The landscape of the urban fringe as an opportunity space

1. The neglected urban fringe
2. Why it needs to be treated as a landscape of its own right
3. Obstacles and possibilities for planning at the fringe
The inner fringe; “land in the advanced stages of transition from rural to urban uses – land under construction, land for which subdivision plans have been approved – in short, land where there is little doubt over much of its area about its urban-oriented function and ultimate conversion to urban uses” Bryant et al, *The city’s countryside* (1982)
Caterpillar (Gerhard Nordström, 1975)
SSK, Fysisk riksplanering i regionplanearbetet (1978)
Red = areas of interest for urban development
White = ?
The urban fringe is an opportunity space (c.f. Alister Scott)

The urban fringe needs to be treated as a landscape of its own right!

The wide variety of land-uses need to be acknowledged, not just farming and suburban development

Temporary uses: innovative solutions (multi-functionality)

Farming ecosystem services? Explore potentials for interactions between urban – rural stakeholders, instead of separating the two.

Not just a matter of land-use, but of a landscape with entrepreneurs, new businesses, and new (sometimes unexpected) stakeholders
Obstacles for planning the urban fringe

- Planning history
- Lack of knowledge (due to asymmetrical descriptions)
- Silo thinking, silo planning
- Lack of meeting places between stakeholders
- Locked positions, and lack of understanding/interest for others' arguments
Planning history: embedded conflicts

“... there is still a demand to develop the town, and then this [estate] is what we have counted on. All infrastructure and all planning since, basically, the 1970s [is dependent on this]. ... it is hundreds of millions [in investments] in total: roads, sewage pipes and everything has been a part of it.” (Politician)
Lack of knowledge due to asymmetrical descriptions

Urban development  Rural protection
Expansion          Decline (at the fringe)
Urban possibilities Rural problems
Activities, economy, creativity land-use, nature
Stake holders      land-use
Public transport, recreation ...  (Natalie Coquand, in press)
Silo thinking (law, administration, allocation of funds, etc.)

- Different laws apply in city and country (e.g. planning dialogue vs expert knowledge)
- Different units within the municipality, competing strategies
- Competence concerning biodiversity, farming and cultural heritage are situated at different departments
- Funding is allocated following according to the silo structure
Lack of meeting places - and plenty of distrust and old conflicts...

Rufopoly: a ”board game” developed to facilitate dialogues between stakeholders at the fringe.

RUF = rural-urban fringe

Developed at Birmingham City Univ., by planning researchers, Farmer’s Union, local grass roots organizations, etc.
• The game board: RUFshire, an expansive region, high quality farmland, sensitive nature areas, etc.
• A dialogue on how the region should develop (no winner)
• The dice takes you from the city centre, through the fringe and suburbs to the countryside
• Place-specific questions
• Role play
The advantages of Rufopoly:

- Playful: opens up for creativity, new perspectives
- An imaginary region: opens up for dialogue
- Wicked problems: no simple answers! No quick-fix or one-size-fits-all solutions
- Aha-experiences concerning the complexity of the fringe
- The first step towards a dialogue, e.g. in development a plan
Potentials for strategic planning the fringe

1. Study planning history and embedded conflicts, learn from it
2. Symmetrical analysis (tell new stories): eye opener
3. New inventories of activities, stakeholders, entrepreneurs etc.
4. Initiate dialogues (Rufology) with existing and potential stakeholders
5. Overcome silo thinking and silo planning by developing a plan for the fringe
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