



Peripheries—Dynamics for the Green Deal

Jörg Schröder

This article calls for a territorial dimension of the *Green Deal* for cities, towns, villages, and regions. *Dynamics of Peripheries* are argued as promising accelerator for an effective and just transition of large parts of European territories—fragmented, diverse, and facing dynamic transformation processes. Place-oriented strategies towards *Reserves of Resilience* are discussed as important contribution to overall transformation to sustainability. The need to foster *Territorial Creativity* for a new *Habitat Vision* of large parts of European territories is put forward to innovate of concepts and tools of urbanism and of action-oriented research: able to empower communities for co-creating shared visions and processes of transformation.

Starting from the challenge how to realise the *European Green Deal*, to target climate change, and how to decide for the *Next Generation* of public policies in and after the Covid-19 pandemic, we should face the multiplicity of spaces beyond metropolis. Taking into account cities, towns, villages, and regions, the challenge will not only be to achieve a transition towards a carbon-free life, but to direct forces and strategies towards a sustainable future of living spaces. The aim of a *Just Transition* will have to consider a territorial notion of the *Green Deal*, to facilitate chances of sustainable development locally—that then contribute to larger networks and constellations as well as foster initiatives of spatial-social innovation. A territorial notion of transition applies not only to material and economic flows and ecological issues, but also to social inclusion, possibilities, and to culture, to the inspiration, knowledge, and abilities to envision *Future Habitats*: in the sense of liveable places, vivid and inspired communities, caring for and working with nature. A new force of civil engagement, entrepreneurship, and research will be central to link with politics and public actors in these challenges. Thus, the success of the *Green Deal* will need to be based on our ability to create new pathways to imagine, evolve and steer *Territorial Innovation*.

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Accelerators for Sustainable Change

The rediscovery of dynamic spaces and phenomena outside of metropolitan cores—not at least through the Corona crisis—puts a wide range of topics on the agenda: peripheries can be understood as arena of social, economic, cultural and ecological innovation and as laboratory for future living spaces (Schröder, Carta, Ferretti, Lino 2018). This potential calls for linking three approaches: (1) the concept of *Reserves of Resilience* between increased autonomy and flexible networks that combine mitigation and adaption to climate change, expanding the concept of resilience from systemic to spatial-social and dynamic dimensions that realise the core factors adaptivity and redundancy. (2) A *Habitat Vision* that addresses the potential of peripheries as attractive places for staying, returning, or settling: as spaces of possibilities for new living and working models, for multi-place modes and temporary citizenship, for new communities. (3) *Territorial Creativity* that can trigger social, cultural, spatial, and natural assets, preserve and develop them (Scaffidi 2018), by enabling local actors and communities and by creating new linkages between metropolitan cores and peripheries: towards strategies for metropolitan, urban, and rural networks with a perspective not on urban margins, but on new centres for community.

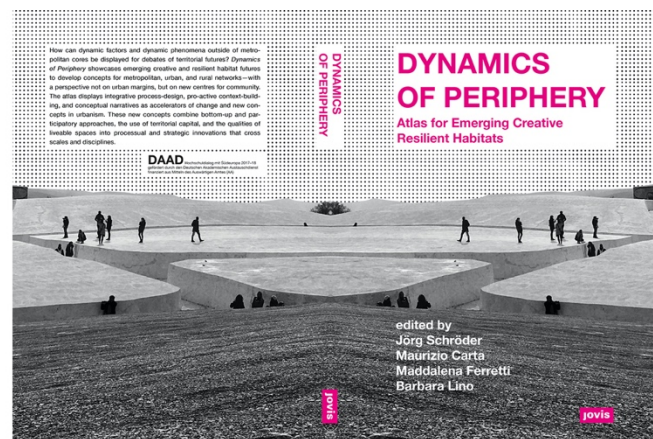
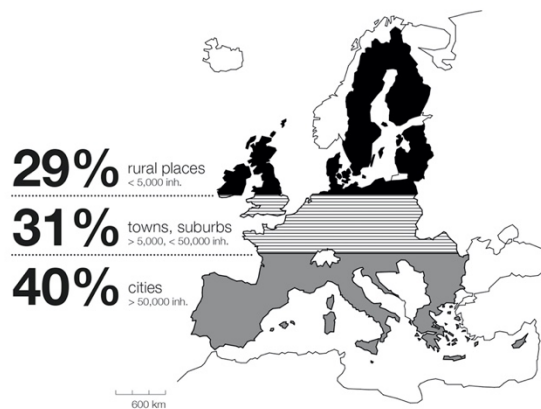


Image 1: EU-28 population according to settlement typologisation, projected by graphic share (precision: municipal level, LAU2). Data: Dijkstra, Poelman 2014. Graphic: Jörg Schröder // Cover *Dynamics of Periphery*, Jovis 2018.

