

## Leipzig, Germany

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The Halle 14 project is part of a large brownfield regeneration project, namely the reconversion of Europe's (once) largest cotton mill complex in Leipzig ('Leipziger Baumwollspinnerei'). It is an excellent example of how brownfield development and creative industries can be used as impetus in a wider urban regeneration context. The approach of using derelict land and widely abandoned buildings for new, sustainable growth ties this project to the Europe 2020 flagship initiative for a resource-efficient Europe which identifies the recycling of land as one of the pathways for greater resource efficiency.

Main objective of the city and the project promoter was to regenerate the historical (and listed) Halle 14 building which was in a precarious state. In order to support the (existing) efforts made by the private owner and by non-profit organisations in the Halle 14 building, the city of Leipzig – supported by the European Regional Development Fund with 278 000 € (2009-2011) – helped in renovating the building's façade and windows as well as creating a 'training room' for cultural/artistic purposes with a total budget of some 373 500 €. The training room is now an anchor point for various activities for local communities, particularly for children and young people. The ERDF investment forms only one part in the joint efforts to regenerate the Halle 14 building, including improving the building's energy performance. Total investment into the building from public and private sources amounts to approximately three million €.

This five-storey industrial building with a floor-space total of 20 000 m<sup>2</sup> is centrally located on the cotton mill site. Since the beginning of the 1990s, artists and others involved in the creative sector have built a productive and lively community at this location. It is renowned for being the home of the 'Neue Leipziger Schule' (new school of Leipzig) of German painter Neo Rauch. As an independent art centre, Halle 14 should contrast with the now successful galleries and commercial creative companies by serving as a centre for non-profit organisations and young artists. Regular exhibitions, an art library, the art education programme 'Kreative Spinner', the scholarship programme Studio14 and the Lounge14 discussion series form elements of the wider Halle 14 project.

The project shows how a strongly integrative process, based on mutual trust and support, can make a real difference. A joint vision of private and public bodies for the regeneration of the entire neighbourhood was the foundation of all rehabilitation activities on the cotton mill area. Considering the context of brownfield regeneration, the project also shows that taking a step-by-step approach is sometimes smarter than a 'big-bang'. The former cotton mills complex is, due to its sheer size and need for physical regeneration, a major challenge for every investor. Tackling this aspect with a demand-based, step-by-step approach proved to be a smart solution.

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Art and creativity have been driving forces of Europe's socio-economic development for centuries. Using cultural assets to support the European Union's push for more sustainable, green growth might not be obvious at first sight. The cotton mill re-development in Leipzig may prove the opposite. One of Europe's largest former industrial production sites has been transformed into a globally important artistic hotspot – offering not only jobs and economic growth but also underlining that the re-use of land is a smart way towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon Europe. It is also an excellent example of how brownfield development and creative industries can be used as impetus in a wider urban regeneration context.

The European Regional Development Fund supported this process by adding (financial) pieces to a puzzle which appeared difficult to solve. By investing 278 000 € into the rehabilitation of a central building on the cotton mill site, the Union helped transforming the listed 'Halle 14' building into a non-profit platform for artists, art lovers and local communities. By improving the energy efficiency of the building, additional contributions to the Europe 2020 flagship initiative for a resource-efficient Europe could be achieved.



Since 2011, the newly renovated, five-storey industrial building with a total floor-space of 20 000 m<sup>2</sup> functions as an independent art centre. Halle 14 should contrast with the now successful galleries and commercial creative companies on the cotton mill site by serving as a centre for non-profit organisations and young artists. Regular exhibitions, an art library, the art education programme 'Kreative Spinner', the scholarship

programme Studio14 and the Lounge14 discussion series form elements of the wider Halle 14 project. It also creates links to the neighbourhoods in the west of Leipzig – an area with social and economic difficulties.

### *Leipzig – an artistic hotspot?*

When the British newspaper Guardian published its ranking of Europe's most important art destinations in 2011, it had a surprise first place. The usual suspects, Paris and London, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> – even the Catalonian hotspot Barcelona did not make it to the top. It was the East-German city of Leipzig who took the place in the sun.

