



Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States

From Adjustment to Reinvention

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Chapter 16

Central Europe's Brownfields: Catalysing a Planning Response in the Czech Republic

Yaakov Garb and Jiřina Jackson

Introduction

A brownfield is developed land (such as a factory site, railroad siding, or former military base) that is now underused – often vacant or derelict, and sometimes contaminated or feared contaminated. While the market will usually ‘recycle’ land whose former use has become obsolete in some way, brownfield properties are ‘stuck’ in an underused state. The market, left to itself, will not recycle them into more active use, often because the perceived cost and risk of bringing them back into use exceeds the benefits to owners. The broader urban and social costs of these underused ‘holes’ in the urban fabric are great, and would often justify the necessary expenditures. Land in central and accessible locations lies non-productive, in terms of the urban fabric and municipal revenues, while marring the contiguity and desirability of adjacent properties. To eliminate the barriers and market failures that prevents such land from reentering into productive use, some kind of public sector intervention (finance, coordination, regulatory change) is often necessary.

This chapter describes how the urban planning issues surrounding the problem of brownfields play out in the Central European context, and the role of a non-profit advocacy organization in generating change. While the issue is well recognised in Western Europe (as well as the U.S.), and a significant professional literature on the topic has developed, the particular circumstances of Central Europe produced a unique kind and scale of brownfield problem, and posed regionally specific planning and institutional barriers to their solution. We describe these particular circumstances and challenges, and why this kind of cross-cutting and complex issue was particularly amenable to NGO interventions. In particular, we describe the catalytic work of one NGO in raising awareness of the brownfield issue, and helping lower barriers to their solution. The interaction of the brownfield problem with EU accession is also discussed, including some suggestions for making EU funding and planning categories more capable of facilitating brownfield reuse.

Our goals are to illustrate how one pressing urban problem and its remedy play out in the Central European context; to highlight the many levels at which change

must take place in order to effect change on a complex (multi-disciplinary and multi stakeholder) planning problem in a transitional economy; to use the experience of one organization's advocacy to illustrate how the non-governmental sector can effect systemic change on this kind of complex issue; and to point to the promises and deficits thus far of the EU accession process in assisting in these solutions. Most of our examples are drawn from the Czech Republic, but apply with some variation throughout the region.

Extensive Brownfields as a Post-Socialist Legacy

Brownfields are produced as a regular outcome of industrial restructuring in any country. But the dynamics of socialism and the circumstances of transition from a socialist to a market economy, both described below, left Central European countries with an exceptionally large burden of brownfields, especially urban brownfields, and with a greatly lessened ability of the market to 'recycle' these properties into productive use.

The processes by which rural and exurban brownfields in Central Europe developed would be familiar from Western European and U.S. contexts. Historically, industries were located close to their energy sources. Thus, glass manufacturers were established in mountains areas, close to sources of timber, and changed locations when their fuel areas had been lumbered. Textile industries were situated adjacent to the streams that powered them. And steel, chemical and other coal-dependent industries were located close to sources of coal, on sites that were abandoned once coal extraction ceased after nearby sources were depleted or when mining became uneconomical.

These closures and relocations of production facilities often left polluted and dilapidated sites, and had drastic social consequences. In Poland, in Silesia, the former centre of the mining, steel and chemical industries, large areas are utterly contaminated. The areas of former steelworks in Ostrava (Czech Republic) are not much better, as are large areas abandoned by the socialist chemical industry. An atlas of industrial production in the socialist Central Europe would nowadays also serve as a fairly good map of the contamination of buildings, soil and water in the region. In addition to the larger and now notorious facilities in such an atlas, are thousands of smaller operations all over the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC), which are now seriously contaminated, and left in a dilapidated state in the aftermath of industrial and political transformations.

An exceptional feature of Central European brownfields compared to Western Europe, however, is their abundance in *urban* settings. This is the result of the shared socialist heritage of CEC cities. Under socialism, with no real estate or capital markets to speak of, state companies did not consider the cost of land or of money when making construction or operating decisions. Sometimes, ideological or political considerations dictated location: such as in the location of a large steel industry next to Krakow, in order to dilute the notorious intellectual and religious character of the

