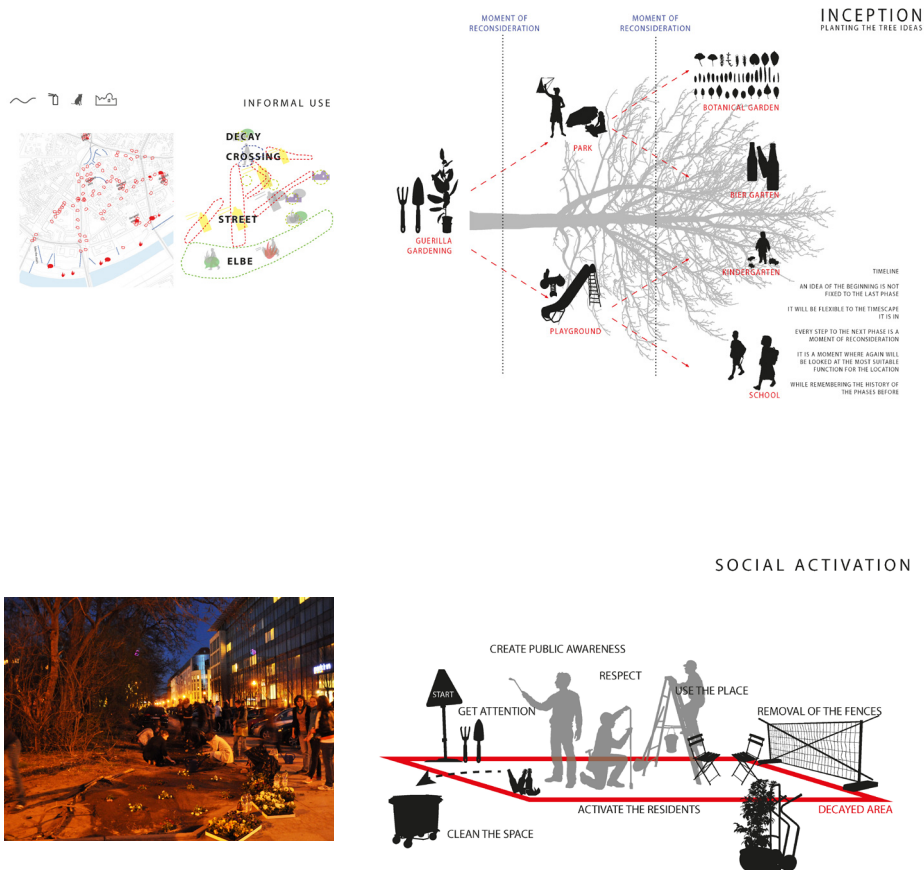
Last but not least, the inclusive nature of the LAB can be described as the creation of a platform to foster open exchange between the participants from the various universities and disciplines as well as to encourage dialogue with the local authorities as well as interested associations and groups.

### 3. LAB Case Studies for Inclusive Urbanism

We can regard each of the LABs carried out during the last ten years as an individual case study for an inclusive approach to urbanism. The first three LABs, which were held in Owiećim in 2009, Rotterdam in 2011 and Dresden in 2012, had a shared focus on urban structures affected by the impact of WWII. These were part of the intensive ERASMUS programme FI-WW2. In more detail, the following formats variously addressed rising urban challenges such as demographic change, urban shrinkage or discontinuity in development due to political change.

#### 3.1 Dresden 2012 – Informal temporary use as a tool for revaluation and redevelopment

In Dresden we termed the area of investigation the ‘Dresden Doughnut’, constituting as it did a ring around the historic centre. Dividing this ring into segments enabled the seven teams to conduct a more in-depth analysis as well as longer on-site investigations. Considered as a whole, the ‘doughnut’ gives Dresden the appearance of a ‘perforated city’. All of the groups focused on vacant or undefined open spaces located either between residential settlements constructed in the 1950s or individual lots that were simply left vacant after the bombing of 1945. Various concepts elaborated the idea of temporary usage as a strategy for possible future development. One group managed to involve residents and a nearby hotel in a ‘Guerrilla Gardening Project’ [see Fig. 3], which included the night-time planting by students of flowers in an abandoned site used as an illegal parking lot. They then observed whether people became aware of the change and respected the new ‘occupancy’ as a public garden. Local residents as well as the staff of a nearby hotel offered to water and take care of the plants. In fact, the brownfield was successfully appropriated, serving as a basis for a public reoccupation process proposed by the team. The impact of such small projects, especially ones which involved social participation, was noticeable. The local groups that participated in the community activities generally continued taking care of the revalued places. It is only in recent years, in the wake of Dresden’s booming property market, that many of the formerly vacant lots have become built-up.



