

Angela Uttke Transcript

REX:

I'm Rex Lemore, I'm with the Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic and I'm pleased to welcome you to our webinar session: Resizing Communities in a Just and Equitable Manner. Today we'll be looking at the master planning process as a method for resizing communities.

Let me just say a few words about the webinar series. It's designed to provide participants with information from leading and from practitioners from across the world on the methods and strategies for resizing communities in a fair and equitable way. We're intending to facilitate the thoughtful discourse and innovative collaborations among community partners and stake holders engaged in resizing communities. It's more than just a webinar series; it's also an accessible site. We're archiving the series and encouraging participants to access the series at their convenience at places where they can access the internet to bring up this material and discuss it with others to facilitate the discussion of these issues in communities throughout our state and the Midwest. It's also a collection of useful materials. Over the past several months we've been identifying materials that we think helps us understand the challenges of resizing our communities in a fair and just way and have been collecting them on our website at www.ced.msu.edu. And we encourage you to use those materials as appropriate for your conversations and communities.

If you haven't registered we'd like you to because if you register we're able to send you information not only about this webinar series but other webinars and other materials that may be useful to your discussion in the process.

Now because this particular session has been pre-taped we will not be utilizing the chatroom function but we will ask that perhaps you might email us questions that perhaps we might be able to get some response to.

Let me introduce our presenter, I am very excited about this opportunity. We are spanning the Atlantic Ocean and inviting our colleague Dr. Angela Uttke who is an urban planner and urban designer. She is a professor at the Institute of City and Regional Planning in the University of Technology Berlin and head of the Department of Urban Design and Urban Development. Before she was a senior researcher and lecturer at the Institute of Urban Affairs in (Difu) in Berlin and held advanced training courses for city planning officials in urban planning issues and public participation. Her research interests are in the field of sustainable city development and participatory design methods. She is a founding member of JAS, the Jugend Architektur Stadt e.V., a non-profit association dedicated to build environment education and participation of children and young people. And I am very pleased to introduce Dr. Uttke. Dr. Uttke.

DR. UTTKE:

Yes I am very excited to talk with you today. I am going to share with you some information about different strategies and indeed it is that when I started about 20 years ago, urban planning, I remember studying urban growth and how to develop cities, how to expand cities. Although in the beginning of the 90s it became clear that East Germany was facing a decline in population and the closure of industries never seen before and since about 20 years urban planners now in Germany are basically using East German experiences resizing cities is also a big [inaudible word 4:24] to find out ways that cities can be resized, adjusted and still have

a future and an upward future for the citizens. And I somehow already stated the conclusion of my lecture; what planners learn is that what does not work anymore is sit at a desk and do a master plan and then go out and try to [inaudible word 5:00]. This is something that did not work anymore in shrinking cities in East Germany, they found out they had to work a lot with the people, go out there, find a solution, discuss what are the options for the development of the neighborhoods. And you can see up there in the left corner of the slide you see people; you see somehow this is a master plan but you see their experts and you see their ordinary citizens there discussing. And this whole thing about getting out there, doing planning this was a process of learning for planning but also for the citizens who for the first time maybe in their lives really got involved in discussing the future of their towns and cities.

And basically what I want to do is to first give you some ideas of what developments East Germany was facing after reunification and then give you some examples of how communities used strategies to resize their cities and what role master plans met and then of course give some conclusions to the experiences.

Just to give you some ideas, East Germany is a Communist pat, you see the map. East Germany just to give you an idea is just about the size 1/3 of Michigan—no, it is 35% bigger than Michigan and it has a far larger population of about 16 million, this is a number from 1990. Michigan has today has 9.9 million, that's what I at least found out. The population in East Germany we have about 385 people living per square mile and you have 175 persons per square mile so we see it is more densely populated than Michigan, it is bigger than Michigan but still I think some features are comparable.