This prestigious win was genuinely linked to one German word: 'Baumwollspinnerei' – the cotton mill. This 100 000m<sup>2</sup>-large, former industrial complex is the playground of some of Germany's most important artists, it is home to globally connected art galleries and it has no problem in competing with other art destinations, including Berlin which is only a train-hour away from Leipzig. Around 150 000 people visit the site every year. And, so the story goes, Leipzig airport runs out of places for private jets when certain galleries show new paintings for the first time.

Finding the cotton mill is however not easy. One has to leave the nicely renovated city centre and travel to a part of the city which still shows the scars of the 40 year-long period of chronic communist underinvestment. No big signs indicate the cotton mill, and on arriving there, crumbling industrial buildings, abandoned railway tracks on the street and little signs of human life do not necessarily add to impression that this can be *the* place. An artistic hotspot – here?

‘Regenerating the whole complex will take a long time – although we have already done a lot. But we are not out for a polished environment. We want to re-use what is there and keep its rather rough character’, explains Bertram Schultze, the owner and mastermind behind the development project. In contrast to other brownfield projects of this size, the owner takes a step-by-step approach in achieving his final objective. No ‘big bang’ with (potentially) difficult to fill renovated space and unnecessary financial risks. Rehabilitating what is necessary and useful – and saving physical resources for the site’s further development. This seems to be the principle. With comparatively low rents of around 2.9 € per square-metre, per month, it is also obvious that quick profit cannot be made with the site. Is the consciousness of having created something ‘special’ which is worth keeping and developing more important? It seems to be the case.

### *Of cotton and canvas*

The site was the location of a German cotton mill company which built the entire complex of production halls and workshops in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It used the raw material supplied from the former ‘German East Africa’ (until 1914) and even owned 30 000 ha of land there. It was Germany’s most important producer of cords and cotton material – and by 1900 the largest producer in continental Europe. Enduring two world wars, the production was also kept up under the communist regime (GDR). In 1989, shortly before the fall of the Berlin wall, the state-owned company mostly produced cord material for tires, still employing around 4.000 workers.



The political and economic changes of the 1990’s brought the company’s slow but steady decline. Given the size of the site, the production of cords was increasingly concentrated in only a few buildings, most others fell empty. To the site’s later advantage, the empty production halls were discovered by local artists who were looking for cheap, atelier-suited space. The cotton company finally ran out of business in 2000 and the entire complex was purchased by an investor

specialised in re-development. After only one year, the site was then bought by its current owner who also 'inherited' a number of increasingly important local artists. At this time, the 'new Leipzig school of painting' (Neue Leipziger Schule) had already earned its first global merits. And its most renowned artist, Neo Rauch, was still painting in one of site's production halls. He still does today.

The current owner described it as a 'natural choice' to use this asset and to try a re-development of a different kind. An artistic site on an enormous brownfield in Leipzig? A risky but finally successful idea. 'One probably needs to be a crazy man to try this. But this is well reflected in my company's name Spinnerei', adds Mr Schultze with a laugh. Indeed, the German word 'Spinnerei' has two meanings, namely 'spinning' (cotton) and 'doing something crazy'. A nice and somehow fitting coincidence.

Today, in 2012, the cotton mill site with its 70 000m<sup>2</sup> of buildings is home to approximately 600 jobs, mostly in the creative sector. The management of the site is very keen on keeping up the site's reputation of high quality art production. Ateliers and workspace are rented out to artists who are selected based on their (current and expected) artistic importance – partly by active recruitment via art academies and universities. Assuring this 'exclusivity' appears as a key factor in ensuring the site's long-term artistic success. While art production, print shops and galleries are at the core of the re-development, rather remote production halls on the site are also rented out to larger firms, including a call centre. This helps in creating steady sources of income for the owner and keeping rents low for artists. It also creates a marge for supporting a non-profit building such as the 'Halle 14'.



