

## **Integration of International Building Exhibition into planning strategies as a format of urban and regional development**

(Track 6: Urban Change: Plans, Visions and Policies. Full paper presentation)

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### Abstract

The paper presents the results as well as the considerations of a research project [2009-2010] concerning the future of international building exhibitions [IBA] as a tool of urban and regional revitalization. As a largeformat of urban and regional development – not directly comparable with other European formats due to different regional and national parameters – especially the IBA Emscher Park is highly reputed worldwide and viewed as an example to be followed in tackling restructuring processes (Reicher et al. 2011, p. 16). The positive reputation domestically as well as

abroad leads to believe that there are IBA-typical features which could be implemented in other formats concerning urban projects on the one hand. On the other hand, the research project gained experiences from the view on IBA similar formats in different European countries. It is necessary to discuss the experiences' value concerning IBA's future in Germany (Niemann et al. 2011, p. 314) and its implications in the European context.

## **1. International Building Exhibition [IBA]**

International building exhibitions [IBA] are a largeformat of urban and regional development. They have become a trademark of German planning culture by being a field for experimentation marked by their openness towards innovation and goals. IBA-exhibitions take place within a time space of a century without a fixed annual schedule, set of rules or standardized quality criteria. Starting as an architecture exhibition in 1910 nowadays IBA is a highly reputed unique label dealing with social, economic and ecological aspects and the quality of processes and participation. IBA-exhibitions have to redefine themselves constantly by dealing with the real challenges of urban and regional society and urgent current problems. Due to these functions IBA are more than architecture exhibitions according to their title. (Durth et al. 2010, p. 66-70)

Especially by comparing the IBA-format with several European formats of urban and regional development, IBA-typical features and recommendations for both upcoming IBA-exhibitions and different European formats can be identified.

### **1.1 Retrospective:**

In Germany, International Building Exhibitions have a long tradition. The first IBA took place in the city of Darmstadt in 1901. This IBA generated the exemplary artist colony of *Mathildenhöhe*, which was created in Art Nouveau Style (Durth 2010, pp. 19-20). The following IBA provided contemporary answers to urgent urban development questions (Durth 2010, p. 18). >New Objectivity< has been the central theme of the IBA Stuttgart in 1924. Architects from all over Europe developed new styles and forms of housing and presented upcoming considerations concerning constructional engineering and economy (Durth 2010, pp. 19-23).

The first IBA after World War II was located separately in both West [1957] and East Berlin [1951]. This IBA can be seen as a competition of the two rivaling political systems. West Berlin put the focus on the international tendencies of modern architecture by following the guiding principle of urban landscape, trying to propitiate both city and nature. Instead of building block of flats various types of construction should have been integrated into a park landscape. In the eastern part of the city IBA has been focused on the *Stalinallee* with its monumental architecture. (Durth 2010, pp. 23-26)

The following IBA was located in Berlin again. This IBA can be seen as a contemporary and sceptical answer to the developments of the IBA Interbau 1957. A shift of paradigm provoked contradiction. The tendencies of housing sprawl led to

the demand condensed housing again and implemented a discussion concerning city center revitalization. (Durth 2010, pp. 26-27)

While the range of tasks became broader the intervals between particular IBA-exhibitions became shorter after IBA 1984/87 Berlin. The following IBA started only two years later in 1989. The well reputed IBA Emscher Park took place in a timeframe of an entire decade between 1989 and 1999. The IBA Emscher Park has been the first IBA putting the focus not only on one city but rather on an entire region in transforming processes. It initiated regional projects and can be identified as a source of inspiration for ideas and development processes in different ways (Reicher et al. 2011, p. 16-22). Within the decade, 19 towns and cities as well as a large number of initiatives and business enterprises realized over a hundred projects (ib.). Those projects are seen as a model approach to deal with the physical realities of the region and its economic framework conditions (ib.). IBA has changed the image of the entire Ruhr Area and the way of identification by its inhabitants. Especially the conservation of former industrial buildings and their transformation into accessible cultural monuments is a considerable reason for IBA Emscher Park's high reputation worldwide. Nowadays IBA Emscher Park is viewed as an example to be followed in tackling restructuring processes (Reicher et al. 2011, p. 16) due to its characterization as an inspiration space, a demonstration space, a reflection space, a projection space and a space for encouragement (Kunzmann 2011, p. 168).

IBA Emscher Park can be seen as a model for the IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land, located in the federal state of Brandenburg surrounding Berlin. This IBA took place between 2000 and 2010 and put the focus on restructuring processes as well as the IBA Emscher Park. The IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land is located in a former lignite-mining area close to the polish border. Its projects re-developed the scenery by creating a wide lake landscape. This IBA also saved former industrial monuments by integrating them into both a new cultural and scenic context. IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land had its final year of presentation in 2010 as well as IBA Stadtumbau, located in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt. Demographically changing and a huge rate of shrinking lead to the IBA Stadtumbau. 19 towns of the state proposed to find solutions concerning their structural renovation under shrinking conditions (Prigge 2008, p. 18).