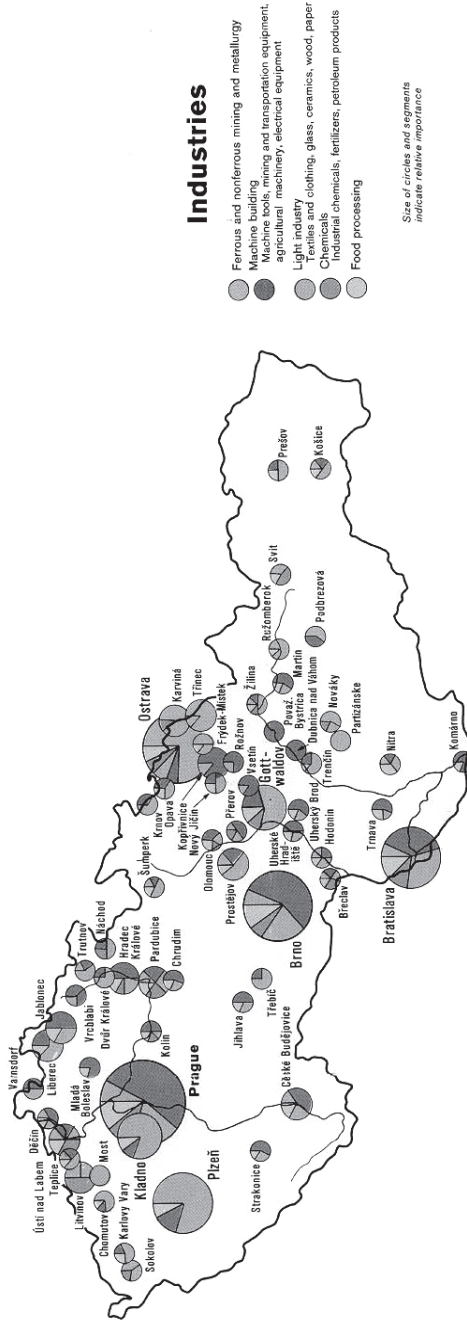


Figure 16.1 Czechoslovakia Industries, 1974
 Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/czech_republic.html. Map No. 501820

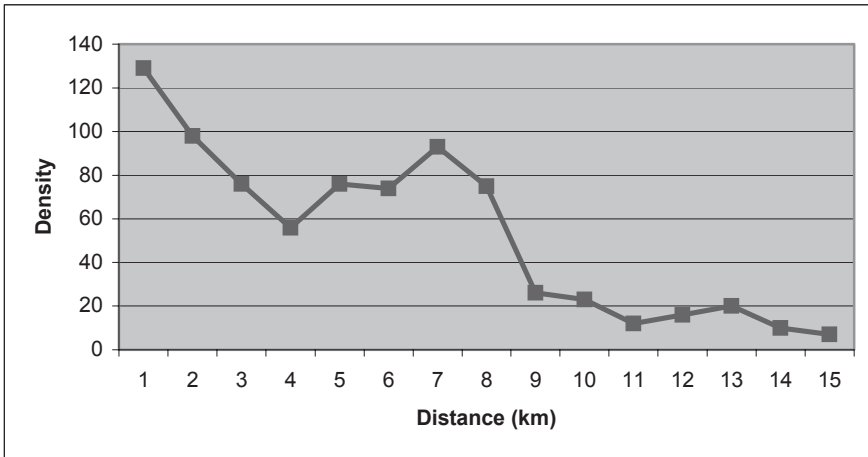


Figure 16.2 Densities in built up areas as a function of distance from city centre: The density 'hump' typical of CEC cities

Data Source: J. Brzeski, 'Guidelines for Developing Local Land Management Strategy,' Krakow Real Estate Research Institute, 2001

city. Thus, production facilities were situated in what would otherwise have been prime urban sites in or adjacent to central locations.

Additionally, in command economies, long range plans and quotas regulated raw goods allocation and production. The inflexibility and bad predictions about demand and supply associated with these spurred production facilities to set aside large areas for the storage of raw materials and finished products, often for extended periods. In the absence of market costs, these facilities were relatively insensitive to the spatial and financial inefficiencies entailed by these build-ups, and their premises were often much larger than their counterparts in capitalist economies.

Thus, post-socialist cities have a legacy of comparatively more and larger industrial sites in cities, as illustrated in figure 16.1. Central European cities (even those that are not heavily industrial), have 2 to 3 times the amount of space devoted to current or past industrial uses than their western counterparts. The portion of land devoted to industrial uses is even higher in distinctively industrial cities, and these face massive brownfield and restructuring problems with the demise of their indigenous industries.

Another aspect of socialist planning further added to the formation of large industrial sites on what is today quite central and valuable land in Central European cities. Massive high-rise housing estates were built beyond city edge industrial sites (often to house workers in these industries), enveloping these industrial sites within the city. Because of these densely populated housing estates, the usual curve of declining density as one moves away from city centres is interrupted by a large 'hump' in central European cities (see Figure 16.2).