**Figure 3.** Urban Strategy LAB in Dresden (D) 2012. Temporary use of vacant lots as a concept for redevelopment in Dresden-Neustadt: 'Guerilla Gardening Project' with social participation. (Source: FI-WW2, 2012, group 6: M. Grzywna, E. Guzik, M. Mikitta, P. Niemeijer, S. Schmidt, E. v. Winsen).

### 3.2 Schierke 2013 – From mountain village to spa to the perfect place to get older?

The urban setting was completely different in the case of Schierke. The Competence Centre for Urban Renewal of the Federal State of Saxony-Anhalt proposed that we work with students on the small village of Schierke (in the municipality of Wernigerode), a formerly famous spa in the Harz Mountains region. The challenge was to deal with a radically shrinking and ageing population while simultaneously boosting regional tourism rooted in the glorious history of the spa village.

# Schierke going slow

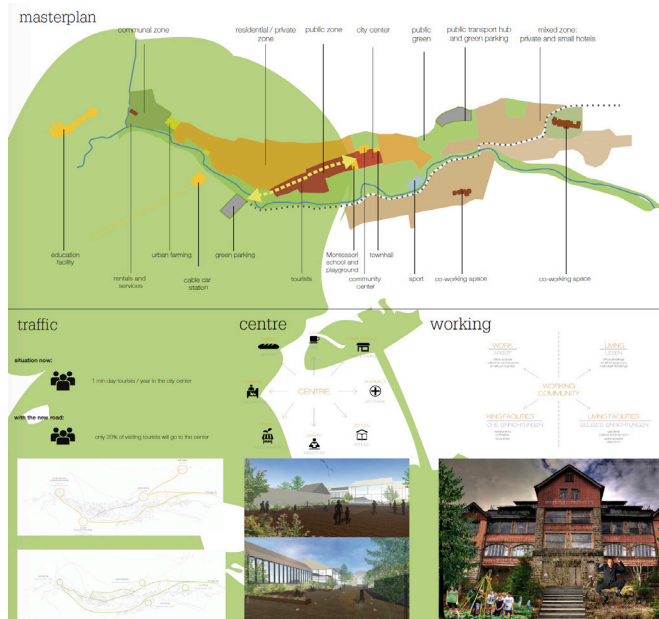
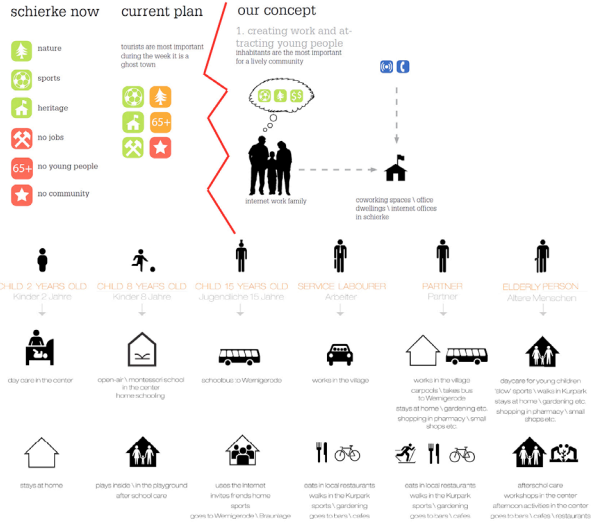


Figure 4. Urban Strategy LAB in Schierke (D) 2013. Concept for the village as an ideal place for slow living. (Source: Workshop 2013, group 2: M. Adam, A. Batkiewicz, K. Dorda, C. Guy, T. Guziak, S. Jaura, R. Mueller).

