

Output 1.2.3

COBRAMAN independent appraisal

Mid term evaluation of COBRAMN project, summary report

Background

As planned already during application phase at midterm an independent appraisal of the INTERREG project COBRAMAN took place. Following the description taken from the AF the midterm-evaluation should focus on the process itself and the results achieved so far combined with the prognoses for the future. Both was evaluated against the targets defined in the work plan. This independent appraisal was carried out by representatives of associated institutions. As those representatives were already closely following the project development a general introduction to the project's main goals and basic structure was dispensable. The experts were provided with the official application form, the detailed work plan as well as with a login account to the internal part of COBRAMAN homepage with further very detailed information and all documents produced so far in the project. Main evaluation was performed during the 2nd annual conference.

Methodology

The external experts participated in this event and were asked to evaluate the project and its progress against the following guiding questions:

1. Evaluation of the progress made in the transnational working groups in comparison to the planned work program.
 - Which outputs were due until now, which are fulfilled / delayed at the current state.
 - For future outputs is there any deviation in output development expected?
2. Evaluation of the quality of the outputs already fulfilled, especially in terms of usefulness in daily practice.
 - Did the outputs deliver new information/know-how or are they just a collection of well known facts and procedures?
 - Are the outputs innovative and are they problem oriented?
 - From your personal point of view, do you think that the output can be useful in you daily practice?
3. Evaluation of the project structure/organisation/management working
 - Do the working groups per WP work transnationally or are they mainly focused on the situation of the WP leader?

- Does the project management work effectively? Are the partners guided through the implementation or does the management do not care about single activities?
4. Are there any weaknesses and if yes how can they be improved?

Results

The detailed evaluation reports of all three external experts are attached to this document. In general the guiding questions were answered as follows:

1. Evaluation of the progress made in the transnational working groups in comparison to the planned work program

It was recognized by the experts that most of the outputs which were already due are available or at least under preparation. At this moment in the project it is not expected that a delay in delivery of one output endangers seriously the time plan of the whole project. However, in WP5 the single pilot applications are in some cases not so far developed as planned. This is mainly due to local circumstances and procedures which of course have to be observed also within the project.

One expert highlighted that in WP4 the workshops on local partner level, to integrate the new position of a brownfield manager are partly delayed. These workshops are crucial for sustainably integrating a brownfield manager in the local municipal organisation structure. In case this exercise fails the best education for a brownfield manager is useless.

2. Evaluation of the quality of the outputs already fulfilled, especially in terms of usefulness in daily practice.

All external experts are convinced of the usefulness of results in practice. This is also partly a merit of the consortium which consists of partners from research as well as from practice. The position of brownfield manager in daily business is generally accepted and the experts see also a big transnational benefit in installing such positions.

However, the implementation of a study course is seen as critical. As staff acting as brownfield manager need to have a broad variety of know how (from communication, economic, to technical) which cannot sufficiently be considered in one study course. So either all aspects are mentioned in the course but only just roughly or only some aspects are taken out and others educated more in detail. The decision in which direction the development is going has not been taken yet.

The existing trainings are evaluated in general positive but getting feedback from the partners they wish to better respect their expectations towards the selected lecturer. Thus host, LP and WP responsible should act promptly and adapt to the specific needs of trainees and take their comments into consideration.

Regarding the output "communication strategy" the external experts identified unclear definition of target groups and weak dissemination activities.

3. Evaluation of the project structure/organisation/management working

One external identified a lack of transnational exchange and the necessarily implies that improvements have to be made to the management structure, whereby much clearer goals have to be defined. It is stated in the report that each partner on local level is practicing “business as usual”. This situation is already recognized by the project management group but not seen as a negative effect. As the project is running within existing municipal structures and making use of real pilot cases, in some cases established local procedures are superimposing activities stimulation transnational exchange of experience. Substantial change and improvement at partner level is expected at the earliest by the end of the project – and needing a political decision probably only in a few years for some partners. Therefore from this issue no specific action results although this issue strongly highlights the need for well targeted communication and dissemination activities also within the partner’s organizations.