### ***Go west! Urban transformation in Leipzig***

Without doubt, the site plays a crucial role in the city's urban development – and its branding. In a way, the cotton mill project helped in the re-inventing of Leipzig's global image. It is both, a nucleus for artistic production with international interconnections and a nucleus for local urban regeneration. Located in the western part of the city, the cotton mill site is at the heart of a 'difficult' neighbourhood when measured by most socio-economic indicators.

It is for a reason that this part of Leipzig had a programme under the EU's URBAN II Community Initiative between 2000 and 2006 which focussed on the social, economic and environmental rehabilitation of three Western city districts. The EU's targeted investment brought a visible infrastructural and economic upgrade of the area. While Leipzig still loses population at city level, the former URBAN II target area could turn upward tendencies around and this area has been gaining inhabitants since 2005 – many of them connected to the cotton mill in one way or the other, or students looking for an affordable, but increasingly vibrant living environment. However, still today the area is far from wealthy, showing an over-average percentage of low-income households and significant needs for physical rehabilitation.

The Saxonian Regional Convergence Operational Programme for 2007-2013 (2007DE161PO004) offered the city the possibility to further support regeneration measures with money from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). In a Saxony-wide competition,

the city succeeded in securing ERDF funding for the west of Leipzig. The approved 'integrated concept for action in the west of Leipzig' covers parts of three western city districts and today forms the basis for ERDF interventions in the area. They cover a total investment of 5 million € with 3.75 million € from the EU. This integrated concept is based on the integrated urban development strategy for Leipzig (2008) and the (updated) conceptual urban neighbourhood plan for the west of Leipzig (2007). In all these documents, the cotton mill site was identified both as a central location for improving the quality of the urban fabric in the area and as a nucleus for creative industries in the city. On this basis, the city authorities of Leipzig supported two important elements in the process of rehabilitating the cotton mill site with EU funding – both located in production hall number 14, or 'Halle 14' to use the German name of the building.

## Two pieces in the puzzle

The Halle 14 building is centrally located on the cotton mill site. In recent years, water leaks, crumbling façade, damaged windows, a damaged roof and the lack of a heating system made the use of the building increasingly difficult. Existing users, non-profit organisations in the artistic field, could use the building only during summer months. As the owner could not stem the financial burden of the rehabilitation of the building (alone), time was running out for the 'Halle 14 e.V.', an NGO running the building. With the goal to make art more accessible to people and to maintain the cotton mill's innovative artistic spirit, 'Halle 14 e.V.' played (and plays) a vital role in providing a platform for artists and local communities. As an independent, non-profit art centre, activities in the Halle 14 building should contrast with the now successful galleries and commercial creative companies. Today, regular exhibitions, an art library, the art education programme 'Kreative Spinner', the scholarship programme Studio14 and the Lounge14 discussion series form elements of the wider Halle 14 project.

In 2008, the NGO's efforts to find investors for their non-commercial activities paid off. One million € could be assured for the renovation of the building's leaking roof. The city of Leipzig, a crucial supporter, helped them in accessing funding from the national urban regeneration programme – the German programme for urban renewal in former East-German Länder, sourced from national, regional and local public funding as well as investment from the building's owner (Stadtumbau-Ost). Additional funding came from the national employment creation programme (Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahme). This first step formed the basis for improving the building's energy performance and assuring its further use. However, even without a leaking roof, the building's users were still confronted with a deteriorating façade and cracking windows in this listed building. Not to speak of a disastrous energy performance.

The good cooperation between the city and the 'Halle 14 e.V.' NGO in this first project laid the basis for the city's application for funding from the Saxonian Regional Operational Programme. As the 'Halle 14 e.V.', due to programme implementation rules, could not apply for funding, the city of Leipzig took over this role. In 2008, a first of two ERDF funding components was approved by the Free State of Saxony which manages the European Development Funds budget for the region. A second followed in 2009, overall providing some 278 000 € of ERDF funding (complemented by 95 500 € of city funding) for the renovation of the building's façade and windows and for the creation of a training room in the Halle 14 project.