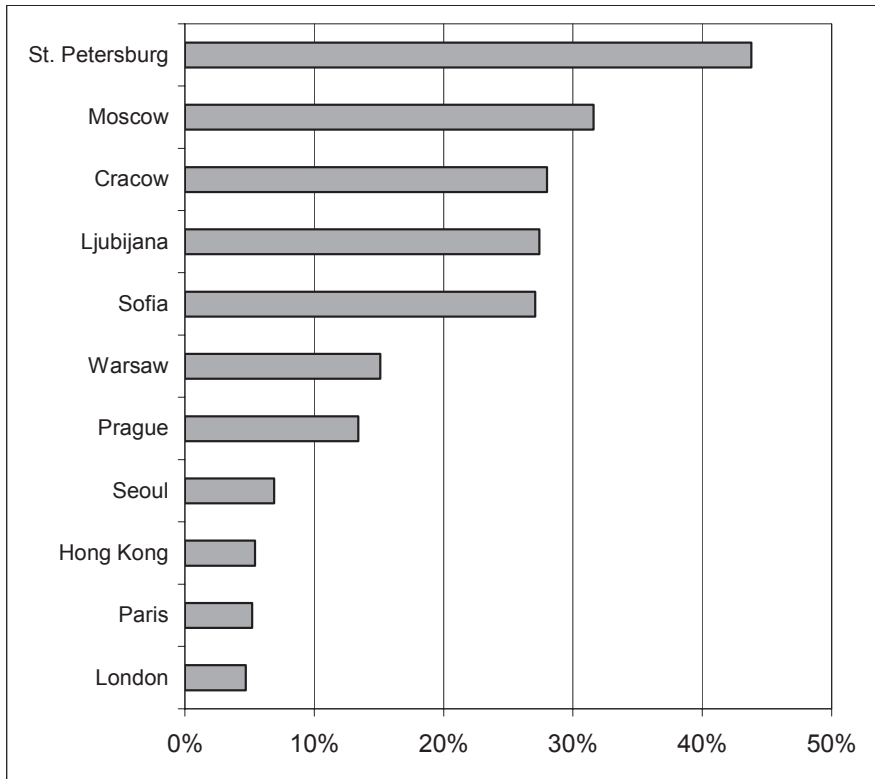


Figure 16.3 Percentage of Urban Land Devoted to Current or Past Industrial Uses

Source: Alain Bertaud, 'The Spatial Structures of Central and Eastern European Cities: More European Than Socialist?', paper presented at the 'Winds of Societal Change: Remaking Post-Communist Cities,' University of Illinois, June 18–19, 2004

With the change in regime in the late eighties, much CEEC industry found itself rapidly redundant, unable to compete in broadened markets terms of its efficiency and the products it offered. A spiral of decline commenced. Maintenance (already a weak point in socialist economies) virtually stopped with the change in regime. Cash-starved companies sold their production and maintenance equipment. The functioning of companies sold in the privatisation process was often short lived, only deepening their dilapidation of their property holdings. Indeed, sometimes these sales were not intended to yield a functioning firm, but were for the purpose of asset stripping. Some properties were rented in a dilapidated form, and on an oversupplied market, and put to secondary uses (for car breakers, for example) that could further contaminate the land.

The physical degradation of these sites was accompanied by a degradation of their ownership status and integrity. Through the privatisation process, and because

owners and bankruptcy administrators tended to dispose of properties in small individual lots, these often became less viable purchases for redevelopment. Other sites were unsellable because they were securities for mortgages, often valued at hundreds of percent their actual value.

In addition to the brownfields caused by industrial obsolescence, additional brownfields arose through demilitarisation that emptied large army bases in and around CEC cities. Extensive railway lands and siding areas, often quite polluted, are also drastically underused in many Central European cities.

The extent of Central European brownfields did not appear immediately with the transition, but grew as firms failed and properties degraded. Brownfields began to be a policy issue during the privatisation process, and especially with the visible reluctance of foreign investors to purchase sites that were or might be contaminated (combined with their eagerness for greenfield sites at the city edge.) With more and more untouchable sites dotting the urban landscape, the scale and seriousness of the brownfield problem in Central Europe became visible.

The urban consequences of the patches of underused land within cities are intensified by the sprawling patchy development of greenfields for commerce, industry and housing outside cities. Shrinking urban populations, and the competition from the easy exurban development on greenfield sites makes it even more difficult to bring brownfield sites back into productive use.

The Barriers to Brownfield Reuse: The Czech Example

Unlike many urban problems, the question of brownfields is relatively conflict-free, in that its solution is not, fundamentally or substantially, to the benefit of some stakeholders at the expense of others. More than most issues, the recycling of urban land, is a win-win solution, benefiting a range of stakeholders in the private and public sectors, at various scales.