It is within the responsibility of the managing team to take care about the meeting agenda and that the program meets the expectations of participants. In case of a public workshop the program should reserve time to also give participants the opportunity to contribute or ask questions. This was not the case in the 2nd annual meeting.

4. Are there any weaknesses and if yes how can they be improved?

In addition to the critical points already mentioned in answer 1 to 3 there were no key weaknesses mentioned which endanger the projects further development and successful finalization of outputs. Proposals for improvements are described together with follow up activities in the next chapter.

Conclusions / follow up activities

Output 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 should be more focused. As these activities should take place on partner level it is difficult for project management to steer partners towards successful organization of workshops. At least several partners should succeed in running these workshops and drawing conclusions out of these discussions. If a other partners fails this might also be a result. It would consequently lead to more awareness rising on political level that such a interdisciplinary position in the municipal structure is beneficial for all actors in the field of brownfield redevelopment. Output 4.4.3 now scheduled for the Stuttgart meeting in November and leading to the 4.4.4 “Recommendations for organizational implementation” will be the focal point for this matter. The recommendations should carefully reflect the partner’s experiences and should be a key issue to be considered in further targeted communication activities.

As all three external experts mentioned the local pilot applications are partly delayed. It cannot be seen as a consequence of bad organization or lack in preparation. In fact these delays are “normal business” in brownfield redeveloping projects and it could be also a helpful output of the pilot actions to set up something like a “worse practice example”. Such example can be of enormous benefit for other because they clearly show the mistakes and their consequences, but they can also outline proper solutions to overcome these obstacles.

To train students in a special course to become a brownfield manager would be like seeking for Swiss army knives. It is nearly impossible to train all aspects which are needed later on. Therefore this study course is seen very critical. On the other hand, the master course of PP5 is already scheduled and in the Czech national certification process. So the experience to be gathered with the courses should be closely monitored. The e-learning activities should be designed as postgraduate courses and well targeted to a) practitioners already working since several years in the related fields b) master graduates extending their studies.

To improve the WP4 trainings and to more adapt them to the needs of trainees in future the lecturer will be even more carefully selected as done in previous seminars. The trainees will be asked if they also have recommendations whom to invite to speak about a specific topic and the questionnaire after the trainings will be analyzed in this respect. As the learning matter of the Ferrara seminar was as demanding as important, a further consolidation of the economic know-how via an additional training (e.g. online as done previously) might be considered.

To enhance the external communication and dissemination the communication strategy must be implemented and the definition of target groups must be more clear. A better coordination of the dissemination activities should be established among the partners through updating the communication strategy and setting more and well targeted dissemination actions in place. But also internal communication part of the communication strategy will be improved. In future the drafting of agenda will be done in cooperation of LP, managing group and host whereas the coordinator should take care that the program meets the expectations of the expected participants and the related goals of the meeting, defined already in AF.

Done: Esslingen, 23.07.2010

Dr. Thomas Ertel

Annexes:

1. Mrs. Adriana Martini evaluation paper.
2. Mr. Dragan Marinkovic evaluation paper.
3. Mr. Ivan Stanic evaluation paper.

Annex 1:

Mid term evaluation

Content:

1. The project at a glance: general impression
2. Work in progress
3. Quality of existing and expected results
4. Process and methodology
5. Recommendations to the project partnership

1. The project at a glance: general impression

Project COBRAMAN “Manager Coordinating Brownfield Redevelopment Activities” is half way through the implementation process. Following the work plan an independent midterm-evaluation has taken place during the annual meeting 2010 in Ferrara. Specific material has been given to the evaluators to help them in their analysis.