A Shift towards Action Research

The relevance to address places beyond metropolis is based on the fact that 60% of Europeans live in settlements with less than 50,000 inhabitants, notwithstanding if they are part of in themselves highly differentiated metropolitan contexts (in Germany 63% of inhabitants), in functional or organisational sense, or outside of them (37%) (see Fig. 1). Larger constellations influence the conditions of places significantly—and are underlying constant and deep transformation processes. An increase of social and territorial polarisation and their political effects are discussed (Rodríguez-Pose 2017; McNeil-Willson et.al. 2019; ESPON 2017a), concerning different scales from quarters to regions—a fragmentation that probably will be enhanced further by effects caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Already longer running trends of concentration, of growth, and shrinkage in national and in regional scales as well as in near vicinity seem to become reinforced (ESPN 2017b; Gans, Siedentop 2017). Thus, the arena to implement the *Green Deal* can be described not only as highly fragmented and diverse but as underlying dynamic transformation processes.

Explanatory approaches of a deep spatial change with increased globalisation since the 1990ies, such as the

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articulation and synthesis of urban diffusion (Indovina 1990) even beyond former notions of metropolis (Soja 2000) and in a new interpretation of territory (Gausa, Guallart, Muller 2003) now give way to a clear shift towards more operative approaches in urbanism. They regard paradigms, concepts, and tools of research defined as in action: e. g. *Open(ing)* (Gausa 2019), *Mosaic Territorial City* (Llop 2017), *Horizontal Metropolis* (Viganò, Cavalieri 2018), and *Augmented City* (Carta 2017). With this, urbanistic approaches are being enhanced towards transdisciplinary research and advice to public and policies. Multiple spatial contexts and different transformation processes are being taken into focus, extending the view on the status quo not only to an evolutive understanding of past transformations (Corboz 2001) but towards pathways to the future, to the limitations and to potentials based on spatial-processual logics and spatial-social constellations. At the same time—linking to concepts such as *Open City* (Sennett 2013) and *Rebel City* (Harvey 2012)—the demand of citizens to being actively involved in shaping spatial futures, contributing to from narratives, and increasing awareness of spatial, social, cultural, economic, and ecological aspects of sustainable development can be seen as important perspectives for the territorial dimension of the *Green Deal*.



Image 2: Between Munich, Stuttgart, and Zurich: Allgäu, Donau Iller and Lake Constance regions // Lake Constance and Alpine horizon. Images: Regionales Bauen und Siedlungsplanung LUH.

- (1) Allgäu brand area (483,000 inh., 3,349 km²) as cooperation between 4 provinces (Oberallgäu, Unterallgäu, Ostallgäu, Lindau) and 3 cities (Kempten, Memmingen, Kaufbeuren).
- (2) Donau-Iller region (1,000,000 inh., 5,464 km²) as cooperation between 6 provinces and 3 cities—an interstate cooperation between Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, with a joint regional planning body, strengthened by impulses from the double urban centre of Ulm/Neu-Ulm, also with a regional mobility network (DING) and the transformation of Ulm station into a multimodal mobility hub.
- (3) Region Bodensee-Oberschwaben (631,000 inh., 3,501 km²), formed by the provinces of Bodenseekreis and Ravensburg) is part of the Euroregio Lake Constance.