Still, it is a obstinate problem. The difficulties lie elsewhere: in the complexity of the issue and of the linkages and coordination required for a solution (linkages across several disciplines and a multitude of stakeholders, for example); in the absence of a clear-cut locus of responsibility; and in the diffuseness of the benefits to be gained from an overall solution, whose appreciation requires a fairly sophisticated understanding of urban dynamics.

At a very basic level, the very absence of the recognition that brownfields constitute a category is a problem. It was not clear, initially, that a dilapidated railway siding here, an abandoned Soviet army barracks there, and a contaminated factory in a third place, all constituted a single kind of issue, indeed a serious one. A further problem, was the lack of any data and measures on how extensive brownfields were: no clear-cut definitions of underused land, nor of the various kinds and parameters of such land, no registry of sites, nor estimate or mapping of their extent, were available.

And, even with the dawning recognition of brownfields as a problem with a name, there was still confusion and fragmentation regarding the locus of responsibility,

leadership, and coordination for mobilizing around the issue. For example, in the Czech Republic, these resided among a multiplicity of agencies. Thus, it was the *National Property Fund* (a state agency responsible for the privatisation process), which instituted Environmental Clearance Contracts to reassure prospective purchasers in the second round of privatisation regarding the sometimes crippling liabilities associated with potentially and actually contaminated state-owned properties privatised in the 'first wave' of privatisation after the political transition in the late eighties. The *Ministry of Environment*, was a useful technical consultant and supervisor for site cleanup, and a first point of recourse for sites posing a substantial environmental risk. *CzechInvest*, the government investment promotion agency under the responsibility of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, charged with developing and promoting sites, primarily for foreign investors, was prompted to develop brownfield awareness and skills by the recurring questions of potential investors regarding urban sites. The *Ministry of Regional Development*, traditionally charged with the formation of national level planning, with the re-formation of a regional level of administration, and with links to and training of local administration, was well positioned to be concerned with a national strategy on brownfields, or with the training of local authorities to inventory and assess their brownfield holdings. The *Ministry of Trade and Industry* itself, which had long been responsible for the environmental rehabilitation of depleted mineral extraction sites, was also a repository of important experience and initiative. And because many *Ministry of Finance* departments touched on issues that related to brownfields, because it often exerted considerable coordinating capacity, and because of its ability to strategically recognise and act on the long-term costs of deferred problems, this Ministry might also be a key locus for taking leadership on the brownfields issue. Yet, despite, and perhaps because of, the multiplicity of relevant authorities, no clear-cut leader on the brownfield issue emerged, which would coordinate the activities of these and other players, and set a tempo for their engagement with the issue.

Associated with the absence of a locus of leadership and coordination, was the absence of a strategy and guiding principles. Key choices needed to be made: by whom should the thousands of sites be counted and assessed, according to what principles should their treatment be prioritised, where should the funds for this come from, and what were the goals and targets that would drive this effort? Without a clear-cut 'owner' of the problem, and a clear strategy for tackling it, it would be difficult to galvanise the necessary political will to make changes across a range of institutions and spheres.

Besides these abstract problems of (lack of recognition, institutional locus of responsibility, and strategy), a set of more mundane impediments and a lack of tools, hampered the market uptake of brownfields.

Some of these impediments might seem accidental and obscure, yet for a developer pursuing a brownfield site, the devil really was in the details of administrative rules and procedures. For example, with many large single sites broken into multiple ownership through the privatisation process, complex land assembly was often a prerequisite for a large project; yet the legal instruments for this were quite uncertain.

Months and years of work could go down the drain with a single recalcitrant owner. Something as small as the 30 year depreciation terms for the costs of demolition and environmental clearance, made brownfield sites a relatively unattractive investment, compared with other activities, whose costs could be depreciated over a far shorter period. The local planning system was often inflexible and arcane, requiring, for example, much learning and frustration in order to change the zoning status of a former industrial site into a more appropriate commercial or residential use. The levels of cleanup demanded of contaminated sites were sometimes overly uniform – not sufficiently discriminating of the intended end use of the site, whose ordinary ambient state would be far below the levels of cleanup demanded for ‘rehabilitation.’

It is no wonder, then, that, in the first decade or so after the transition, playing by the rules in obtaining, rezoning, clearing, and redeveloping brownfield sites was too frustrating for *bone fide* developers. As they abandoned attempts to redevelop brownfields, the field was initially largely left to the less careful or informed. Local planners and environmental administrators, as well as local property buyers and stakeholders often did not realise all the risks and complexities entailed by urbanised land reuse. This led to the development of a niche for developers who cut corners, though in doing so they were able to develop brownfield properties only to the lower standards of a local market, since such crudely redeveloped properties were unlikely to pass review by the competent due diligence teams employed by large international investors. This was compounded by the fact that certain permits could be purchased, rather than legitimately obtained, and professional consultants could be found who would look the other way.

