



# The Flexible City Sustainable Solutions for the Urban Fringe

Pakhuis De Zwijger | Europe by People  
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## Book of Ideas Reinventing the fringe

DOCUMENT FOR SCREEN READING



# The Flexible City

# Sustainable Solutions for the Urban Fringe

## Introduction

The Flexible City is a series of lectures on the book 'The Flexible City – sustainable solutions for a Europe in Transition' by Tom Bergevoet en Maarten van Tuijl. The book introduces a toolbox for the spatial challenges of the European city of the future. Building further outside the city boundaries is no longer desirable. Instead, the current built environment should be made sustainable. This new spatial assignment is explored in the book through examples and instruments of several different European cities. Today one of the authors, Maarten van Tuijl is the lead expert for a European URBACT network, guiding nine cities in the transformation of their post war fringe areas.

**The post war fringes across Europe are in need of new interpretations and require updating in a bid to stimulate compact cities and counter suburban sprawl.**

Although more people live and work in these peripheral areas than in our inner cities, they have not received the same amount of attention and care. The urban fringe of most European cities are in need of renovation, in order to address wear and tear, adapt functions or increase energy efficiency. How can we devise interventions that address these issues and introduce new urban qualities and identities to these areas?

The URBACT network 'sub>urban. Reinventing the fringe' unites nine cities that are re-inventing their urban fringes to transform them into high-quality and sustainable city quarters. The first results of this network were presented at Europe by people Amsterdam, with a focus on the urban challenges faced and tackled by Antwerp, Baia Mare, Barcelona, Brno, Casoria, Dusseldorf, Oslo, Solin and Vienna.



Architect  
& Lead Expert  
Maarten van Tuijl

# Presenting



**Maarten van Tuijl**

Architect, co-author of 'The Flexible City,' lead expert for URBACT III, sub>urban



**Ivan Tosics**

Principle of the Metropolitan Research Institute and thematic pole manager of URBACT



**Christian Rapp**

Antwerp city architect, founder of RAPP+RAPP, professor at TU Eindhoven



**Toine van Goethem**

Urban designer, city of Amsterdam



**Gordan Cengic**

Local coordinator, city of Antwerp



**Betina Haraldsen**

Project architect and bicycle planning coordinator for the city of Oslo



**Annie Attademo**

University of Naples Architect - Urban Planner

By Skype





# Programme

Moderator  
Isabelle Verhaert



## 20.00 welcome

by moderator Isabelle Verhaert (city of Antwerp)

## 20.05 – 20.20 introduction and dilemmas

relating the *The Flexible City* to the *sub>urban* network, by Maarten van Tuijl (temp.architecture)

## 20.20 – 20.40 transformation across the borders

interviews with three cities from the *sub>urban* network

## 20.40 – 21.40 debate

- Maarten van Tuijl, temp.architecture, Urbact Lead Expert, co-author the *Flexible City*

- Ivan Tosics, URBACT thematic pole manager, principal of Metropolitan Research Institute (MRI), Budapest

- Christian Rapp, city Architect Antwerp, founder RAPP+RAPP, professor TU Eindhoven

- Toine van Goethem, Municipality of Amsterdam

## 21.40 – drinks and after



# Introduction and dilemmas

Download the baseline study





# What is Urban Fringe?



[Click here for live broadcast](#)





## Transformation accross the borders

**Nine cities are working together to reinvent the urban fringes of their cities. But what does that mean?** There are as many differences as similarities between all European cities, so how do they expect to learn from each other? And what do they hope to achieve in two years' time?

A debate between Antwerp (Belgium), Casoria (Italy) and Oslo (Norway) frames the theme 'sub>urban. Reinventing the fringe' within a more local perspective.





# Transformation across the borders

## Interview with Annie Attademo University of Naples

### Why did you want to join a European network?

Casoria expanded up to the end of the '70s, when it had become a major industrial centre. When production stopped, factories and industrial sites were abandoned. A new service sector based economy took over. Today Casoria's growth has stopped, but the city is facing a remarkable crisis in the service sector and its residents are moving away.

Being part of a European project on the topic can help us find the right path towards the future. The first step is to raise awareness among local communities within the regions of the Convergence Objective. Next, we need participatory planning methods, which are unusual in Southern Italy. This involves the development of a design method, coordinated with private stakeholders and inspired by the discussions with the partner cities.

**Which issues are you facing as a city in terms of transforming planning/intensifying use/social inclusion?** The proposed challenges were placed at the core of the local political agenda as a first coherent implementation

of the environmental regeneration and redevelopment strategies of the Municipal Development Plan of 2013, which was recently re-adopted. In the past year we have translated this process into a public urban laboratory named 'Step-by-step', referring to the need for patient and continuous programming.

The main task of the Step-by-Step Lab is pushing urban plans forward gradually, searching for realistic scenarios and projects without sacrificing the greater vision, going beyond the mere "maintenance or survival of the existing", which has probably been a weakness of some previous EU-funded programmes. 'Step-by-step' also aims to establish planning synergies with the neighbouring municipalities and other relevant public bodies and to ensure constant participation of citizens. Cooperative planning is very important as it allows us to address problems and opportunities on the right scale and across municipal boundaries.

### Which message do you want to put on the Urban Agenda?

Post War Urbanism in Casoria has been disastrous, and the outcomes are still quite visible in the settlements. The incapability to implement new structural redevelopments has had a great impact on the existing environment. The quest for methods to reconvert these areas should weigh heavily on the Urban Agenda.

