



PROSPERA LOCAL ACTION PLAN

City of GHENT



Juli 2022



Local Action Plan City of Ghent

Part I – General information

Project: __PROSPERA__
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Partner organisation: __City of Ghent__

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): _____

Country: __Belgium__

NUTS2 region: __Provincie Oost-Vlaanderen__

Contact person: __Eva Kerselaers__

email address: eva.kerselaers@stad.gent

phone number: 09/266 84 14

Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
<input type="checkbox"/>	European Territorial Cooperation programme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed: Spatial Structural Vision 2030 – Space
for Ghent (*additional: Local Food Strategy Gent en garde*)

Introduction to Ghent

Ghent is a city in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium, with a total area of 157,96 km². The City of Ghent has a growing population, with currently around 261 483 inhabitants. Hence, the average population density is 1655 inh/km². This density is even higher in the city center, and a bit lower in the “peri-urban area”. It is expected that by 2030 the amount of inhabitants will have grown to around 277 000 and even 282 293 in 2035. There are also 76 510 students in Ghent from which a lot are boarding in Ghent.

Depending on the definition used for peri-urban area and rural area, Ghent is entirely urban and there is no strict rural or peri-urban area of large scale in and around Ghent, nor in Flanders. However, small scale open spaces with very different characteristics are detectable up to the city limits: the so called 'rural area', the growing city, the green hubs and the canal villages. Therefore, all space outside the core and inner city of Ghent is indicated in this project context as peri-urban area.

Introduction to the policy instrument Spatial Structural Vision 2030 – Space for Ghent

Within the PROSPERA project, the City of Ghent chose to review, improve and implement the policy instrument "Spatial Structural Vision 2030 – Space for Ghent". More specifically, in accordance with the ambitions of PROSPERA, Ghent will focus on policy instruments related to the preservation and sustainable management of open space in (peri-urban) Ghent. This is one of the goals formulated in the Spatial Structural Vision 2030, but currently only limited instruments are available to assure the implementation of this goal. It was the Cities' objective to specify throughout the PROSPERA process which specific instrument(s) could be developed to contribute to this goal.

Challenges

The challenges that we focus on within the PROSPERA project are food production, natural heritage, climate change and environment. The other challenges addressed within PROSPERA, namely population, built environment, mobility, economy, cultural heritage and tourism, are also addressed, but were less central for the City of Ghent within the PROSPERA project.

'Food production'

Ghent is growing and must continue to address the needs of its people: affordable housing in a pleasant area with enough green, options for relaxation, employment, accessibility and open spaces for agriculture and nature development. Given the high pressure on open space in Ghent, it is a challenge to develop policy instruments that allow to preserve open space and steer its management in the desired direction. For example, sustainable local food production is a key issue in the local food strategy of Ghent. In order to provide sustainable local food, preservation of local farmland is crucial.

'Natural heritage'

Providing enough green, both for biodiversity, recreation and its contribution to climate mitigation and adaptation, is another key goal for the City of Ghent. This also implies policy instruments that allow to preserve, develop and manage green open spaces in a sustainable way.

'Climate change'

Space for Ghent – 2030 Structural vision describes the way in which we wish to live, work, relax, get around, and prepare the city for climate change. The preservation and suitable management of open space is a crucial asset for dealing with climate change. Open space contributes to tempering the heat island effect in cities, provides space for storing excess water and allows infiltration of water to replenish the groundwater table. It also contributes to carbon storage (e.g. in trees, crops, soil).

The City of Ghent aims for agricultural activities to have as little as possible negative impact on the climate. Hence the focus on local food and sustainable agricultural practices (see also Food Production).

'Environment'

The environmental challenges are to a large extent linked to the above topics of natural heritage and climate change. It also covers the challenge of assuring sustainable agricultural activities.

Worldwide, a loss of open space is encountered. Spatial planning is the main policy instrument used to preserve open space. Indeed, this can to a certain extent assure the preservation of open space. However, this instrument alone is not sufficient to prevent conversion of open space to residential areas, industrial zones, roads, etc. Therefore, scholars, public authorities, NGO's and citizens are searching for governance mechanisms to support preservation of open space. Within PROSPERA, we wanted to investigate which levers a city can use to assure preservation of open space. Such instruments are innovative, and certainly at the level of a city.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1 – Development of a vision on agriculture and public land for agriculture

1. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

Reggio Emilia's good practice "variation to the urban planning tool" has been very inspiring for Ghent. The good practice consists of various ideas, plans and actions that inspired the City of Ghent to concretise our own vision on agriculture and, related to that, a vision on the way our public land can be used as an instrument to implement the vision on agriculture in practice. Reggio Emilia's goal to promote rural territory and the recognition of agriculture as the guardian of landscape are a valuable starting point for our envisioning process. Moreover, the participatory approach to develop this variation to the urban planning tool seems very valuable and a key to the success of the good practices. Other ideas that we consider useful to concretise Ghent's vision on agriculture are the memorandum of understanding, the differentiation of the agricultural area in different types of agriculture, the agripriide to connect farmers and citizens and the voluntary approach for rezoning/redesignation of building zones/urbanizable areas to agricultural zones.