A more serious impediment to brownfield rehabilitation was the structural disincentive posed by the ready availability of greenfield sites. In essence, by providing connecting infrastructure (roads, sewage, electricity), and ignoring the externalities of ex-urban uses, the government was subsidizing the development of greenfield sites, and undermining the relative appeal of brownfield sites despite their more spatially efficient locations. Recycled brownfield sites in most major Central European cities are, in principle, sufficient to support years, if not decades, of new development, which is instead leaking out to the office parks and hypermarkets at ribbon sprawl locations on radial highways.

A final and important kind of barrier to brownfield reuse is the lack of technical tools and professional know-how. Some of these are quite simple: such as a simple method for local authorities to audit and prioritise their brownfield holdings, or a nation-wide registry of contaminated sites and their parameters, linked to the cadastral registry, so that buyers can unambiguously know the status of their sites, and sellers can record the kind of cleanup performed. Similarly, a compilation of the unit costs of various kinds of clearance and cleanup procedures would allow a better ability to foresee and benchmark a proposed project, and prevent unscrupulous prices for work performed. More sophisticated financial, legal, and administrative tools are required (and were lacking), for example, to support the kind of public-

private partnership arrangements, which would be necessary in order to mobilise around and raise capital for brownfield projects.

The Role of an Advocacy Organization in Addressing a Complex National-Level Problem

The previous sections have described the massive extent of brownfields problems in post-Communist cities, and the substantial barriers to tackling these. Despite talk of the importance of urban land effective management, somehow, amidst the pressing issues of transition and the priorities that were a condition for EU accession, these land use issues did not receive the same kind of national attention or outside technical assistance. Though the questions of urban land availability and land recycling are clearly linked to broader issues of structural change and competitiveness, EU subsidiarity principles placed land use and planning issues out of the bounds or at least the central thrust of EU involvement. The 6,500 or so Czech communities, which have primary planning powers, might have been a key player in addressing the brownfield sites that so many of them possessed; but, as we have seen, they lacked the know-how and overview necessary to mobilise necessary national level changes. These circumstances created a leadership vacuum, that made NGO interventions of special importance and leverage. This chapter describes, through the experiences of one NGO, the kind of networked advocacy that was attempted, and what it was able to achieve. . Through this, we hope to lay out the kind of catalytic potential the NGO niche offers in facilitating comprehensive change in a planning regime.

Several NGOs began work on the brownfield issue, some early on, and others have joined in more recently. For example, the Vankovka civic association in Brno was active consistently over a long period in lobbying for the rehabilitation of the old Vankovka factory site, close to the centre of town, so that this could be developed into a thriving commercial space with areas devoted to community use. The brownfield project of The Institute for Transport and Development Policy (ITDP), whose brownfield work phased into the work of the Prague-based NGO ('civic association'), IURS, was one of the early leaders in the brownfield advocacy area, and its work, in which the authors were involved, is described here. The Prague-based Institute for Environmental Policy also took up brownfields issues, preparing an analysis of the legal framework for brownfields rehabilitation. More recently, one of the strongest Czech NGOs, the CTKP (Centre for Communal Programs), has begun to focus on the brownfield issue

The NGO described operated out of Prague, with a three-year mandate and funding to work on 'smart growth' issues (sprawl restrain and city revitalization) in Central Europe.¹ This organization, with in-house skills in both the property

1 The Institute for Transport and Development Policy (www.itdp.org), based in New York, and operating internationally, had been operating on transport issues in Central Europe since the early 1990s. A grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation for 'smart growth' advocacy enabled the work described in this chapter. IURS, a Prague-based civic association

development cycle and in public interest advocacy, had a considerable advantage in the situation described above, of a serious problem, largely unidentified, demanding new insights and tools, and coordinated action across sectors and disciplines. Various freedoms allowed the organization to be responsive to this emerging issue, and focus on mobilizing brownfields at a national and regional scale. Not being bound to a particular institutional or disciplinary agenda (as various government agencies are) nor geographic scale (as municipal and local actors are), the organization was able to consult with a variety of stakeholders and build a systemic viewpoint. The luxury of multi-year funding, and the knowledge that it was to facilitate change in a field, rather than ‘set up shop,’ allowed the organization to focus on and do what was best for the topic at hand, rather than being driven by PR considerations. Thus, as opposed to a consultancy or even a government ministry, the NGO was able to ‘give away’ ideas and expertise, rather than hoarding them for repeat sale or building institutional power. The NGO ‘do-gooder’ status made the organization less threatening, initially, to other stakeholders, who could collaborate and discuss difficulties more freely (though some players became more nervous, over time, as the NGO began to generate analyses and recommendations appeared to highlight their own inaction).

