

**Communication strategies and methodologies for stakeholder involvement in the conversion  
processes of a Brownfield site**

**Technical-institutional pathway for the conversion of a dismissed industrial site (ex-sugar refinery of Comacchio)**

This pathway consists of an in-depth phase of sharing and consultation at local area level of the choices relating to the conversion of the site. It is found between the site reclamation phase, though a whole or part of it may take place parallel, and the architectural planning phase conversion option that is to be chosen.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) PROVIDE ALL THE MEANS NECESSARY FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE AREA**
- 2) AVOID ANY OBJECTIONS THAT MAY BLOCK/PUT ON HOLD THE CONVERSION PROCESS**

**MILESTONES:**

- **PREPARATION OF THE PLANNING PROCESSES AND THEIR CONTENTS**
- **PLANNING OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES** (agreements, commissions, work groups, etc..)
- **PLANNING OF CONSULTATION PROCESSES** (involvement of the public sector in order to share the planning options)
- **PLANNING OF REALISATION PROCESSES** (project company, actualisation procedures, master plan, business plan, etc..)

**ACTIONS:**

**Preliminary meetings with institutional stakeholders**

Consists of a series of one-to-one meetings, organised by the Brownfield Manager, in order to obtain an idea of the expectations and position of the public local administration authorities responsible, and to verify at a very early stage the workability of any future or existing project ideas.

In the case of the sugar refinery in Comacchio they will certainly need to be, amongst others:

**Political-technical meeting with the Ente Parco del Delta**

This will allow us to understand what stage the Piano del Parco (Park plan) has reached. This plan is at the preliminary planning stage and is currently published on the Province of Ferrara website, and objective of public presentation meetings to gather any indications from the local area. Such evidence, together with the content of the preliminary project, will be the topic of discussion for the planning conference who will release the document. It is therefore the most advanced plan, as far as

its composition, compared to the PTCP<sup>1</sup>, PSC<sup>2</sup> and the Piano del Porto (Harbour plan), which are also linked together. The Park plan will be received by the PTCP and then, by cascading, by the other processes. The Park plan includes the refinery area, therefore it is important to understand what consequences/impact the statements and forecasts made by the Ente Parco on the urban fate of the area will have on the conversion plan and to what extent these clash or coincide with it.

**Technical-political meeting with the Municipality of Comacchio**

This will allow explanation of the administration's needs for the conversion of the site and to verify the suitability of the planning processes for eventual project proposals. For instance, in the specific case where conversion ideas may already exist: that the PSC<sup>3</sup> doesn't just indicate a specific use of the land (or few specific uses), but rather stays open to various options of conversion, excluding residential only and industrial purposes which will have an impact on the land, and therefore will be incompatible with the characteristics of the area.

**Technical-political meeting with the Province of Ferrara**

This will allow explanation of administration's needs for the conversion and to verify the suitability of the urban processes for eventual project proposals. For instance, in this specific case, the Piano Territoriale di Coodinamento Provinciale (Provincial Coordinating Territorial Plan) is designed taking into account the conversion needs. It must be remembered that, in the case of the Municipality of Comacchio, the urban processes of the Municipality and for the province are strongly linked: meaning that the PTCP developed by the province will be taken as a foundation document by the Municipality's Structural Plan.

**Outline of the technical-administrative plan of conversion**

A study of the best technical administrative pathway for the adaptation of the urban processes regarding the area: Park plan, PTCP, PSC, Harbour plan, guaranteeing their consistency with regard to the purposed usage of the area and defining the timescale in order to present a PUA<sup>4</sup> of conversion. This activity involves in-depth due diligence in collaboration with the Ente Parco, Municipality, Province and other authorities involved.

**Involvement of the University**

The collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture and in general with all technical and economical Faculties (Engineering, Physics, Economics, Agricultural Studies etc) allows us to verify and/or actualise the very first conversion project proposals with the involvement of an important local

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<sup>1</sup> PTCP: it's the Plan for the coordination of the planning policies at County level; it's the main tool for the coordination and management and the main objectives and elements for the development of the territory.

<sup>2</sup> PSC: Municipal Structural Plan, it defines the strategical lines for the safeguard of the phisical integrity, the environment and the cultural identity of the Municipal territory, fixing the burdens for the buildings and the contructions, establishing the main needs in terms of settlements.

<sup>3</sup> See above explanation.

<sup>4</sup> PUA: Urban executive Plan; the urban tools which enable the concrete implementation of the redevelopment actions or the new detailed urban planning.

institution which has knowledge of the local area, the preparation, and the means for analysis in order to give a first technical answer to the proposal for area development, and any possibly arising issues in a preliminary, institutional “brainstorming”.