During the last century the intervals between IBA-exhibitions still became shorter. Between 2000 and 2010 two individual IBAs were running simultaneously. Nowadays five IBAs are taking place at the same time located both in Germany and its neighboring countries Switzerland and the Netherlands.

## **1.2 Current and upcoming IBA-exhibitions:**

Nowadays IBA-exhibitions are taking place in cities, city regions, federal states and tri-national regions. The IBA Hamburg [2007-2013] aims to realize a large city development project dealing with the cities' multi-cultural *backyard* district of Wilhelmsburg (Hajduk 2010, p. 12). The IBA Basel 2020 is the first IBA located in a border triangle containing parts of Switzerland, France and Germany. The IBA Heidelberg aims to position the city as a model city of science (City of Heidelberg ed. 2012, p. 7). And finally the IBA Thuringia – taking place in the entire federal

state – puts the focus on demographic and environmental aspects related to its financial situation (IBA Thuringia ed. 2011, p. 5-7). The first IBA abroad is located in the city region Parkstad Limburg in the most south-eastern part of the Netherlands, flanking Germany directly.

The enormous number of current IBA-exhibitions, the considerations about further IBA [Berlin 2020] and finally the positive reputation of former IBA domestically as well as abroad, lead to believe that there are IBA-typical features which could be implemented in other formats concerning urban and regional projects. IBA-typical recommendations can be useful for Europe-wide forthcoming formats of urban and regional development. Putting the focus on IBA's future in Germany, there are also experiences selected from IBA-similar formats abroad which are defined as possibly learning effects for IBA itself.

## **2. The research project**

### **>The future of International Building Exhibitions<:**

Conducted in the context of a constantly increasing number of IBA-exhibitions in short time intervals the project >The future of International Building Exhibitions< [2009-2010] discussed the development of the IBA-format focused on two research elements.

The first element – the international project research – was aimed at enriching the discussion concerning the format's future with an international view (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7). Considering 80 formats and finally ten case studies [including Manchester's Urban Renaissance Program; Expo Milan 2015; Floriade Venlo 2012; ...] of urban and regional development within the scope of the research project, several IBA-typical features have been defined and evaluated.

The second research element was focused on developing a monitoring system for an internal self-evaluation of future international building exhibitions as an instrument of quality assurance. That element of the research work consisted of two steps and included an analysis of the functional logic of an IBA and the development of recommendations of action for future exhibitions (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 8).

### **2.1 Essential results of the international project research:**

- Although IBA similarity of the international case studies has been a guiding principle for the research project, there are no formats directly comparable with IBA. For similar requirements different projects and formats are being applied (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7).
- Many strategies and projects combine the pure process of building with soft strategies of distinguishing sites either through the arts, communication or events (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7).
- Unique characteristics of an IBA like the linkage of a top-down and bottom-up approach, the admission of experiments and of openness towards innovation and goals have been identified by only a few examined projects. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7).

- Only a few projects work under lab conditions and a bottom-up approach at the same time (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7).
- Comparing IBA with different European formats a tendency towards regionalization can be detected and the areas of reference become broader (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7; p. 17).
- Instruments of analysis and quality control have only been developed in few examples abroad despite an obviously increasing complexity and need for reflection resulting from this fact. In some countries guidelines and *Baukultur* institutions (i.e. institutions for a better built environment) exist, already established in the area of quality control of strategies and projects with IBA-like aspects (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7)

## 2.2 IBA's functional logic

Considering the second research element the project was focused on developing a monitoring system for an IBA internal self-evaluation as an instrument of quality assurance. Neither has there been a monitoring process that can be generalized for the IBA, nor has there been a systematic research for a functional logic which is an essential prerequisite. Based on a case study dealing with the functional logic of the IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land in the federal state of Brandenburg, the research project defined mechanisms of functioning. Therefore partially structured interviews with the protagonists of this IBA-exhibition were a central instrument for the empirical survey. The structure of the interviews was worked out on the basis of the already existing knowledge on international building exhibitions and similar formats (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 8). Finally four phases including several recommendations have been identified:

### Phase 1: pre-IBA-phase

- Defining the urgency of implementing an IBA instead of using conventional planning instruments for structural problems by local actors and stakeholders. Therefore the protagonists need to discuss IBA's admission of experiences and its openness towards innovation at two levels; on the one hand innovation aspects concerning the local and regional development, on the other hand innovation aspects dealing with building and planning culture itself. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7; p. 46)
- Furthermore the pre-IBA-phase requires political support, the debate of a stable IBA-idea, the definition of the area of scale and reference and the exchange of experience. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 47-48)