Because an advocacy NGO’s resources are nimbleness and independence, rather than large resources or institutional power, it must create change catalytically, rather than by brute force. For example, it can do things such as

- educating and embarrassing other larger players into action;
- networking players with one another;
- importing knowledge and best practices;
- demonstrating in pilot projects what might be done more broadly;
- generating and exhorting a strategic viewpoint or plan;
- cultivating and nourishing individuals in key locations within formal institutions; and
- quickly creating small but pivotal tools or pieces of knowledge, that can leverage larger change.

In this case, the NGO began its work with a kick-off conference on the topic of brownfields, and invited a range of panellists (from various ministries, local and regional authorities, the private sector, and other NGOs) to give a short presentation structured by a set of questions regarding their own organization’s or sector’s response to ‘the brownfield issue,’ basic background

devoted to urban sustainability issues, was established by the project, as partner and eventually an inheritor of the Central European initiatives started under this ‘smart growth’ mandate (see www.brownfields.cz). Jirina Jackson, based in Prague, acted as the project’s Central Europe coordinator, and conducted most of the work on the ground, in collaboration with Yaakov Garb, ITDP’s Director of Central European programs.

on which was provided in conference preparation packet. Once a couple of key ministerial players had agreed to talk, other ministries could not afford to not be absent, even if they had little or no idea about the topic. This sent a wave of (sometimes frantic) preparation through several organizations, in order to prepare a description of 'what we are doing about the brownfields crisis.' In several cases, the hosting NGO itself was called on to do a good deal of the coaching on the preparation, providing important opportunities for mutual education. High-profile sponsorship for the workshop by the city of Prague was obtained, which had the happy side-effect of requiring formal approval by the City Council, whose members then needed to review a background briefing on the purpose of the workshop before voting. In short, much of the value of the workshop was achieved before it opened. The workshop itself generated a baseline mapping of what the various stakeholders knew and were doing regarding the topic, the barriers they perceived, and an initial body of expert and local knowledge that could be distributed. The latter benefited from overseas organizations (OECD, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and others), which contributed experts, and materials for translation – the first such materials available in Czech, which was especially important in reaching a more senior generation of civil servants and decision-makers who did not speak Western European languages.

Thus, this workshop launched the issue of brownfields visibly on the public agenda, mapped the issue and the key barriers to brownfield reuse, distributed an available body of knowledge in Czech and English, and created a cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional network of people with a familiarity and some degree of concern for the issue.

A second conference, which attempted to address specific questions, such as financial and insurance arrangements for brownfields, or public participation in restoration, turned out to be premature, and somewhat less successful, as the 'market' was not ready for these specialised topics. Instead, the NGO began initiatives that worked more closely with ministries, regional and local authorities. A series of brownfield presentations were given to regional authorities, and to towns with considerable brownfield holdings. This educated them about the issue, and how they might inventory their brownfield holdings, prioritise sites for urgent treatment, and conduct preliminary planning exercises for these sites. [See the box Šternberk case study] It also increased the NGO's knowledge about the barriers experienced at the local and regional levels. Over time, this awareness at local and regional levels began to percolate up to become pressure for the necessary administrative and legislative reforms at the national level.

Along the way, the NGO identified and created some specific high leverage tools and pieces of knowledge. A quick rough estimate of Prague's brownfields showed one thousand hectares of unused land in central areas: a galvanizing figure that helped prompt a more systematic survey (see Figure 16.4).



Figure 16.4 An early schematic map, used for lobbying, of the location of major brownfields in Prague

Based on its work with municipal authorities, the NGO crafted and circulated a ‘brownfield inventory’ methodology, which towns could use to assess and prioritise their holdings. It also began circulating information on how various EU funding categories might be applied toward brownfields projects, and helped cultivate several grant applications, some of which were subsequently successful.

The various government ministries must have a large role in any comprehensive brownfield solution, and the NGO worked quite intensively with some, supporting initiatives and capacities within the ministries, while pushing to deepen inter-ministerial linkages on the subject. Thus, the organization wrote a position paper that was adopted as the ministerial strategy paper for one of the ministries, helped encourage another to establish a cross-ministerial brownfields committee, under the direct responsibility of a Deputy Minister, and encouraged (and helped draft the terms of reference for) external grant categories for brownfields work in two other ministries. It helped insert sections on brownfields into national strategy documents, since eventual EU funding would be based on the priorities established in these

strategic declarations (for example, the National Development Plan). The NGO also distributed a sample 'checklist,' organised along ministerial lines, of the kinds of amendments needed in the Czech law to reduce the barriers to brownfields reuse. This was a rough first pass, meant to elicit discussion, and illustrate the cross-cutting range of needed changes (also see box). By offering 'no strings attached' materials and consultation to those interested, the 'brownfields' topic became an vehicle through which an ambitious individual or ministerial unit could advance themselves and become more visible.