The OP the Central Europe programme has presented a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) whose main aim was to integrate environmental considerations into the programme actions so to ensure a high level of environmental protection and to promote sustainable development. The OP specify also the need to ensure a transnational approaches on Brownfield development into the activities focused by Priority 4 'Enhancing Competitiveness and Attractiveness of Cities and Regions'. The COBRAMAN project is focusing an essential problematic for the quality of life and the environmental valorisation of urban area. Especially in the eastern EU member states, brownfield revitalisation is an issue of growing importance. A general evaluation of the project idea demonstrate the importance of the topic concerned, a good balance of the partnership dislocated in 5 countries of the Central area, with the presence of local bodies and of research support from the partner universities. Different typologies of brownfield areas are involved in the pilot project and the transnational approach is quite clear on the realisation of the European School for Brownfield Redevelopment.

2. Work in progress

The results of the annual meeting 2010 in Ferrara have demonstrate a positive transnational approach of the working groups to follow the planned work programme.

The only criticism is the fact that also if during a previous workshop held in late 2009 has been decided the matrix for the data base, this is still in progress, being necessary for assessing the concepts and the tools useful or their practical

application. The implementation of the data base results compulsory for a operative transnational approach to the whole aspect of the project.

The public workshop in Ferrara has been a common moment of exchange of information and peer reviewing to implement the applicability of the concepts. The brownfield management experiences presented by external experts have to be considered useful tools for the assessment of the practicability of the project processes.

The internal workshops dedicated to wp4, wp5 and wp6 have presented the state-of-the-art of the project implementation. There were some delays on the schedule of the work packages, not so significant, as they did not affect the main priorities of the project and were due mainly to technical reasons. As a conclusion, the partners consider that the delays of the scheduled time for the implementation of the work packages do not at all affect the essential parts of the project.

3. Quality of existing and expected results

The project methodology and the working procedures concerning administrative, political and scientific issues have confirmed the importance of the presence of partners coming from research as well as partners coming from territorial administration who operate in different contexts and are able to express different points of view.

Although, the partners presentations in the workshops highlighted differences that exist between the partners network in terms of urban regeneration/renewal policies as well as operational tools. These differences can be seen as a main point of interest as they can help to transfer specific experiences and capabilities from one partner to another in the field of urban brownfield regeneration.

It is indubitable that the potential figure of a well trained brownfield manager knowing how to use resources and knowing how to identify targets and priorities at urban scale will be a result perfectly in live with the priorities of the Central Programme.

4. Process and methodology

The partners cooperation is demonstrated by the quality of the outputs already realised and the fulfilment of most of the activities on time.

The case studies chosen by the partners made it possible to verify how much interaction and what type of sustainability can be included in the policies aimed at brownfield regeneration and rehabilitation.

WP1: the task of this Work Package is to coordinate and oversee the work.

Management structure seems to be able to ensure proper reviewing, reporting and auditing.

WP2: the task of this Work Package should be to dedicated to the diffusion of the project's results to the target group and the general public through a

communication plan. It seems that the communication plan, already done, remains quite theoretical, both external and internal communication guidelines. A correct dissemination of the project's outcomes should orient public authorities towards more integrated processes setting up an effective and efficient brownfield policy. Correct communication can convey to take medium/long term strategic approaches and to promote sustainability, in its all different aspects, in urban areas. Target groups, well defined in the application form, seems not to be sufficiently involved and contacted in these operative phases. Targeted dissemination can also be an excellent basis for regular monitoring on the part of the competent authorities, generating a flow of information that enables operators to understand the effects of their actions on the environment and modify what they are doing accordingly. A general public dissemination, to spread around consciousness on good practices in the brownfield regeneration topics, important to help local administrators on developing brownfield correct policies, seems to be completely absent.

5. Recommendation to the project partnership

The project's work did not require significant adjustments of initially developed working plan and technical programme. All partners guarantee to confirm the correctness of project's methodology.

Up to the results of the workshops in Ferrara and the partners' considerations, it seems that recommendations may be summarized as follows: **A)** the communication programme must be implemented and the definition of target groups must be more clear. A better coordination of the dissemination strategy should be established among the partners. **B)** joint implementation of data is compulsory for the positive result of the project: 1- the data base is a necessary tool for the training activities 2- the effectiveness of the application of the results on the field can be given only by following a common pathway. **C)** It could be interesting to better identify the methodological link unifying the different pilot projects as a result of transnational cooperation.