As the building was (and is) owned by the private 'Spinnerei' company, the city was facing the risk of financing rehabilitation measures for a building which could – in the worst case – be used for

commercial purposes after its renovation. In 2009, the owner and the city (as final beneficiary of ERDF funding after EU legislation) concluded a legal agreement which binds the owner to a non-profit use of the 'Halle 14' building for at least 15 years. By means of an entry in the land registry, the sustainability of non-profit use is now assured until the year 2024.

Both projects formed the basis to make a real difference in terms of energy performance and usability. They are two rather small, but important pieces in the puzzle. (Epilogue: The puzzle is about to be completed in 2012. The city of Leipzig successfully applied for another 1.5 million € of national funding which will be used to upgrade the interior of the former production hall to modern standards. In this third – and last – step, a fire alarm and a long-awaited heating system will be installed). Total investment into the building from public and private sources will amount approximately to three million €.

### *'Halle 14' – the 20 000 m<sup>2</sup> challenge*

The rather high need for investment is linked to the building's sheer size. It is one of the largest former production halls with over 20 000m<sup>2</sup>. 'Painting a wall according to "Halle 14-standards" meant: we had to paint a wall which was 4 metres high and 45 metres long. Everything about the



project was rather gigantic', explains Kim Wortelkamp, the architect who steered the renovation project. Indeed, the five-storey building's dimensions are impressive. 'We had nine workers checking and repairing every single brick on the façade – non-stop for over 4 months', he adds in relation to one of the two ERDF funding lines.

By repairing the double windows and fixing the façade, the building now possesses whole 'new' energy efficiency parameters according to recent measurements. It sounds paradoxical that what is

now 'new' corresponds (more or less) to the energy performance the building already had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was built. In a sense, the buildings on the cotton mill site are lucky picks for energy efficiency aficionados. Despite being over a hundred years old, all buildings on the site show a remarkably good energy performance – something which is linked to the original construction method. One-meter-thick, solid brick walls and double glazed windows should keep the temperature in the production halls at a constant temperature of around 23 degrees throughout the year. These high temperatures were necessary to optimally produce cords and fabrics from cotton. In addition, the price of cotton could be determined only at specific levels of humidity – and therefore temperature. Still today, cotton trade uses standard temperatures to assure the maximum water content – wet or humid cotton would weigh more than dry cotton and could be sold for higher prices.

It is for this reason that it was the planner's main task to ensure that all openings (esp. windows) and the façade were intact – additional measures such as additional insulation or new windows would have changed little or nothing to building performance. Or to put it differently: it was good value for money to repair gently rather than to replace radically. And indeed a good result for the European Regional Development Funds.

When looking at the building nowadays, its history is still visible. Instead of going for up-market, polished renovation, the project promoters decided to leave the buildings rather rough character – interior - and outside. New architectural elements have been introduced where absolutely necessary, mostly in the entrance area which also includes the new library of Halle 14 e.V. This intended ‘style’ of rehabilitation helped saving money without compromising the building’s functional quality.

Today’s users – Halle 14 e.V. or Kreative Spinner e.V. – find themselves in a pleasant working environment which is suited to be opened to the wider public. But what’s the real role of Halle 14 e.V. apart from its objective of being a non-profit platform on the cotton mill site? ‘We want to be the creative engine of the site’, answers Vera Marušić from the Halle 14 e.V. She agrees with the owner when they speak of the building’s crucial role for keeping the art production ‘young and fresh’ – and that external impulses (through exhibitions and moderated discussion series) would sometimes be needed to achieve this. In addition, the Halle 14 building opens the cotton mill site to people which do not necessarily work there or have no commercial interests in art production. The newly installed library alone, which has been compiled from donations, brings a growing number of students to the premises. But also interested people from neighbouring urban areas make more and more use of this offer. As books cannot be borrowed a dedicated, open seating area offers the possibility for reading – and interacting with other visitors. And indeed, the facilities bring life to the cotton mill site which can, due to its sheer size, appear sometimes rather empty. Negotiations to bring more ‘users’ into the building are on-going, replacing a renowned art foundation which ended their temporary activities in late 2011.