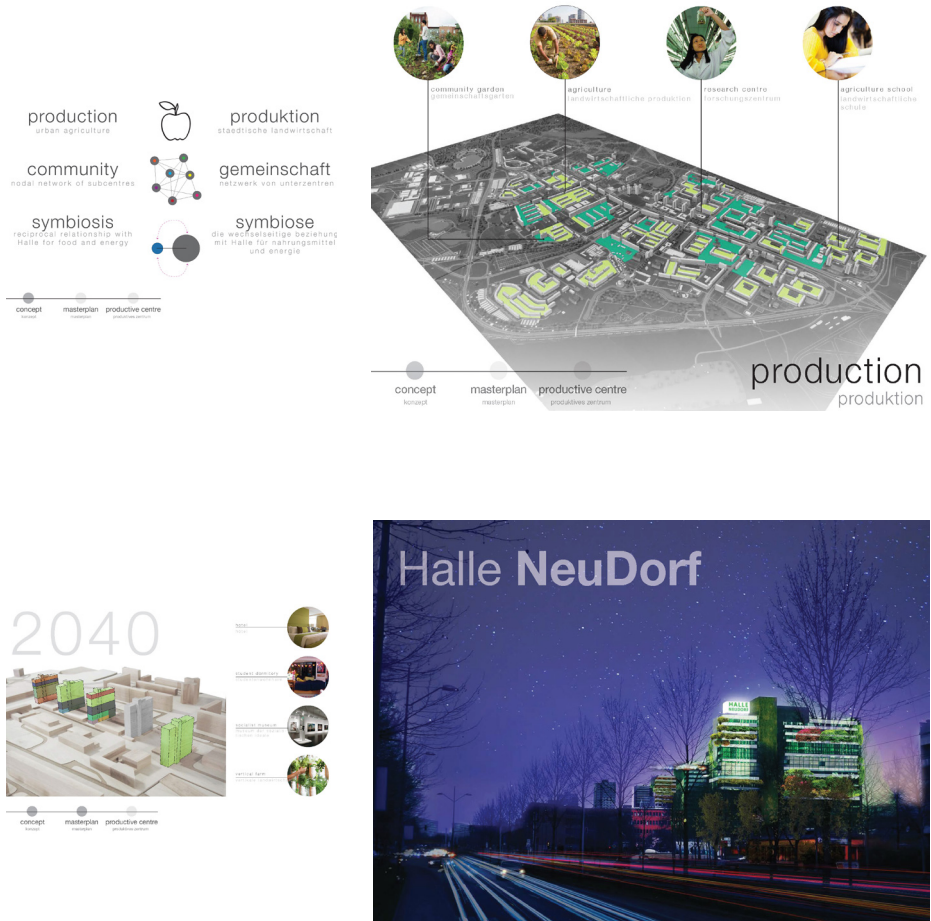
The concepts developed by the teams focused on nature and ‘slow’ tourism [see Fig. 4]. The strategy of creating an exclusive spa meant that private transport had to be kept outside the settlement. One of the groups presented Schierke as ‘A perfect place to grow old’. The natural environment, beautiful surroundings and reactivated infrastructure of the former hotels and spas would doubtless attract not only older people but also provide job opportunities and ensure a positive future. In Schierke, a fierce discussion was triggered by a local authority plan to build a vast car park at the entrance to the Brocken Mountain for hikers who wished to walk to the top as well as for skiers. The LAB participants pointed out the negative impact of this investment on the future development of the town. The parking area would serve as a physical barrier between Schierke’s centre and the nearby touristic areas, depriving the centre of the positive economic impulse of around a million tourists a year (Kowalski 2013). Yet the local authorities finally decided to construct the car park and, in the year after the workshop, demolished one of the most famous former grand hotels. Although the federal state was in favour of more sustainable development and was even willing to help with subsidies, the local authority chose a ‘fast and easy’ solution.

### 3.3 Halle-Neustadt 2014: From uniformity to diversity

Halle-Neustadt was founded in 1964 when the East German government began to plan this model socialist town, and people began to move from all parts of the GDR to work in the chemical industry. After the reunification of Germany in 1989, the local population plummeted from almost 100,000 to around 45,000 by 2014, the year in which the LAB took place. The 60 students from Cracow, Delft, Dresden, Gent and Gothenburg were confronted with vacant buildings in the centre, undeveloped open space between dwellings and a legacy of oversized social and technical infrastructure. Ten teams worked to make ‘HaNeu’ (as it is popularly known) more attractive. The students proposed new connections between the city and adjacent parks, the improvement of open space by reinterpreting it for temporary use as well as new types of living units. Another focus was to introduce forms of rural production into what had been solely a residential town.

Together with scientists from other disciplines, the LAB explored the potentials of urban agriculture, vertical farming and even the establishment of IT server farms in existing vacant buildings. Concepts for five towers in the city centre were further developed in Delft and Dresden before being finally presented and discussed at the 2014 Architectural Biennale in Venice [see Fig. 5]. Although the likely beneficial impact of the programme was widely disseminated at the local and regional level, the ideas were viewed with a certain level of suspicion. Nonetheless, the concepts revealed the potential of the buildings, stimulating public discussion about the value of GDR modernist

architecture and infrastructure. In 2017, 57% of the local residents in Halle voted against the demolition of one of the residential slabs, instead supporting its reuse as an office building for the city administration.