A Focus on Peripheries

From this background, a comprehensive view of formerly separated phenomena seems promising—not only in research, but also in public and cultural debates, as started already in many European countries (e. g. Guilluy 2015). The concept of *Dynamics of Periphery* (Schröder, Carta, Ferretti, Lino 2018) proposes a focus on emerging and creative contributions for territorial futures—of spaces formerly separated by attributions, that are now are seen oscillating, transforming, and in multiple ways interconnected: medium and small cities and towns, villages, rural areas, suburbanised areas undergoing deep changes in the trend of accelerated metropolisation; mountain, coast, or inland settlements becoming increasingly remote or set into new contexts. Areas labelled as in need of economic restructuring cover now about 1/3 of German regions (BMWi 2019), comprehending shrinking or stagnating areas, former coal-mining areas, frontier areas, and including all categories of places. At the same time, pressure phenomena cause deep frictions in growing metropolitan agglomerations and areas outside of metropolitan cores have maintained or initiated economic and social wealth, e. g. connected with clustering of SME, new technologies, or touristic positioning. Since *Peripheries* can offer—until now often hidden—potentials for overall sustainability and for alternative pathways of development, a renewed focus should address three aspects:

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- (1) to set up a necessary co-production of knowledge about dynamic processes of transition;
- (2) to enhance co-creation of concepts and practices of urban and regional transformation;
- (3) to link with new forms of social movements, private-public actions, social innovation, and civil engagement.

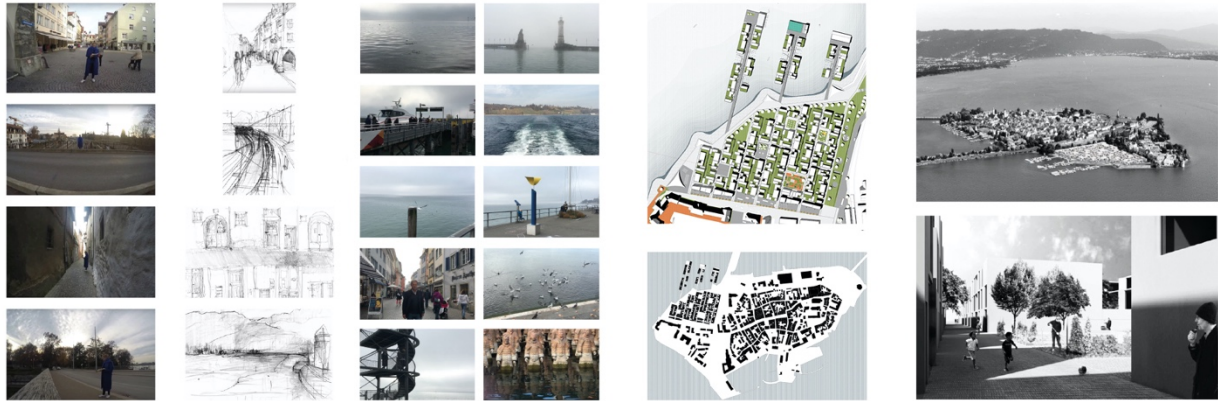


Image 3: Video stills in Lindau. Amelie Bimberg, Lea Frenz // Project on Lindau Island. Eike Ruhland, Raphael Schall, Regionales Bauen und Siedlungsplanung.

A study project for a new urban quarter in Lindau, at the head of the urban island and on the site of a former car parking area—with specific focus to new working/living models and social inclusion (see: Schröder, Hartmann 2016). In the meantime, the municipality is realising the new quarter (Hintere Insel Lindau) based on a competition project. It is connected with the transformation of the extensive railway area on Lindau island due to the new train station on the main land. As part of the improved railway connection between Munich and Zurich, it will provide further connectivity for the whole Lake Constance area.