While drafting our new urban plan, we got to explore issues directly related to the sustainable transformation of twentieth century urban tissue and the development of innovative spatial patterns for settlements. We are working with the idea of disassembling the existing city into parts interspersed by new 'empty' spaces, which lend themselves to spontaneous public use, support a better quality of life and stimulate a sustainable economy. It is not a question of propaganda but a work of patience, based on knowledge, understanding and shared visions.





# Transformation across the borders

## Interview with Betina Holt Haraldsen, City of Oslo



Through the Urban Agenda, the EU should explicitly focus on renewing the outer cities as an urgent task. Without this, large swathes of urban areas in Europe risk falling further behind in the quest for sustainability, wealth creation and living standards. - Betina

**Why did you want to join a European network?** For many years Oslo has had a policy of joining European networks on important policy areas, such as Eurocities and Metrex. Being a part of these kinds of networks systematically increases chances to learn more from other cities.

Networks such as URBACT provide a framework and put topics on the agenda. EU funding requires persistent commitment, participation and results. Although less flexible than a more informal network, this helps guarantee progress and improvements in our own work, especially having been involved ourselves in designing the project from the early stages.

**Which issues are you facing as a city in terms of transforming planning/intensifying use/social inclusion?** The City of Oslo has acquired a lot of experience in planning conversions of older industrial buildings and sites. But most of the older industrial buildings with some potential have now been converted into housing or retail, leisure and office spaces. We are just starting to transform parts of the city which were

developed around the 1950s.

These areas were carefully planned and are home to some of the city's most vulnerable communities. This means that we have to have both a clear and well-understood vision, as well as good ways to engage the local population in redesigning their neighbourhoods. One of the main challenges is to make the city more inclusive through socially mixed housing in the areas that are awaiting transformation.

**Which message do you want to put on the EU Urban Agenda?** Much of urban policy in recent decades has focused on the historic centres and the earlier industrial inner-city areas. But the largest parts of our cities comprise post-war housing estates, more recent industrial sites and massive infrastructures, which do not always fit today's needs. Tomorrow's challenges, including climate change, unstable economies and increasing social diversity should be approached in new ways. Our outer cities are not always sustainable – or inclusive, for that matter. A clear focus on these areas can bring about great renewal.



# Transformation across the borders

## Interview with Gordan Cengic, City of Antwerp

### **Why do you want to join an European network?**

We want to learn from URBACT and other cities in terms of good practices and innovative forms of urban planning, design and development. We believe that the key of success in urban projects lies in process management and capacity-building for policy makers. In that sense URBACT offers many opportunities, as it is the only European project that places cities in a central role and allows them to experiment with transition using regulation, policies and processes as tools.


Also, the launch of “LAB XX”, a more recent research project by the city of Antwerp, has strengthened the need and momentum to participate in the URBACT programme. LAB XX focuses on improving the quality of urban life in the outer city through smart densification, as an answer to the growth of the population. LAB XX was conceived as a flexible process and, as such, has been able to evolve into a very ambitious and extensive project. This also means that there are no strict multi-annual strategies or budgets. We are aware of the need

to work with experts to help us define a local action plan and ensure progress and actual implementation.

### **Which issues are you facing as a city in terms of transforming planning/intensifying use/social inclusion?**

Today Antwerp is mainly familiar with facilitating projects from a land owner's position. This is a comfortable position which allows the city to direct and impose conditions on partners. Today this role has changed. The initiative and ownership is now much more in hands of private investors and developers. We need new processes and instruments to ensure quality and stimulate cooperation. We also need to define quality criteria that can be applied in different urban contexts.

**Which message do you want to put on the urban agenda?** We are too often confronted with projects that focus exclusively on housing. Our ambition is to promote and facilitate the development of high-quality and compact environments that combine housing with facilities and work places.




Antwerp has initiated and realised a number of ambitious urban revitalisation projects in the recent past and wants to continue doing so in the future, based on the acquired experience, but also constantly improving its approach.

- Gordan



## Debate

A photograph of four men seated at a long wooden table during a debate. From left to right: a man in a light blue button-down shirt with arms crossed, a man in a blue polo shirt, a man in a black t-shirt looking down at a glass, and a man in a dark suit with arms crossed. There are microphones and a water bottle on the table. The background is dark.

We have to think beyond administrative borders. If we talk about densification we need to include the densification of the sub-cores too. A good example in this sense is Berlin.

“ In central-eastern Europe, now-privately owned 10-storey apartment buildings present us with big problems in addressing collective challenges. What would happen if these buildings were demolished and their residents moved into individual houses in the suburbs, using cars to commute to the city each day? This is a European challenge. We have to instil urban qualities into these suburban city areas.

“ First and foremost, the issue is how to increase the quality of these areas for the people living there. This could mean, for instance, keeping the buildings but making them more sustainable and addressing social issues. These areas present us with great social challenges. We need to preserve the social mix in neighbourhoods that still have balanced populations today.



Thank You

**More info.** This Book of Ideas is its essence a memory aid for inspiring words. If it triggered you to learn more about 'sub>urban. Reinventing the fringe' you can follow us on LinkedIn, on [www.urbact.eu/suburban](http://www.urbact.eu/suburban) or contact us in person by email at [sub\\_urban@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:sub_urban@stad.antwerpen.be).

**Colophon**

sub>urban. Reinventing the fringe, URBACT III, 26 May 2016

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