### ***‘We don’t do glitter fish’ – Artistic inspiration for the young***

The second piece of the puzzle which was financed from European funding was the creation of a training room. The construction of a new, two-storey room (280m<sup>2</sup>) in the Halle 14 building now provides adequate facilities for an institution which focuses on young people. An NGO, the ‘Kreative Spinner e.V.’ (translated as ‘creative nut heads’ with the already described reference to ‘Spinnerei’), wants to bring young people closer to arts and artistic production. Schools use this offer just as well as individual persons. In special sessions, the co-operation between the young and senior citizens forms another element of the NGO’s activities. Whoever might suspect that these activities are just about fun has chosen the wrong place. ‘We want young people to understand that being an artist is a real profession. It’s not a hobby or something you do when you have nothing else to do. That’s why we do not do glitter fish here. We want to create an understanding that artistic work is something serious – nothing that everyone can do’, explains Wednesday Farris, the mastermind behind the ‘Kreative Spinner e.V.’. What sounds now very serious is indeed quite playful and inspiring. In several sessions, young people learn more about an artist and his (or her) work, discuss with art professionals, then start conceptualising first ideas – and finally bring their ideas about him (or her) to canvas or paper.

The new training room which is located in the former ‘women’s washing room’ offers adequate conditions to the association which has been moving around the cotton mill site for years. Now being able to operate all around the year, the outreach to local communities also enters a new phase. Schools from around Leipzig, but particularly from the west of city, use the association’s offer and engage in ‘artistic dialogue’.

## *Local dimensions of sustainable growth*

When looking at the cotton mill re-development in general and the Halle 14 project in particular, one might wonder about its actual contribution to sustainable growth in Europe. Can a local initiative like this make a difference?

It is believed it can – on two levels.

On a very local level, the Halle 14 project could improve – or re-install – the energy efficiency of a building which was crumbling, leaking and slowly turning into a ruin. The positive impact on energy performance and –use is therefore obvious. Not to speak of the effects that the project has on restoring industrial, cultural heritage, creating a place for people and supporting the socio-economic rehabilitation of a disadvantaged neighbourhood,

The second level takes a higher perspective. The Halle 14 project is part of an enormous brownfield regeneration project, namely the reconversion of Europe's (once) largest cotton mill complex. It is an excellent example of how brownfield development and creative industries can be used as impetus in a wider urban regeneration context. The approach of using derelict land and widely abandoned buildings for new, sustainable growth ties this project to the Europe 2020 flagship initiative for a resource-efficient Europe which identifies the recycling of land as one of the pathways towards greater resource efficiency.

Under the Europe 2020 strategy the flagship initiative for a resource-efficient Europe points the way towards sustainable growth and supports a shift towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy. One of the building blocks of this initiative is the Commission's Roadmap for a resource-efficient Europe<sup>1</sup> which among other initiatives includes brownfield development as one of the trajectories to higher levels of resource efficiency.

Accordingly, brownfield development is also included in the investment priorities for future cohesion policy (Article 5 of the draft regulation, investment priority (6): protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency, (e) action to improve the urban environment, including regeneration of brownfield sites and reduction of air pollution).