The processes used in developing this action can be as follows: student's awards for architecture, workshops, graduation thesis, studies and research carried out by graduates and junior doctors etc.

### **Feasibility Studies**

These are necessary to the development and the definition of the work processes required for the next stages of the conversion, for example: a “stakeholder involvement plan”; the creation of a society for the purpose of conversion of the site (e.g. wholly private company, urban development company, other forms of PPP); the corresponding executive procedure (project financing, contract competition, public auction, etc..); master plans of the conversion proposal ; a business plan of the proposal that is to be analysed in detail, etc..

### **Stakeholder involvement plan**

Outputs:

#### **Agreement Protocol**

This is the protocol between Sipro, in this case, or the owner of the area in general, the Municipality, the Province, the Emilia Romagna region , the Parco del Delta del Po Emilia Romagna, Camera di Commercio (Chamber of Commerce) of Ferrara, Professional Associations, University of Ferrara, Union Representations. This document will cover the sharing and definition of an integrated strategy aimed at the conversion of the site.

The objectives will be:

- increased levels of employment in the Comacchio area and generally in the area south of Ferrara;
- reinforcement of the productive sector, tourism and services,
- qualification of the urban and environmental system of the area with particular attention to environmental and energetic sustainability of the proposed projects.

The agreement protocol will involve the creation of a Steering Committee which will represent them and the commitment/obligation of the signatories to give a factual contribution (which they will explicitly declare) to the definition of an integrated strategy for the conversion of the ex-sugar refinery. For example: providing qualified human resources for the feasibility studies, plans and programmes; plan ways of accessing public funding, streamlining the authorisation processes required to achieve the shared objectives, modify the existing urban destinations in relation to the projects developed or validated by the Steering Committee, make studies and research results carried out on the Ferrara area available, so that they can contribute to the development of a conversion master plan and related business plan; present studies and materials/resources that can allow for the use of innovative technologies to diversify the systems aimed at strengthening the productive sectors of employment that will settle in the area.

#### **Redevelopment Agreement**

This is the agreement between Sipro, Comacchio Municipality, Province of Ferrara, Emilia-Romagna region, Parco del Delta del Po Emilia Romagna, Chamber of Commerce of Ferrara,

professional associations, University of Ferrara, Union representatives, which will show all the opinions, assertions, intentions and licences, authorisations and concessions necessary to be given and/or allowed by the participating administrations and public authorities, regarding the conversion project. In order to ensure co-operation with the local authorities and social parties, the document will need to include a chronological investment programme and will be a binding element for the evaluation of the executive projects, to guarantee all the interests of all parties involved. In essence, the conversion agreement defines and promotes the contents of the project of conversion. At this stage, "conversion project" must be intended as a detailed technical-economical plan of feasibility, which will need to determine: the timetable for the achievement of the project; the resources necessary and corresponding investors; technical aspects of realisation of the project, the economical social and employment impact on the local area, the environmental impact and its difference between the original situation and the one of the inactive/abandoned site. It will also need to clearly state the commitment to be undertaken by each signatory in the process of conversion. Furthermore, the agreement involves the creation of a Steering Committee and of a Technical Group for evaluation and monitoring the conversion process. Such work groups will monitor the process and make sure that it complies with the stakeholders' expectations.

#### **Steering Committee**

This is formed by all the agreement signatories and its purpose is to make sure all the contents of the conversion agreement are met. This process is maintained until the full implementation of the objectives that must achieve the conversion (incl. economical, social, employment and environmental ones).

#### **Technical Group for evaluation and monitoring of the conversion process**

This is a technical body constituted by the Steering Committee, and its purpose is to verify accurately each stage of the conversion process, record and report to the Steering Committee any delays or deviations from the plan.

The Group will include the Brownfield Manager (who in this case also represents the owner of the area, which is Sipro), a representative for the Municipality of Comacchio, a representative for the Province of Ferrara, a representative for the Parco del Delta del Po, a representative for the society whose purpose it is to convert the area (Project Manager of the building intervention).

#### **Urban Consultation Workshop, communication plan of the project to residents, creation of an "Urban Center" (Information Point)**

This is a series of meetings and activities to discuss the conversion plan.

It allows for the Municipality Administration, owner of the site, the local associations, and residents interested in the project to meet and discuss together the project that involves the area once occupied by the industrial site.