Another good practice of Reggio Emilia that has been a source of inspiration is the Edible park, an integrated and sustainable system with arboriculture/garden cultivation on a plot of land owned by the municipality of Reggio Emilia. This project is an example of how a municipality can use its own public land to develop an innovative and valuable farm project that combines different advantages of agriculture such as food production, dealing with climate change, social employment and short food supply chain.

A good practice of Varberg that also inspired this action is the Rural village development strategies. This good practice shows a successful cooperation between local stakeholders, politicians and public officials. The idea to organise meetings/walks in the area at stake to talk with stakeholders, politicians and public officials in order to identify challenges and possibilities and to propose activities to develop the area together in a public-private partnership seems very relevant for Ghent's peri-urban area.

Concerning data collection, Reggio Emilia's good practice "variation to the urban planning tool" has also been the first source of inspiration. The maps that have been made to support the policy making on agriculture are very interesting, e.g. the maps that show the historical evolution of built up area and to show where farms are located and which farm type. Also the differentiation of the agricultural area in different types of agriculture (areas with high productive agricultural vocation, agricultural areas with high landscape values, peri-urban areas) could be relevant for Ghent.

Another good practice that inspired us is Debrecen's Envirosense, with a very broad range of data derived from GIS and satellite data. These data are used to get an accurate view on the state of green areas, urban spatial structure, building density, etc. in peri-urban areas. Time series analysis shows how the urban structure of a given area, the proportion of built-up area and green areas have changed over time. This is very valuable for mapping, evaluating and communicating about ecosystem services of the peri-urban (farmland) area. Moreover, it is relevant to deal with illegal or undesirable functions and constructions in peri-urban areas.

Finally, Varberg's good practice on grasslands also focusses on mapping and monitoring of grassland and grassland value. During the field visit, Varberg also showed nice maps of the different land uses on their territory (woodland, farmland, water, built land).

2. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

The City of Ghent will concretise its vision on agriculture and public land for agriculture. The policy instrument "Spatial Structural Vision 2030 – Space for Ghent" already refers to agriculture as an important part of open space in the peri-urban area of Ghent. In the local food strategy Gent en garde, preservation of space for sustainable local food production is also one of the main goals. However, up till now, the City has only few concrete instruments to promote the preservation and sustainable development of farmland areas. Therefore, the City of Ghent plans to concretise it's

vision on agriculture and public land for agriculture. The concretisation of the vision on agriculture is in itself an instrument that can contribute to the improvement of the policy instrument SSV 2030, because it makes the goal on preservation and sustainable development of the farmland areas more explicit. Moreover, instruments and actions related to preservation and sustainable development of farmland will be defined as part of the agricultural vision. By developing such a vision, we will fulfil the need for an additional programme, strengthening both the current Spatial Structural Vision 2030 and the local food strategy Gent en garde. The purpose is to contribute to several policy goals, related to local food production, but also climate, green open space, biodiversity, recreation, an attractive living environment and social employment.

To develop the agricultural vision, a participatory approach will be applied. Both workshops and one to one meetings will be organised for this, inspired by the participatory approach of Reggio Emilia's and Varberg's good practices. A specific idea that we will implement are the meetings/walks where stakeholders, politicians and public officials can interact.

Another (sub)action that will be performed to support the envisioning process, is **to collect data and prepare maps about agriculture and public land**. The collected data maps will be used to feed the envisioning process on agriculture and public land for agriculture. They will also be combined with existing maps and maps that have recently been developed in the framework of other studies (e.g. about the impact of climate change and drought for the City of Ghent). The data collection will help us to have a better insight in the importance of the open space area and make the added value of open space more visible, valorised and connected to the urban and economic actors. Finally it will lead to a better acknowledgement in the urbanisation processes of the essential ecosystem and societal services delivered by these open space areas and how these services can be better integrated in our farms and farmland. This was another need addressed to our policy instrument.