At the end it seems that the COBRAMAN projects will develop a positive exchange of good practices in the framework of one on the priorities of the OP of Central Europe Programme.

Adriana Martini.

2 giugno 2010

Annex 2:

Mid Term Evaluation Report COBRAMAN Project

Prepared by: Dragan Marinkovic, Associated partner

Position: Head of environmental protection unit

Place: City of Kragujevac, Republic of Serbia

Date: 08.06.2010.

Content:

1. The project at a glance – general impression

My general impression is that the project COBRAMAN is highly innovative and very useful not only for local partners but for all municipalities, institutions, professional bodies and individuals throughout Europe. Even though the project involves 9 PP and many other local institutions and individuals, the defined project hierarchy (PSC, TCG, associated experts etc) enables on time exchange of information and delivery the project outputs which are both qualitatively and quantitatively satisfactory. The project results are visible to the public (web site, conferences, seminars and other events).

The development of a profession "Brownfield manager" through European school for „Brownfield managers“ involving an accredited program which does not exist anywhere in Europe will be useful for all transnational partners and other beneficiaries of project results. The procedure is universal and is therefore applicable to all European regions regardless of economic or social differences.

2. Progress

At the end of month 18th, the project is on track. Generally, the delays of some activities should not influence the end results. The project has been implemented with the active participation of the all partners.

3. Content – Quality of existing and expected results

The quality of the results achieved so far are satisfactory. Below are comments on the results achieved so far within the WP which I found the most important.

WP1: Project management and coordination

Most of the outputs are achieved. I can not comment on the output 1.2.1. (subcontracting the coordinator) since I do not have sufficient information why the contract is not concluded for 2010. Also, output 1.2.2 Regular progress reports, foresees 3 progress reports by month 18 and two are submitted (one approved and the other under evaluation). Since I do not have the submission date for the second progress report I can not comment on the delay at JTS.

WP2: Communication, knowledge management and dissemination

In general, the communication, knowledge management and dissemination are satisfactory, even though the expected outputs with activities such as 2.2.2., 2.2.7, are not achieved. Media coverage, press releases, web site, newsletter, project handbook etc are sufficient to ensure wider public recognition, communication between partners and dissemination of project results.

It seems that the Communication management plan is not utilized as much as it should be even though it gives the precise guidelines and communication requirements for the project.

WP3: Knowledge base and decision support

All outputs regarding the Knowledge base and decision support have been achieved on time.

WP4: The Brownfield manager

Activity 4.4.1 Local workshop with other departments involved is among most PP delayed. These workshops are very important since introducing the brownfield manager position into local structure is an integral part of the core output – trained brownfield manager (as regular municipal employees) and is useless if it is not integrated into municipal organization.

WP5: Pilot application

There are delays on several activities but this is usually expected since the realization of pilot sites is very complex issue. However, LP is informed about the causes of delays and is acting accordingly to overcome the problems and resolve the issues. The greatest problem is the relocation of pilot site in Kranj (Information centre Kranj) since it is a core output.

Finally, the activities of trans-national working group are so far in line with project time plan. Two workshops took place in Most in November 2009 and Ferrara in May 2010 and all PP were present. **WP6: European school for „Brownfield managers“**

This WP is developing according to the project plan. “Study plan” for the graduates has been sent to accreditation and Project handbook is defined with inputs from all PP.

4. Process, Methodology

The COBRA-Man approach to enhance rehabilitation of brownfield sites is to establish an integrated concept for brownfield revitalization with its heart: a new profession – the brownfield manager.

Based on information received as substance for this mid term evaluation report it can be concluded that the activities are being conducted in line with the defined methodology. Furthermore, the activities are modified and new are introduced when necessary in order to achieve better project results i.e. study trip to Ireland defined during the 2nd on line seminar. Such activities can be very fruitful for the project especially when all PP agree on it.