The developments of East Communist Germany after reunification can be described mainly as two words: demographic revolution and deindustrialization. East Germany lost about 1.5 million inhabitants due to inter-German emigration. If you look at this map all this dark blue is basically an outline of East Germany. You see there is a reddish circle around Berlin basically, so a lot of people moved out of Berlin of course out into suburbs which are in the East Germany countryside I would call it and all the rest of Germany lost population because people moved to the west side of Germany and we had a very harsh birth drop, drop of birth rates to about 1/3 of what it was before. And what is very unique is that the German immigration is especially used by women. So a lot of well educated women and you have to know that in the communist part of East Germany women were part of the workforce, they were not home stay mom, hardly anyone stayed home. I remember growing up in East Germany, none of my classmates had moms stay home so they were all working. So after working down a lot of women left to have a career, to do a profession in West Germany so this is very unique.

And what is happening now in East Germany is a picture like this. We have a very old over aged population and this over aging is going on so this is probably something that you would see very much exaggerated in German cities. You have a high percentage of older people who simply stayed and did not move for other jobs in the western part of Germany. We have a birth drop; we have schools closed down due to the fact that we don't have much young people there anymore.

So what does it mean for cities? Of course cities are different; this is just giving you a range of population bars by East German cities between 6 to 40%. And still of course this population loss can be noticed differently; in larger cities 6% is not something you would notice much but 40% in a small town of 50,000 which dropped to 30,000 will be noticed very much by vacant buildings, vacant signs. And what is even more severe is the fact that 80% of jobs in industries were lost between 1990 and 1993. So within three years basically 80% of all these jobs

in industry—chemical industry, manufacturing industry for example—had basically closed down and hardly any new jobs were created. The unemployment rate in 2003, so about 10 years ago, was actually 18%. And even today we have, Germany is lucky, we did very well even in the recession we have the lowest unemployment rate after the reunification of Germany but you still can see in 2008 the very high difference in unemployment rate between East Germany and West Germany; the unemployment rate in East Germany is still twice as high as in West Germany.

And what we have is a large population of the working force is commuting. They have, still have their homes in East Germany and are commuting for work to West Germany or even Austria or Switzerland, coming over weekends and then going during the week to work in other parts of Germany or even other countries to earn their living. Just to give you some ideas of these developments the population and also the deindustrialization had a major impact on the way East German cities are developing. They had huge federal investment programs going on in East Germany to offset some of these developments. They remodeled, refurbished, they rebuilt in the cities [inaudible 12:26-12:30] but still they still had empty housing stock, Brownfields, and underused infrastructure and public services and a perforated urban fabric was developing. Urban planners basically had to deal with this.

So how did they do this? I think this best can be explained showing you some examples of what cities do and of course I want to show you what role master plans had in this redevelopment strategy and how big the power of planning is to create a future and how they work with the citizens, how they got them engaged and participated in planning. I already said at the beginning that the participation of citizens really became a key to a lot of resizing strategies. And maybe a unique German thing, when there is a challenging problem there is a tradition to set up laboratories, to do model projects in Germany and they are framed by something we call International Building Exhibition. So the IBA you see their stands for International Building Exhibition; bringing experts, international experts, national experts together in cities to develop model projects to find solutions to issues of city planning and also architecture. So in 2000 such a laboratory got installed and it is only for a limited time, ten years. And in this ten years the laboratory would be used to try out new things, to find a solution. After ten years you can see what would work, what was developed and also transferred to other cities and things that did not work you would stop. And within this ten years city governments, international experts, national experts would work together to find a solution. And this is a unique solution; you usually would get city government very much, at least in Germany in this period of time, to get them committed to try out new things to find a solution. And this IBA has been quite successful in Germany.

One IBA got installed in 2000 for as a laboratory for resizing cities. By the way right now we have a laboratory set up in Hamburg which is more focused on climate change and to develop ideas of what climate change could do, what could be a solution for climate change in German cities. But let me come back to this building exhibition. This is a building exhibition for resizing cities to generate impulses in cities. It was held in Saxony-Anhalt here in Germany, 19 cities participated. Big towns or big cities with 300,000 people is what would be called a big city here in Germany but also a lot of small towns with 30,000 or 20,000 inhabitants. The aim was to test simply planning approaches, resizing strategies and to find keys and visions for resizing the city. And a very important part of this whole laboratory is that the officials from different cities would get together and talk about their resizing strategies and form a network to learn from each other. And most of the strategies that I am presenting here are basically developed within this laboratory.