Overall, academic literature identifies the reuse of land within the urban areas as preferable to development at low density on greenfield sites in and beyond the urban fringe. Greenfield sites are often more attractive to developers and carry less commercial risk. There is thus a danger that economic growth will favour loose knitted, decentralised patterns of development that will work against the EU's 20-20-20 targets and increase rather than contain the ecological footprint of territories.<sup>2</sup>

What the re-development of the cotton mill site (and its ERDF-funded projects) demonstrates is the need for an integrated approach and clear vision. Perfectly renovated buildings without a real community use or lacking a socio-economic dimension are worth little to nothing when striving for sustainable growth. Integrating environmental issues and socio-economic aspects appear as vital pre-conditions. The vision which was behind the entire development convinces both by its good

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<sup>1</sup> COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS : Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe, adopted on 20 September 2011, COM(2011) 571 final

<sup>2</sup> ESPON: Synthesis report 'sustainable Europe', Luxembourg 2010:  
[http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/SynthesisReport/FirstOctober10/sustainable\\_europe.pdf](http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/SynthesisReport/FirstOctober10/sustainable_europe.pdf)

co-operation between public and private stakeholders and by its explicit dedication – without gentrifying the site or alienating it from local communities. It reflects different dimensions of sustainability – in environmental terms (re-use of land, energy and resource savings), in socio-economic terms (role for the socio-economic performance of Leipzig and its western neighbourhoods), in terms of its users (inspiring role for the functioning of the site) and in financial terms (slow growth over quick profit).

### *Learning from the experience*

There is, without doubt, much to be learnt from the rehabilitation process of the cotton mill site – especially from the way how Leipzig approached this important challenge. Exploiting some of the results might be worth exploring in a regional, national and European context. Many cities are facing the similar challenge of generating sustainable urban growth while having a sometimes difficult-to-handle physical heritage – brownfields and abandoned industrial sites.

One first lesson to take away is reflected in the approach, how the regeneration process of the site was planned and implemented. The former cotton mills complex, due to its sheer size and need for physical regeneration, would be a major challenge for every investor. Especially in a city which still suffers from comparatively low levels of income – and huge public debt. Leipzig is not New York or London where returns for a re-development would be significantly higher. Old industrial urban regions all over Europe will be faced with a similar situation. Tackling this aspect with a demand-based, step-by-step approach proved to be a smart solution. Also to go for non-polished and yet performing options could reduce potentially (very) high costs and limit financial risks. The Halle 14 is an excellent example for this approach. With this strategy, the financial risks for the investor and supporting public bodies are comparatively limited – both by spreading investment/funding over years (possibly even decades) and by avoiding renovated but empty buildings with high maintenance costs. The impulses for the regeneration of the entire neighbourhood appear to be sustainable, guaranteeing slower, but constant green growth. Taking a step-by-step approach is sometimes smarter than a ‘big-bang’.



A second strong point of the cotton mills project lies in the shared understanding that integrated regeneration will require time, joint efforts and patience – but will pay off in the end. A joint vision of private and public bodies for the regeneration of the entire neighbourhood was the foundation of all rehabilitation activities on the cotton mill area. This strongly integrative process is based on mutual trust and support. Also, both sides seem to be aware that sustainability of investment and action is more important than quick profit.

A third point concerns the dedicated use of the site. And it shows that the cultural sector and creative industries can make a difference in urban regeneration. Indeed they can be used as impulses for achieving higher levels of growth and productivity. Halle 14 and other buildings on the cotton mill area use the ‘creative power’ of its users – and the cultural sector. It makes the area

a unique, clearly positioned location for arts (and related professions) which produces numerous, positive socio-economic side-effects in and around the area. Today, around 600 persons work at the site. Effects in the wider neighbourhood are already visible with a growing number of cultural workers living in the area and an increasingly vibrant cultural (and economic) scene.

Finally, this 'local' intervention has made a clear difference for Leipzig's global image. It added some 'spice' to the city's image as an important fair (expo) location – something which many other cities are known for in Europe. With its position as one of Europe's largest (and most renowned) artistic sites, the cotton mill project helped in re-inventing Leipzig's global image. Around 150 000 (mostly well-paying) tourists visit the site every year and contribute to improving the city's economic performance. Halle 14 as a non-profit art location plays a central role in maintaining the site's image as a centre for the young and the creative. As a 'laboratory for new things', it contrasts and complements commercial galleries. It also opens up the cotton mill for a wider public as ateliers and workshops are usually not publically accessible.

A smart, sustainable and inclusive investment into the future, one could say.