5. Recommendations to the project partnership

To sum up, the outputs deliver new information/know-how to all partners involved. Work packages have transnational dimension. It is important for the PP to respect the deadlines for the completion of specific tasks (it is not necessary for the task to be fully completed, draft versions should be accepted and this will enable for the project to run in line with the projected time plan.

It is recommended that the local authorities, in close collaboration with representatives of PP, work out an efficient action plan to maximize the project outputs. For example, representatives should regularly inform their superiors about project progress and jointly work out the strategic plan on how to integrate the project results into their local policies. From my own experience, it is not as easy as it seems to change the job systematization/organization within the municipal structure and introduce the brownfield manager profile.

Another comment may be on the realization of trainings, specifically many remarks are made on the content of presentations, organization, interpretation and other related issues so the LP or WP responsible must act promptly and adapt to the specific needs of trainees and take their comments into consideration.

Finally, the outputs are very useful in daily practice and with correct dissemination of project materials, specifically the universal training courses for brownfield managers, the follow up can be expected within cities and regions which are not currently involved as PP.

Annex 3:

COBRAMAN
Manager Coordinating Brownfield Redevelopment Activities
Mid-term evaluation
Ivan Stanic
Ljubljana, 10. 6. 2010

Content

1. Evaluation of the programme in comparison to the planned work programme
 - 1.1 Due until now: fulfilled/delayed
 - 1.2 Future outputs
2. Quality of outputs
 - 2.1 Did outputs deliver new knowledge?
 - 2.2 Are they innovative?
 - 2.3 Usefulness of outputs in daily practise
3. Project structure/organisation/management working
 - 3.1 Is the work transnational?
 - 3.2 Is project management effective?
4. Weaknesses to be improved and transnational structure

5. General observation

6 Finalisation strategy

- 1 Evaluation of the programme in comparison to the planned work programme
 - 1.1 Due until now: fulfilled/delayed

From the material supplied by the project leader it is apparent that there are delays in most of the WP.

My comments are in italic:

WP 1: P 1.2.1 sub-contracting with the coordinator – why?

WP 2: no delays / work in progress

WP 3: P 3.3 should be completed parallel to the set data base

WP 4: P 4.1.1 / postponement is logical, this is the key question of the whole project

P 4.4.1 / output delivery for other partners should be on time

WP 5: P 5.2.1, P 5.2.2, P 5.3.2, P 5.3.8 / delays caused by concrete project implementation should be dismissed ASAP, however local circumstances and procedures have to be observed

P 5.4.1, P 5.4.2, P 5.4.3 / the case of Most has to be revised according to

other comments in this revision: the focus of the exercise is to wide and varied

WP 6: no delays

1.2 Future outputs

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2 Quality of outputs

2.1 Did outputs deliver new knowledge?

At the mid-term evaluation judging about new knowledge is superfluous. The project cases haven't been developed far enough. However subjective and objective comparison of experiences was registered and could be the basis for future amendments to on-going practises and processes.

2.2 Are they innovative?

By definition regeneration projects vary in scope, methodology, organisational frameworks in local authorities, initiators, rationale, financing schemes, outcomes for the public benefit etc. However certain common denominators can be found even in this phase of project development, mainly:

- Local financing inconsistency;

- Political backup or lack of it (i.e. changed political agendas after elections, unexpected limitations in local finances, shifts in political alliances);
- Unrealistic expectations;
- Building upon parallel relations to too short mandates of representative elected bodies, which don't correspond to project requirements or specific problems;
- Insufficient consideration of local practises, concerning public procurement procedures for services and insufficient mid-term planning involving budgetary issues, municipal statutes and representative procedures. Particular project methodologies can be seen as inovative, however comparison is very difficult because of the very nature of particular projects, for example the cases of Kranj and Most.

2.3 Usefulness of outputs in daily practise

The main benefit of the outputs is comparison of difficulties and possible exchange of experience to benefit project completion. As much as good practises are the backbone of modern planning in the EU, unsuccessful examples are also necessary in the training process. The later are better for defining insurmountable obstacles or discerning, which element in the organisational environment of local authorities should be better developed to avoid possible difficulties.