The first city is the city of Dessau-RoBlau that I want to present. I will show you that in 2025 the city has lost about 30% of their population and by the forecast for 2005 goes actually to 35%. So the city discussed how they could redevelop spatially their city and decide if they want to strengthen their city course and develop landscape zones within the city. This is a radical urban development concept, redevelopment concept. And this was developed and formulated in a strategic, flexible urban redevelopment concept. This concept has time lines and it has spatial implications and they were flexible. And somehow you would call this a master plan but it's not as formal anymore it is more like an informal flexible strategic plan that got developed here in the cities and was also a very important part of this management of this urban redevelopment concept was more like a vacant land management concept and also a service concept they put into this urban redevelopment concept.

So yes it is a master plan but it is different, it has very flexible informal parts in it. And especially the participation of people, it was developed with the people and it has a lot of implementation and ideas that only work with the people. And this is best explained by one important part of this redevelopment concept that the land that was gained by the omission of vacant buildings was divided up into plains that people can acquire for nonprofit use by single residents, by initiatives. This vacant land management concept is something that was developed with the citizens, development for the citizens, that was communicated to them by walks throughout the cities, by meetings, but putting up signs. You can see here on one side of a building there is a big sign of somehow a campaign saying [inaudible 19:12 to 19:16], so this is a strategy that also works a lot with communication in marketing tools.

And looking at the process of how did the city come up with this strategic plan? You see a slide that is quite complex, don't even try to read it—it is by the way in German so you would not be able to read it—but still it shows that there were a lot of steps and points where they got together in workshops, where they did competition, where they did a marketing strategy, communication strategy, the first implementations to get things started. And overall looking at all cities that participated in these resizing laboratories it became clear they had about 8 instruments and working methods they used. One important method was interdisciplinary workshops; some were closed workshops only for experts but a lot of them were open workshops, citizens or other initiatives participating in these workshops. Like in this for example they started with an interdisciplinary workshop and the result was the Strategic Urban Regeneration Plan.

Then they used design and idea competitions, they could be by professionals but they could be placed into schools. They could be idea competitions by the citizens themselves when they are asked to bring in ideas to compete for the best idea. A very important part are studies and conception papers. And I put master plan beside it because this is where I would put the master plans here; they are more of a conceptual and study character, an informal character. And then of course there were implementation planning, so where the mission needed to be prepared to set up the landscaping.

What was very important in these cities was to get the discussion going and to form networks. This existing initiatives with existing activists in the city to get them also to participate in the planning process. Public participation formats, I would say everything is up to date with public participation was discussed and used in this resizing strategies. So it was discussed what is the best way to get our people participating? Is it meeting the right way, is the competition the right way, or should be do a survey, do we need walks, do we need other forms of participation to really get to our citizens, to get to the extra people and to get them involved?

Very important was spatial realization and intervention. Not only the whole planning was going on, it was important that something happened. And some of these claims and for example [inaudible 22:35 to 22:37], I talked about were also taking over the city themselves. There red planted oaks to really show that these oaks are not here just for a short time, we are talking about shrinking our city to a size that will work for the future and we see oaks as something that can grow for a hundred years because we don't expect our city to be half the size we had before.

Communication and marketing of the resizing strategy was very important. And here especially experts, external experts can be discussed with the city officials and communication strategies and marketing. And at the end of course if the master plan gets more informal, if it's not the comprehensive plan anymore, then the city council position saying, "Yes we accept this informal master plan as our future guide for the future spatial development of our city" becomes very important and was very crucial that the city got their city government upholding and committing to these informal master plans.

Just to give also two examples of how resizing strategies were also developed I want to give two more examples of two cities that were really looking at the sub factors they can offer. And education for example is one sub factor that is very important to keep people, to keep families in the city. Also especially if you have a shrinking city you have to decide which schools, which kindergartens, what youth centers you are closing down and which centers, which schools you would keep. And the city of Bernburg, this city is expecting to have half of its population in 2025 than today. They really thought so what can we do to attract families, to still be interesting for also local businesses to stay here with us?