Here the Brownfield Manager has an essential role as facilitator or organiser of the activities carried out by professional facilitators who will need to chair the meetings of Urban Consultation, liven up the meetings, creating opportunities for reflection, interpreting and

translating the input given by the participants, and delivering the answers given by the project officers/managers and investors in a way that they can be easily understood. It is a method of approaching the conversion in an open and transparent way, allowing for the involvement of residents and individuals active in the local area, in order to trigger a debate as broad as possible at the time of definition of the strategic options for the future of the area and the territory. The workshop programme is to be shared during the preliminary meetings.

Four work stages can be identified:

**1. Communication-Information programme**

A programme of communication initiatives and information which will accompany the whole process from planning to building.

Creation of an Information Point, "Urban Center" dedicated to the project and which will hold all the main technical materials (accordingly adapted for communication with non-experts), periodically revised, the exhibition of the history of the project by means of displays and drawings, the collection of observations both at planning and at construction stage.

Tools for spreading information to the territory (city, wider area, province):

- a periodic newsletter which merges together the historical background and identity of the city and sugar refinery with the project for the future of the area.
- an internet website to accompany the consultation process, a useful instrument for the sharing of information between the stakeholders.

**2. Workshops for analysis and discussion of the plan.**

Three or four topic-based meetings to analyse and discuss the observations made regarding the plan: they are workshops meant to involve not only interested individuals but also experts (technicians responsible for the project, administration technicians/clerks, technicians from other authorities and institutions, etc...); the purpose is to share information and point out all the possible changes that may be applied to the plan (highlighting, in particular, those that are compatible and those that stand as alternatives). Participation in this phase follows enrolment (open to associations, authorities and individual residents), which is necessary for the better organisation of debates and to guarantee continuity of the workshop.

**3. Workshops for re-definition of the plan.**

Two or three meetings, the purpose of which is to bring together all the elements gained from the previous four workshops. This is a stage of maximum exchange between technical directors and participants in the discussion of different project ideas, the identification of possible alternatives, the proposition of preferred options, and eventual legal and technical updates useful to the verification of the feasibility of the ideas. The activity of these workshops intends to reach the maximum sharing of the final choices but, in conclusion, will also highlight eventual elements of disagreement and conflict left unsolved.

**4. Workshops for verification of the plan**

The revision stage of the plan will end with the presentation of the definitive proposal designed by the Municipality administration, taking into consideration the long consultation process. It will be the final opportunity to verify the version of the plan that needs to respond to the feedback.

**Preparation of a volumetric plan and conversion master plan**

This is the first fundamental element of the project from which to start the actual planning. If shared with the stakeholders involved, the project responsible implementor can start the real urban planning using this tool (then PUA or PP, architectural preliminary, definitive and executive planning).

**Business plan of the chosen conversion proposal**

The verification of the economical feasibility of the conversion proposal is a document that is essential to the subsequent choices: from the definition/selection of the economic subject that will deal with it, the financial options available to the support of the entire operation, the detailed planning choices, to the return in terms of cost-benefits for the territory.

### Preliminary phase

Awareness of the institutional organs for the recovery of the vacant site



### Definition of the objectives and of the conversion plan

Collection of information about re-developed, abandoned sites on a national and international scale

Research of the good practices, eventually reproduced at the site to be converted

Analysis of the best technical and administrative pathway for the subsequent adaptation of the local urban processes regarding the area, guaranteeing their coherence with regards to the intended use of the area and eventually assuming the timing of a presentation of conversion plan



### Project Development Phase

Involvement of the university in order to:

1. Realise and/or verify the first conversion project proposals
2. Investigate some deeper themes through:
  - architectural design awards for students,
  - workshops,
  - graduation thesis',
  - studies and research carried out by researchers and post-graduate students etc

Arrangement of feasibility studies for the financing and management of the redevelopment work



### Stakeholder Involvement Phase

The involvement of stakeholders and the sharing of objectives is essential to the conversion process of the sugar refinery in Comacchio. In this regard a feasibility study will examine the various aspects involved in the

A draft of the Agreement for the recovery of the site

The anticipation of the creation of a Urban Consultation Workshop which guarantees the participation of the residents and sharing with the social parties to the project

The terms and conditions of involvement of a Steering Committee which includes the authorities involved and a Technical Group of evaluation and monitoring of the conversion process

A communication plan responsible for all updates on the programme of the conversion process, which will also include suggestions for the creation of an information point in Comacchio and/or Ferrara

Plan of the costs of the investment and promotion of the project



### Implementation and Promotion of the Recovery Plan Phase

Definition of a conversion volumetric plan and master plan

Business plan of the chosen conversion proposal

Promotion of the plan

1. Communication-information programme
2. Workshops for analysis and discussion of the plan
3. Workshops for re-definition of the plan
4. Workshops for verification of the plan