With an eye to longer term continuity beyond the life of its initial intervention, the NGO helped establish a local NGO, concerned with urban sustainability issues, which began taking on the brownfields campaign locally, finding autonomous sources of funding, and becoming the Czech partner in EU grants it helped facilitate. It began working with universities and professional organizations to increase brownfields awareness among practitioners and the next generation of practitioners, and obtained EU (LEONARDO and other) funding to prepare brownfields professional training for local authorities and professionals. And it began organizing an NGO of brownfields stakeholders, both private and public sector, to act as a lobby group and clearing house on the topic. It also began to link up with the EU professional networks on brownfields, so as to tie Central European practitioners into Europe-wide efforts.

At the risk of being banal and/or self-congratulatory, we have brought this account of NGO activity to emphasise the multiple levels at which change must occur on a topic as complex as this, and to show how the catalytic actions of a small NGO can produce fairly far-reaching systemic change within official systems. While many of the effects of this 'awareness-raising' work will take years to diffuse through the various levels of the system and translate into concrete projects, we can already see some tangible outcomes of this advocacy work in strategic documents and the Czech National Plan and guidelines for expenditure of EU Structural Funding, specific ministerial brownfields positions created (inc. at the Deputy-Minister level), brownfield funding, training, and research programs initiated, greater inter-ministerial coordination and links with the brownfields community internationally, and in concrete advice taken on several specific redevelopment projects in Prague and in several smaller towns in the Czech Republic.

The Interaction of EU Accession with the Brownfield Problem

Conducting brownfields advocacy in Central Europe during a period in which the Czech Republic was keenly engaged with accession issues, highlighted several points of mismatch between the categories and emphases of the EU accession assistance and the country's needs on an urban topic as complex as brownfields. The following are several key kinds of mismatch that hampered the EU contribution to

the Central European brownfields issue. (Similar dynamics may continue to hamper EU assistance to acceding countries on other issues.)

First, is the fact that the problem has a different scale and nature than in Western European countries. There are less brownfields in these countries, they are less encumbered by bureaucracy and risks, and the market is better equipped to pick up and recycle sites whose prior use has become obsolete. For Central European cities, brownfields are of a scale and seriousness that they impinge substantially on urban competitiveness, and on the rate of greenfield conversion (with all the attendant environmental consequences). Thus, a problem that might be justifiably be less central on the EU urban agenda, is (or should be) at the centre of attention in Central Europe.

Second, is the massive horizontality of the issue, which straddles multiple institutional, temporal, and disciplinary domains, as discussed above. Urban land is not typically considered as a finite threatened resource, in the same way as water or green space. While brownfields can directly affect several media (water, soil, even air), they also entail more subtle environmental impacts (hampering the energy and infrastructural efficiency of urban forms, facilitating agricultural land conversion), as well as social and economic impacts. These are far more difficult to quantify, as are the benefits of brownfield remediation. Third, and relatedly, the range of relevant indicators and benchmarks associated with other EU priorities is far less available for the brownfield issue. Fourth, the reuse of brownfields involves the private sector almost intrinsically, in a far deeper and more sophisticated manner, than other issues. And, finally, the EU is encumbered in relating to a topic that is embedded in planning issues and institutions, toward which the EU subsidiarity principle applies.

This mismatch of emphases and categories is reflected in the limited applicability of many current EU funding programs (INTERREG, FP6) for brownfield work, and in limited EU assistance for Central European capacity-building on the topic. To remedy this mismatch, urban land needs to be included as a category of environmental protection priorities; spatial issues need to be paid greater attention, especially in a linked-up manner, in which economy, jobs, spatial form, and environment, can be jointly considered; and the range of comparative uniform indicators and monitoring systems must be expanded to include factors of relevance for brownfields

As opposed to other spheres (banking, environment, security), which received very focused technical assistance and capacity building from the EU, Structural Funding assistance on the brownfields issue seemed to primarily take the form of 'pilot projects.' The hope was, it seems, that these would build up a greater understanding by 'learning through doing,' which would lead to an increased demand for more comprehensive national tools, regulations, frameworks, programs and strategies. It is still an open question to what extent the pilot project model has been able to lead the kind of overall systemic change hoped for.

'Šternberk Case Study'

The story of one Czech town, Šternberk, shows how with some training, and lots of proactive initiative, even a very small local authority, with substantial brownfield problems and not a particularly promising location, was able to help itself tackle the brownfields issue. This small forgotten town once known for its tradition in watch making is emerging as a model of proactive local brownfield revitalization. In a short time, Šternberk became one of the first municipalities to analyse its brownfield situation, forge a partnership with the owners of one of the town's largest brownfield sites, and apply for a PHARE grant to redevelop the site for industry and housing.

