

LITERATURE

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Costa, C.S. et al. (eds.): GreenKeys at Your City: A Guide for Urban Green Quality. Leibnitz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development, Dresden, 2008. 105 p.

A new, remarkably useful *guide* has been added to the already abundant list of references to spatial and urban planning. The booklet is aimed to prove the importance and to present opportunities for a relatively new spatial planning purpose: the urban green development. The content of the present volume was based on findings of an EU Interreg III B CADSES (2005-2008) project, titled: '*GreenKeys – Urban Green as a Key for Sustainable Cities*'. The project had three main objectives. Firstly, to plan and implement pilot projects in the partner cities and collect the experience gained during the whole process. Secondly, to formulate an Urban Green Space Strategy, which can be used as a template in future projects. Finally, to help transfer the knowledge and know-how in the topic, and to publish the results. The GreenKeys brought together 12 cities from 7 countries, 8 scientific supporters (among them the research group of the Geographical Research Institute Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest), external experts, design studios and NGOs. Besides, the public participation and involvement of local stakeholders were a crucial goal of (and at the same time tool for) the project. It is worth to mention that the GreenKeys project has partly been built upon the EU FP5 project, called URGE (Development of Urban Greenspaces to Improve the Quality of Life in Cities and Urban Regions) as an antecedent.

The fact that the present book was written by authors who participated actively in the whole procedure of the given pilot project could guarantee what one can claim from a guide: to provide swift, definite and universally usable methods for solving the problems and to give answers to the emerging questions. The structure of the volume (made up of five major chapters) certainly meets this requirement.

In the Introduction the authors proclaim their credo: the urban green space development contributes to the sustainability of cities in all detail. The benefits are observable in the economic, social, ecological and environmental spheres of life. Four major phenomena make this issue timely: the numerous 'brownfields' within urban areas having appeared after economic restructuring and deindustrialization, the climate change which affects the built-up city areas profoundly, the increasing need of better quality of life and the aspect of public health.

The second, most lengthy part makes the readers acquainted with strategy planning procedure step-by-step. Three main phases can be defined: the *starting* part, in which the aims, priorities, and the exact implementation steps have to be identified after establishing the strategy group. Collecting and analyzing data and subjective information are the primary purpose in the second, *analytical* part. The third, *action* part deals with the development of urban green space strategy and ends with the preparation of its draft version. It also offers an implementation plan in accordance with the needs that have already been revealed. Here we can find a subsection (Pool for strategies) which gives exact examples not only from the experiences of the project partners, but from the UK (Bristol, Doncaster) and Germany (Münster) as well, about how to deal with the emerging issues and to surmount possible obstacles. It also offers different types of solution in such cases.

One of the most difficult questions of the action part of every project is how to raise funds. The example of Nova Gorica, Slovenia was mentioned where the HIT Group (a

casino and tourist corporation) co-financed the development of the green space. The story of the involvement of a private company began with an event organized by a local artist. The artist sold hand-made plastic flowers to collect money to build a children's playground in the city park. Naturally, the amount collected this way was not sufficient but publicity was aroused among politicians and other decision makers. All this contributed to the decision of the management of the casino, situated near to the projected playground, and run by the HIT group, to co-finance the project.

The third part of the book is an attempt to present an overview of the experience gained from the implementation of the GreenKeys pilot projects. As a general rule we can state that the faults committed in the starting and analytical part of the strategy can easily hamper implementation or raise difficulties.

The fourth chapter provides an overview of the tools developed during the project. This section practically functions as a manual for the contents accessible in the website (<http://www.greenkeys-project.net>) and on the enclosed CD-ROM, which is a good idea indeed as the documents, questionnaires, tables with the instruments, techniques, concepts are completely downloadable and applicable in the work of experts and interested and committed civil stakeholders.

In the last chapter recommendations concerning the green policies of cities are formulated and the local authorities, national governments and the European Commission are called for action. This chapter describes the multilevel benefits (for individuals, local communities, tourists) of green space development in different (social, environmental, economic) aspects. The importance of the initiative and supportive roles of the local government is emphasized, and the special relevance of cooperation between the related actors i.e. the local authorities, professional consultants, scientific advisors and the inhabitants, local stakeholders is pointed out. The involvement of the inhabitants (primary users of the green area) into the procedure from the planning phase till the implementation and maintenance means to contribute to the local civic awareness in positive sense and to motivate the population to care for the new or renovated green area. Next to the involvement of the local stakeholders and public participation it is the interdisciplinary approach and the cooperation between the scientific and administrative experts that are the key elements for the successful planning and realization of an Urban Green Strategy.

In most cases the logical structure of the booklet is accompanied with an attractive appearance. The framed texts refer to examples from the practice of the project partners but in other cases they stand for important statements, recommendations. Maybe it would have been more logic to differentiate between the two. Another problem with these green-framed writings is that they sometimes hamper the understanding of the subsection as they are cut in the main text. Beside these, an abundance of maps, figures and diagrams help the better interpretation of the message. Photos made the book colourful and 'easy-to-read' – notwithstanding some of them seem to be unnecessary and redundant. The green CD-ROM-symbol always reminds the reader to check further information on the attached CD-ROM, while the green arrow indicates cross-reference to other chapters of the book.

The experience and problem oriented approach of the guide might encourage and could inspire launching further similar projects. Additional strong point is that beside the enumeration of benefits emerging from the green space renewing projects it also indicates the difficulties and dysfunctions.

The guide can suggest good ideas to the professionals, and also may be used by the interested civilians who care for maintaining and improving of their residential environment.

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