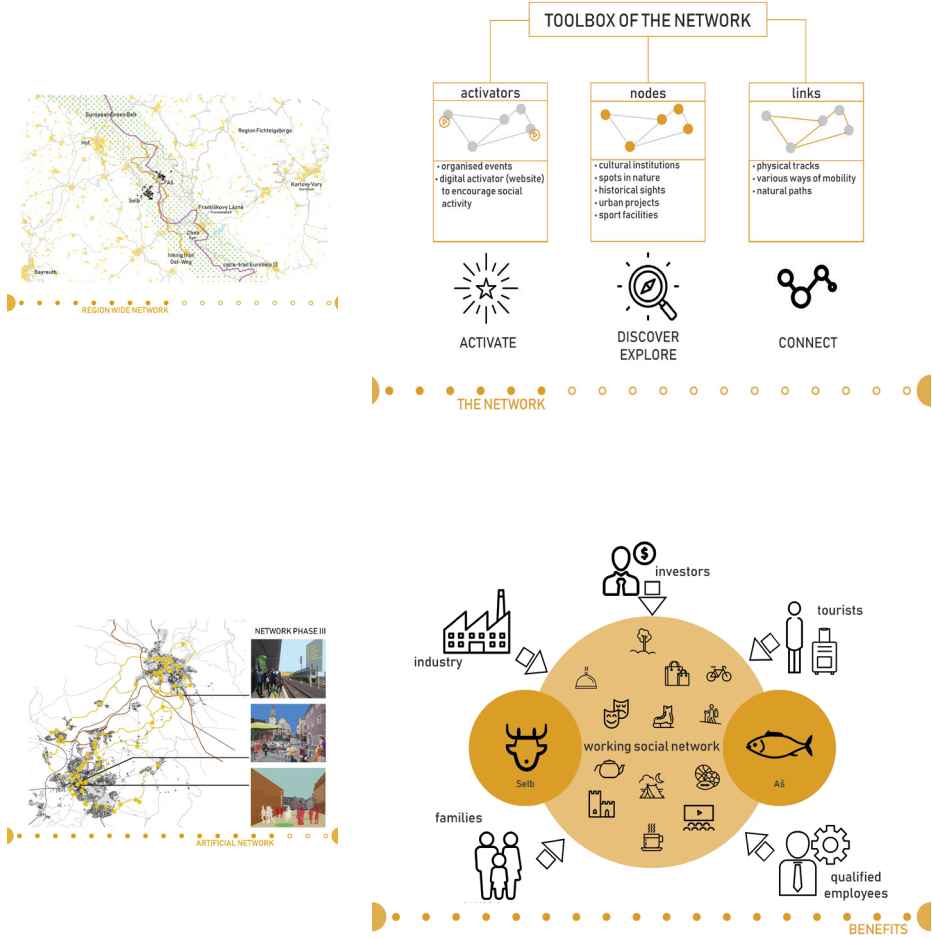


**Figure 5.** Urban Strategy LAB in Halle-Neustadt (D) 2014. Concept for a new productive community 'Halle NeuDorf' with urban agriculture on vacant lots and vertical farming in the empty high-rise buildings in the centre (Source: Workshop 2014, group 2: A. Anwar, A. Bogaert, J. Forner, K. Glodowska, M. Matraszek, W. Shang).

### 3.4 Selb – Aš: Unified by the border?

Previously lying on opposing sides of the Iron Curtain, the border towns of Aš in the Czech Republic and Selb in Germany represent two different urban histories and contrasting developmental pathways. While a significant proportion of the urban structure in Aš is today dilapidated, and large swathes of the urban fabric have been torn down and replaced with concrete housing estates, the city of Selb has seen a gradual improvement in its housing stock and the restoration of its historical centre. The different legal environments and working conditions in the two countries have fostered a growth in gambling businesses in the Czech border region as well as the migration of Czechs seeking better job opportunities in Germany, further intensifying the economic imbalance in the region. The European Union has explored ways to improve the economic and social links while fostering the search for mutually beneficial forms of development. In fact, the municipalities already cooperate well at a cultural and social level. While a strategic plan for improved cooperation in the future was previously worked out, no measurements regarding urban planning followed. Therefore, the local authorities took the opportunity to invite experts from the universities of Dresden, Cracow, Prague, Delft and Strasbourg to provide an international view and enable comparison with similar situations in other parts of Europe. The on-site visits of the students and teachers were supported by the two towns while the Rosenthal company provided workspace in their factory.