Right now the city of Bernburg, we studied their talents and what they can offer and what the talents of the people are. They found out they have 20% of all students, high school students, don't finish school. On the other side they have local companies that have jobs to offer that they cannot fill with local people, so something is going wrong. And then on the other side they have dropping student numbers, due to the decline of population of course, and they have to decide so where would we put schools? So they decide we close the schools outside of the city, on the city outskirts, move them to the city center and develop a concept where we strengthen education, high school secondary school education concentrated in the inner city, develop a concept where we offer lifelong learning in our city.

And what is very interesting city planners and educators, head of schools, high schools for example, secondary schools, kindergartens, youth centers, they sat down and discussed how can, what could be a pedagogical concept for the future? And what does it mean for the spatial impact for the city? And I find it very interesting that the city of Bernburg really committed to "we will strengthen our city center by building upon education and cultural institutions". You see here a slide of this existing cultural educational institute in the city of Bernburg. And if I just go back one slide you see that it is a very attractive, very historical old city center. So they really want to make sure it stays attractive, they would rather shrink at the outskirt; bring all the power they have—and they see the power as the young students—to the city centers. And by this strategy the number of high school students will raise in the inner city location will rise to 1450 students. And you can imagine this city gets very lively and the Campus Technicus, which will be a center of secondary education in this small town, will open next year. And I think it will be very interesting to see what the use basically does to a city center and if it works to build up here an attractive education center.

The next example, and my last example I want to show you is the city of Köthen, which is also a rather small city of 30,000 people. They have to face a population loss of 37% by 2025.

And then this city, dig into their talents and ask them what could be the future of our city? Our industry has lapsed, what can we build on? They found out that the city has been the center of homoeopathy, it is German, actually I am not sure how to say it in English. But this is a medical way of treating patients that is right now getting very much importance in East Germany and all over the world. So the city said, "We have been the home of the founder of this homoeopathy and Samuel Hahnemann lived Köthen and practiced in the longest time of his life". So they said, "Okay let's build Hahnemann health care as an economic factor of growing importance in our city and see what we can do with this talent, with this history that we have to offer". And indeed they were successful. This project, actually this city was discussed all over Germany in national press, in TV; the headlines were, "Shrinking to Beauty". And this city was successful to open up a museum on homoeopathy. They were able to remodel a historic hospital into an international library of homoeopathy and they were successful to get the international library relocated from the very important city of Hamburg from a big city of Hamburg into a small town. I think this is a; they were also able to build up an education center for conferences and seminars and they will now start also a small college offering a Master's degree in homoeopathy in the city.

You see I did not mention a master plan at all because these strategies did not work with master plans, they built upon their talents. Of course maybe the focus of education, the result was a master plan that [inaudible 30:47] and planners got together coming up with a master plan for the city. But the city occurred and basically worked more the principle of homoeopathy. Looking at their citizens, asking them, listening to their complaints and then finding out solutions and then setting medical points basically on the symptoms.

What was very interesting was that they tried to use homoeopathy; they got doctors and planners sat together at the table and discussing how homoeopathy planning would work. And they had a study case which was a road, a street residential street in the city of Köthen that has a lot of vacant buildings, housing buildings and the city was not able to get the home owners to do something, to either demolish the buildings, the remodel them. So they talked with the doctors, the medical doctors, what can we do? So the medical doctors offered them, "Okay let's try to put up signs to get to the home owners". And you see one picture here where they really put up signs on these buildings, "What can we do?", "Why don't you do anything?", "Why don't we put a hotel here?", and they were waiting for reactions. It did not work. The signs did not cause any reaction from the home owners.

So the medical doctors told the city planners, "Why don't you turn off the lights and see what happens"? And they really turned out the lights for several days in the streets and this really got the residents going. They got really angry and came to the city and complained but it started the discussion and it started action. So all together they came up with strategies to redo some of these buildings, remodel them, some of these buildings are now demolished and some of these buildings are now used as housing, offering now apartments again and are also open to other uses. And this whole strategy of setting up a city on the soft skill of health care and homoeopathy was really a success story throughout Germany.