3 Project structure/organisation/management working

3.1 Is the work transnational?

So far it is highly suspect to assume that any exchange of experience or building transnational has been implemented or that any transnational exchange of knowledge or procedures has been seen. Despite the established link between two partners working on methodology and methodology application, the results so far don't seem to correlate to a better understanding of either, i.e. improvement to methodology or better implementation on site. I believe that methodologies cannot be simply transferred but relate to the issue at hand. A methodology is not a cookbook.

3.2 Is project management effective?

Understanding of the overall management structure would be presumptuous. My observations are based on information obtained from the meeting in Ferrara and materials that the lead partner delivered. Building on responses to points 2.2, 2.3 and 3.1 necessarily implies that improvements have to be made to the management structure, whereby much clearer goals have to be defined. Despite the elaborate and consistent structure of the project brief, necessary focusing of the targets has to happen very soon. My impression is that most of the planned cases are being developed independently, separately, in a kind of (local) »business-as-usual« manner.

4 Weaknesses to be improved and transnational structure

Spatial development in the EU isn't governed by a supra-national department. In effect spatial planning is still a national-cultural domain. Nevertheless, spatial development is governed by common environmental, transport and similar directives, which directly or indirectly condition possible development actions and define possible issues. The transnational approach in the project can be seen as:

- Intertwinement of different actors in different countries that are organised in a vertical and horizontal exchange of ideas, methodologies, planning experiences and knowledge;
- Enforcement of a multi-cultural planning dialogue, which focuses on common mutual interests and set EU territorial cohesion goals that promote local responses to global issues;
- Applying a methodology, which is derived from physical conditions and is then put in a larger territorial framework; variations in interpretation can lead to better understanding of spatial realities and invoke cohesive planning policies.

5. General observation

The public event and workshop was a set of ex-cathedra presentations, without any discussion or question and answer slot. If the event is termed "public", then the public should have a say in the matter as well. The presented cases were nevertheless interesting, but involving the public (good work

by the local organisers, since the turnout was very promising) also means providing time for reflections, additional information etc., not from the board, but from the audience.

The supporting programmes were very useful for better understanding of the planned regeneration work at hand, especially the training seminars on property development economics, financial instruments, developer's viewpoints (poor delivery, but important for local decision makers) and risk insurance. Most of these topics cover the planned curriculum of the post-graduate school and are the "solid" foundation of any property management course.

I am sceptical about the profile "brown-field manager". Even more so about the dedication of an entire academic course to such a professional, who will work either in the public or private sector on projects corresponding to the desired profile. Since I was involved in setting up several post-graduate courses (property management and law, environmental planning and management, urbanism for architects) in the last years, such specific specialisation seems irrational. Brown-field regeneration is one of the subjects dealt with by property managers.

6 Finalisation strategy

The project results will clearly present necessary changes in planning norms and standards concerning placement of particular activities inherently linked to rehabilitation of brown-fields, especially in the partner countries or cities. Moreover the project can lead to further detailed investigations and initiatives related to detailed development of specific locations. The pilot projects involve a series of operators that could be very interested in further developing the activities, upon project termination. Investigation of similar projects undertaken in the EU in the last years and setting up a more complex data base of cases would also be a useful enterprise. However, the greatest potential for follow-up actions is the participation of publicprivate partnerships, such as national, regional and local authorities with potential private investors in the countries concerned. The project recommendations and proposals should be aligned to real response, as well as to necessary improvements of administrative structures and procedures in participating countries and cities. If setting up a special post-graduate course is one of the responses, so be it. However, I believe that brown-field management is a specific type of property development, which is more the subject of several subjects in a property management course, rather than a course in its own right. Although the incidence of such projects is increasing in European practise I still believe that having a specified expert only for such projects is over-rated. I nevertheless wish the organisers success and hope they will set my opinion wrong in the years to come.