Through the LAB it was possible to approach the urban sites while disregarding the border, thereby overcoming the established limits. The leitmotif of the LAB became ‘Stronger together!’ The students pointed out some of the formerly inherent places on the border that had deteriorated and become forgotten. Their proposals suggested a new use for these spaces, a combination of private businesses such as a local café or hostels and a new tourist centre that the city of Aš wants to realize. The recreational use of the area could be encouraged by properly linking the two settlements by means of a tourist trail, taking advantage of the existing large bicycle track in the region; this would also encourage people to visit the newly ‘discovered’ sites [see Fig. 6]. The projects were presented to the local authorities and residents. The cities of Selb and Aš intend to host the ‘Bavarian–Czech Friendship Weeks’ in 2023, with the LAB supporting this cross-border cooperation. The preparatory phase has already served as a platform for the planning authorities and architects on both sides of the border to exchange their expertise and ideas.



**Figure 6.** Urban Strategy LAB in Aš (CZ) and Selb (D) 2019. Concept for a new social and spatial network between the two towns (Source: Workshop 2019, groups 4: P. Berger, V. Felbrich, M. Garnarczyk, D. Maassen, H. Song).

#### 4. Dissemination, limitations and future steps

The success of the LAB format depends on the involvement and commitment of municipalities, their willingness to disseminate results and to use the material prepared by the team. For example, the interest of the Competence Centre was to explore the possibilities of future inclusive development of sites and cities in the focus of the federal state. In particular, current challenges to urban renewal are demographic change, shrinkage in large prefab-housing estates and poorly utilized public space. The developed ideas should also serve as models for other cities in the region. All results from the on-site



LABs and later projects were published on the Competence Centre website<sup>10</sup>, accompanied by documentation in the form of brochures. The design projects demonstrated the potential of sites, frequently attracting the interest of likely investors and developers in cities that were undergoing structural changes and were suffering from under-investment.

Additionally, the LAB format created a platform for exchange between the different stakeholders in the towns and cities. In Germany, there is an interdependence as well as competition between the federal states and cities regarding planning policies. Often the state is the owner of urban property designated for development and thus a key player in the real-estate market. Furthermore, the ministries of each federal state decide on the direction in which future subsidies will flow. The public discussion of the LAB results provides a framework that allows state and municipal representatives to concentrate on the issues at hand and disregard their formal positions. Concepts developed in this framework facilitate open discussion between, not only the federal state and cities, but also between citizens and public authorities, thereby fostering a more inclusive approach.

A public Internet platform was created to gather all materials developed by the programme regarding the repercussions of WWII. However, as daily maintenance was required to secure the platform, the decision was taken to abandon this project. Nonetheless, this is an efficient way to disseminate the LAB results and should be implemented in the future.

The contributions of academics and professionals involved in the realized programme were significant, even outstanding, representing the architecture, urban design and urban history of Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. The programme also made it possible to contact experts from local government and administration – including those responsible for spatial development and other local institutions of the studied town and cities. The involvement of various academic partners was a valuable element of educational exchange. It has also led to joint scientific activities, for example applications for research programmes and cooperation between graduate schools.

The results of the LABs constitute valuable didactic material, which has been developed by the tutors in various urban and architectural scenarios and courses, including diploma theses. Several projects have been promoted jointly by the participating universities. The involvement of students from CUT Krakow in the further development of LAB concepts has been supported by the prestigious Georgius Agricola scholarship offered at the TU Dresden.

The LABs prove how important it is to collaborate closely with students on difficult topics. It forces future professionals to become more sensitive and responsive in their work by participating in international teams and jointly de-

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<sup>10</sup><https://www.kompetenzzentrum-stadtumbau.de/entwuerfe-2/halle-neustadt/>; (access: 08.05.2019).

veloping projects that can be directly discussed with local experts and residents. It is an extraordinary experience that teaches responsibility at every level. The LABs appear to be a viable and successful way of teaching, learning and cooperating. New topics are currently being prepared, building on the well-received cross-border cooperation in Aš and Selb. Such cross-border issues are highly relevant in the European context, encompassing a wide range of cities with complex historical development pathways, reflected in their spatial conditions and urban space. We expect that will serve to boost the level of inclusiveness of the LAB format.

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