With extensive brownfields, some of them heavily polluted, Šternberk was highly motivated to explore brownfield redevelopment, and in 2001 sent a representative to the ITDP (explain abbr. or put reference to footnote) brownfield seminar, co-organised by the Region of Olomouc. Over the course of three more seminars, it cooperated in preparing and testing the first version of ITDP's Brownfield Audit Project in cooperation with the Union of the Central Moravian Communities.

The audit highlighted several key findings, including the fact that seven percent of the town's total area (63% of its former industrial holding) was brownfield. The audit allowed Šternberk officials to identify a key prospective site for redevelopment and made clear that in order to achieve its objectives of providing jobs for its citizens and improving its environment, the local authorities would have to work very closely with various local private owners.

In analysing its own real estate ownership, the town realised that it had missed the boat on privatisation in allowing private owners to acquire large portions of strategically located land. To act now to reuse this land they would have to work indirectly, in partnership with these land owners.

Most importantly, the town drew on ITDP training to identify a large brownfield site that was still covered by the state National Property Fund environmental guarantees for cleanup of privatised properties. This already fragmented site was in danger of become even further broken up because of the imminent bankruptcy, which would force a piecemeal hurried sale of the remaining property. Not only would bankruptcy make future consolidation and development of the site almost impossible, it would probably strip the property of this precious government guarantee. This would have made the site truly intractable.

Thus, bankruptcy would lead to a deeper and entrenched dereliction of the property, and the resulting degradation of surrounding properties, including some owned by the local authority. Realizing the urgency and implications of the situation, the local authority approached the private owners of the site. The seminar had emphasised that a risk assessment was a prerequisite for eligibility for the environmental guarantee; since the site owners had no money to do this, the town agreed to step in and provide the risk assessment.

This assessment enabled the property owners to enter into an Environmental Clearance Contract with the National Property Fund, and in March of this year the government approved money for site clearance – a value of 63 million crowns (almost \$2 million). With the first prospect of a cleanup, property regained a measure of commercial value, which will probably enable the owners to raise enough to buy back their bad debts at substantially reduced rates. The Contract will not only remove environmental pollution and ensure that site ownership remains relatively consolidated, but it established a culture of partnership between the town and the owners.

The town then drew on some of the models of creative partnerships between local authorities and the private sector presented in the workshops. In consultation with the owners, the town created a site development plan, and the city purchased some of the private property needed for infrastructure to serve the site.

The city has now applied for EU PHARE funding to help to redevelop this former industrial site as a mixed-use site for industry and housing. It has sold some of the site adjoining the brownfield to a German supermarket chain and a private businessman, in exchange for 200,000 Euro which will be used co-finance the PHARE project (co-financing is a condition for these EU projects) and a commitment from the buyers to install their own infrastructure.

The story is far from over. The site represents only one third of Šternberk's brownfields, and even if this is cleaned up and prepared it remains to be seen whether the market will take it up. But the town is well aware of the hurdles, and is building on its experience of partnership with the site owners to approach local entrepreneurs to develop their businesses in a way that could eventually come to occupy the site. In this way, an area that was once a burden on the town landscape might become the heart of its regeneration.

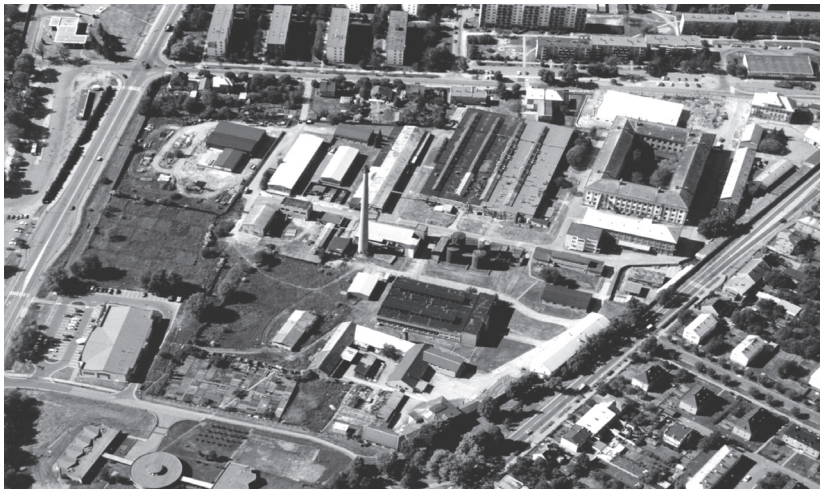


Figure 16.5 Picture of the Šternberk brownfields