What can I conclude? And this also comes to the questions you gave to me. So I think the resizing process in Germany was very much based on finding talents and finding the distinctiveness that cities and towns had to offer compared to other cities and towns. The planners and the experts and also the citizens in these towns and cities were looking for what are their spatial talents, what are their talents as cities, what are the talents people can offer? The key also to resized communities was to find the right balance between demolition and also identification, to get networking going and to do something like a proactive planning on one

hand and on the other hand a land management that is working today and making things happen today.

It was very important for the cities, especially when they discussed their talents and distinctiveness, to bring in external experience and experts to moderate complicated participation processes, to get communication and marketing of concepts of resizing concepts going. And then it was very important to use the state of the art in planning and communication methods. And then last but not least, exchange experiences in a city network, exchange experiences with other cities that are in the resizing process. To find out what works there and maybe we can learn from it. Also, at least my experience, if you see things have been tried in other cities and have been working, you want to also try maybe complicated things in your own town.

Master plans, what role do they have? Like I said, they give a very informal character, they are a very informal instrument and they have more of a flexible, adjustable context, and they are a product of participation. A wide participation of all kinds of stakeholders, not only experts but especially citizens, the local community, business community, other initiatives and organizations in town.

How big is the Power of Planning to create the future? I would say the Power of Planning in Germany at least is what I can best judge; I think it's still quite high. But it needs to be a lot more innovative about resources. Compared to the nineties when the shrinking process started and the first big national investment programs came, these investment programs are not there anymore so they are not big subsidies to be used. So communities in Germany have to be a lot more creative about funding of projects, they also have to be a lot more creative about dealing with extra space in a positive way and to deal with the talents of the people they have. So I think the role of planning has changed, it's less desk talk; it's a lot more field work. In Germany informal planning instruments I would call the master plans an informal planning instrument by now, they are a lot more important than comprehensive plans and then land use plans because they really are giving more vision and more flexibility to react to developments in the future. And then what is important, even I would say as important as a good master plan is a good communication and moderation of planning processes. So the role of planners has also changed in that way that they have to do a lot of communication work and a lot of moderation work in the cities.

How can the cities be engaged and how can they participate in planning. I already showed in some examples how this can be done. I have to say that resizing an East German city is a lot about participatory design and a lot about participatory planning. It is about connecting space and forming options and possibilities. It has very much to incorporate discourse; it goes out in the field to get the people, to work with the people, to find their talents, and to work with their talents. And it's not only participation and planning, and I think the example in Dessau very much it's also implementations so that citizens become implementers themselves, not only be investors but also each citizens can be an investor in their city basically on a very small scale; in Dessau it's only a claim of 4,000 square feet but still they can be designers, shapers of the city themselves. And especially if you do this, if you raise the importance of participation, moderators and facilitators become a very important part of this whole process.

And last but not least what has been found out in these laboratory cities that have been part of the resizing of the International Building Exhibition, these 19 cities, is its very important not only to have a master plan or a master strategy for resizing, it's very important also to have short term implementations, to have spatial realizations and interventions, positive spatial realizations and interventions, as signs of change, of positive change. So that is why it was very

important for Dessau of course the whole landscape, the islands of city centers they want to develop or neighborhood centers in a floating landscape is a future vision but Dessau claims they already have implementations today and I think this is strategies you have to changes, or master plans have to have implementations that can be done today.

And last but not least I would like to finish with a quote and I think this quote is very much bringing also an experience we had with East Germany with all these resizing strategy projects that Sonja Beeck who is one of the project directors of the International Building Exhibition, and she was by the way also in charge of the city of Köthen who came up with the homoeopathy concept, she said: “A very important experience for the planners was to realize how valuable it is to approach problems with a deliberately unbiased attitude”—to be open—“and observe things carefully”—so look very close, what can be done, what are the talents, what is distinct, how can citizens work, what are their needs?—“and in the end allow themselves to be surprised by the impulses coming from the residents”. So it was an experience we had that a lot of planners were surprised by the ideas, by the engagements of the residents here in East Germany. So I would like to conclude like this and I am open to questions.

REX:

Thank you Dr. Uttke, that was an excellent presentation and I appreciate your sharing with us some of the lessons that you’ve learned in Germany as you sought to resize your community, and it’s very much in line with some of the challenges we face in Michigan and other part of the Midwest. So thank you very much for that insightful presentation.