### Phase 2: starting phase

- Developing a sophisticated structure of communication in order to assure IBA-project's approval by the local population. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 48)
- Institutionalizing the capacity to act concerning both financial and organizing resources. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 49)
- Stabilizing the network of experts and extending the structures of participation concerning IBA's projects. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 49)

### Phase 3: project phase

- Emphasizing the extraordinariness and the “relative alienation” of IBA’s projects. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 50)
- Strengthening the network of projects and sponsors. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 52)
- Integration into an international networking process (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 52)

#### Phase 4: final phase

- Assuring institutional sustainability by defining forthcoming approaches and revoking the IBA-trademark while establishing self-supporting structures simultaneously. (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 52)

The listed phases represent the ideal type of phases that were identified out of an abstraction of the information obtained from the IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land. The process of current and upcoming IBA-exhibitions does not follow rigidly this scheme of phases but show overlaps, parallel developments and also regressions to previous phases. (BVMBS ed. 2011, p. 8)

### **2.3 IBA-typical features / recommendations:**

Approving IBA’s functional logic – structured by phases – the research project extracted general IBA-typical features that are meant to be recommendations for both forthcoming IBA-exhibitions and different projects of urban and regional development. Based on the unique IBA-characteristics there are features considered as being typical for IBA. Initiated by an IBA validation workshop in 2010, the following IBA-typical features were filtered and emphasized (BMVBS ed. 2011, p.8). Therefore, IBA-typical features are:

- the specific innovative character of the idea of the IBA that cannot be realized with conventional instruments and formats,
- the degree of “relative alienation”, meaning external influences and expertise when organizing and realizing an IBA-exhibition,
- a finely divided communication strategy,
- visionary project ideas that are initially created apart from hard calculations,
- the temporary lack of triviality and daily routines,
- the creation of degrees of freedom to allow experimental action and
- the definition of a mission for the future that can serve as a basis for planning at the end of an IBA exhibition (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 8)

### **3. The future of international building exhibitions – experiences from abroad**

Based on the analysis of IBA’s functional logic and its typical features the research project defined – as previously listed – unique characteristics of the IBA like the linkage of a top-down and bottom-up approach, the admission of experiments and of openness towards innovation and goals. These characteristics are IBA’s main potentials (Niemann et al. 2011, p. 322). Comparing IBA with different European formats of urban and regional development there are a few aspects that should be considered regarded to the future of international building

exhibitions. The key-topics in the context of possible learning effects for the IBA can be highlighted in the sense of a cross-sectional view: reason for urban development chains, scale and area of reference, identification of aims and topics, conditions for innovation/funding of innovation, quality of process, communication and image, quality assurance, functional chains and improvement of continuity (BMVBS ed. 2011, p. 7). Regarding the experience out of the international building exhibitions, the following recommendations and conclusions can be drawn for forthcoming IBA:

- IBA should provide clearly defined requirements for sophisticated analysis of the processes. Every IBA is related to specific spatial conditions and unique stakeholder, therefore the processes of following the different aims is important.
- IBA should have the view from outside. Being strongly involved in different internal problems make it necessary to have an ingenuous and sovereign view from an external perspective.
- IBA should encourage participation. The success of every IBA depends on participating the stakeholders and the concerned population.
- IBA should strengthen communication both internally and externally. Discussions in public about the projects, the aims and the successes of the whole process are import to get support from institutions and attention in public.
- IBA should implement (self-) reflective moments. As the process of nearly every IBA is flexible and determined by different decisions the moment of overturning the guidelines is a condition for being successful.
- IBA should examine mechanisms of continuation. As every IBA is running during a limited space of time, it is important to establish structures and conditions to continue the improvements.
- IBA should establish an international exchange of experiences. The format of the International Building Exhibition is getting more and more international related to the sites of the exhibition and is regarded more and more as an instrument to head urban development, therefore it is necessary to learn from each other and to profit form the different experiences.

At this moment, when the IBA format is getting known and discussed as an interesting format for initiating urban development, the research about the results should be intensified. If the Ruhr Region considers “Cooperations and networks have evolved that are now being continued on the basis of inter-municipal cooperations between the towns and cities involved... Other regional activities or the application as European Capital of Culture, would, as they stand, not have been possible without

the IBA, either on the cooperation level or in terms of the vision of seeking to create something jointly together for the region.” (Reicher et al. 2011, p. 17) the question is obvious: How can this link in a chain of effects be used for restructuring the process of urban renewal?

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