Long term (sub)action (beyond phase 2): During the envisioning process and afterwards, when realising the developed vision, specific actions that we learned from the PROSPERA good practices will be further investigated for their relevance in Ghent's vision on agriculture (e.g. memorandum of understanding, agripriide event, differentiation of agricultural area, rezoning of urbanizable areas, development of a project such as the edible park, QR codes that provide information on farms and farmland, art to add an attraction in the peri-urban area, ...). However, as the vision still has to be developed and as this will be approached in a participatory way, it is impossible to already define which of these ideas that we learned throughout the PROSPERA project will end up to be part of Ghent's vision on agriculture and public land for agriculture or later actions based on this vision.

Type of change: The concretisation of the vision on agriculture and public land for agriculture implies both a governance change and a structural change. It will be a governance change because it changes the way agricultural issues (and related policy goals as described above) are integrated into the Spatial Structural Vision 2030. The (sub)action of collecting data will also help to make better decisions and hence also qualifies as a type of change 2 (improving management/governance). Moreover, it is also a structural change, because new measures will be created to realise the farmland related goals of the Spatial Structural Vision 2030.

3. **Players involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

Various stakeholders that have also been involved in the PROSPERA project will be involved in this envisioning process and will be invited for the workshops and one to one meetings:

- different types of farmers,
- farmers' organisations,
- nature organisations,
- NGO's related to food, nature and social work,
- citizen movements related to food,
- Province of East-Flanders,
- Flemish Land Agency (Flemish Government),
- spatial planners,
- scientists,
- advice councils related to environment, nature and spatial planning.

Part of these stakeholders are also represented in the Ghent's local food council. Hence, this forum will also be used to discuss the vision.

Furthermore, city colleagues from different departments and politicians responsible for relevant areas (agriculture, green open space, social employment, public land) will be involved. Also colleagues from the participation department will be involved.

Specifically for the data (sub)action:

City of Ghent, specifically also the Data and Information Department

Organisations with expertise in agricultural data and mapping

4. Timeframe

First steps have already been taken to design the participatory approach and concretise the agricultural vision. This will be further concretised during phase 2 of the PROSPERA project.

According to the current planning, the vision should be finished by December 2022. This timing is more strict than the PROSPERA timing due to political pressure emerging once this action has been defined throughout the PROSPERA process. In case the vision is finished according to this very strict timing, further steps will already be taken to refine the vision and action plan within Phase 2 of PROSPERA. However, the final deadline for approval of the vision is June 2023 (last municipal council before the end of Phase 2 in July 2023).

Steps to be taken:

- Monthly meetings with City colleagues to give input and feedback
- Workshops with farmers, other stakeholders, city colleagues and politicians to give input and feedback (4 workshops have already been planned: March, May, June and September 2022, more workshops might be organised when needed)
- Meetings with (a broader group of) politicians to inform, provide feedback and input
- Data collection to support the envisioning process (see below)
- One on one meetings with people from the above groups when needed
- Writing the draft vision, based on the above input (September 2022, at the latest March 2023)
- Adapting the draft to a final document, based on the above input (November 2022, at the latest May 2023)
- Political validation of the final document describing the vision on agriculture and public land for agriculture (December 2022 - at the latest June 2023)
- *Only when we manage the above very strict timing:* further steps to refine the vision and action plan (see e.g. long term subaction)

Specifically for the data (sub)action:

In October – December 2021, an assignment has been granted to ILVO to gather data about agriculture in Ghent and public land owned by the City of Ghent (OCMW).

Further data needs and the possibility to collect these data will be investigated during the second phase of the PROSPERA project in function of the planned envisioning process.

5. Costs (if relevant)

Personnel costs will be the main cost, as several city employees will cooperate to concretise the vision on agriculture and public land for agriculture

1 person working 50% during 12 months, 8 persons working 10% during 12 months, i.e. ca 97 500 euro for personnel costs

Costs for organising workshops (at least 4 workshops have already been planned, costs will depend on the location and workshop approach, e.g. walks versus inside location)

Catering and location: 200 euro/workshop + personnel costs (included in the above costs)

Specifically for the data (sub)action:

Personnel costs for city employees who take part in the data collection exercise

Costs for paying organisations with expertise in agricultural data and mapping to collect specific data and produce maps

Costs for the data collection in October – december 2021: 17.986,65 euro (from Ghent budget – not PROSPERA budget)

Costs for further data collection: not yet defined – estimated amount max 20.000 euro

6. Funding sources (if relevant):

City budget will be used to pay personnel, organise workshops and hire expertise on data collection and mapping

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____