Examples for Innovation

Two areas in Germany, in the shadow of a mediatic, cultural, and political mainstream, can illustrate the emerging phenomena outside of metropolitan agglomerations. Some indications from these two examples can open pathways for further research: In the first case (Fig. 2), in between Munich, Stuttgart, and Zurich, three spaces of regional cooperation, in some parts overlapping, show challenges and also frictions¹ of an overall economically and demographically growing area. In the Allgäu area,² a model for territorial cooperation based on the development of a shared branding as tourism destination and positioning for SME has been established; in both parts linked to sustainability objectives: in creating a brand that embodies values, and in recycling already built-up zones as well as in forming intercommunal initiatives to provide space for industrial zones. The extension of the branding operation into further policy fields can be seen as evolving regional strategy-building (RURBANCE:³ Schröder 2015). Recent projects regard promoting new living and working models and community spaces in a recycling of empty spaces in town and village centres, or in setting up a regional process for a housing strategy. Initiatives from bottom-up foster the cooperation scenario, e.g. in strengthening regional building culture or in creating innovative shared housing models. In the Lake Constance area, a cooperation model between the different regions around the lake—parts of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland—is targeting the positioning in research, innovation and productivity as well as mobility networks, liveable places, natural capital, and spatial development.⁴ A particular focus of the towns and cities around the lake can be noted on the recycling of buildings and spaces in urban centres, for strengthening their attractiveness and preventing further settlement expansion—e. g., in Lindau, the project of a new urban quarter on the city island (Fig. 3), but also in Bregenz, Konstanz, and Friedrichshafen.

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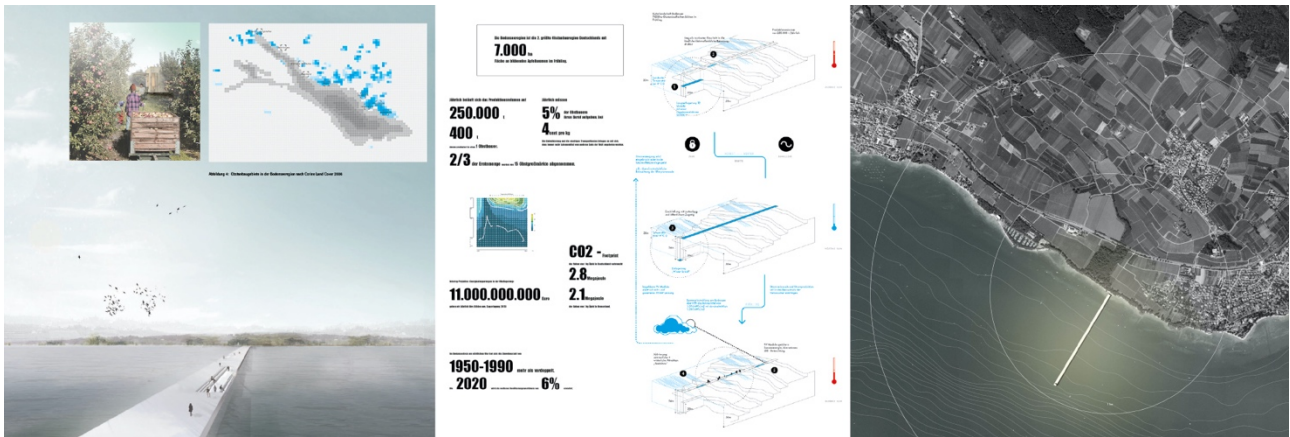


Image 4: Project Cool Down: Underwater apple storage in Lake Constance. Franziska Faber, Eva Staack, Regionales Bauen und Siedlungsplanung LUH. A study project addressing the topic of apple production, quite important on the northern shore of Lake Constance: as contribution to conflicts between nature preservation and agriculture, the project suggests a new perspective of sustainability regarding the whole cycle from production to consumption, by addressing the problem of energy-consuming storage: an underwater storage is combined with a pier as new public space in the lake—symbolising regional cooperation and as platform for culture and education for Green Economy. See: Schröder, Hartmann 2016.

In the second—much smaller—case (Fig. 5), in between Berlin, Hamburg, and Hannover, the region Wendland.Elbe started several regional innovation processes in the framework of a regional climate strategy.⁵ They are building on strengths of community empowerment and of linkages to metropolis, in cultural and productive dimensions, but also in cooperation with universities. In particular, the yearly *Landpartie* Festival attracts yearly 60,000 visitors for 600 manifestations set up in a model of bottom-up organisation, linking 71 makerspaces all over the region, focused on creative culture and design. The area has a long tradition of bio-agriculture, renewable energy production, and forestry. Facing a general process and increasing threat of regional marginalisation and gentrification, and dealing with demographic changes and overall shrinkage of population (up to 1% from 2010 to 2018), innovation processes target regional attractiveness. They established facilitating frameworks for staying/returning/new settlers—answering to demands of existing light industry SME and craft enterprises, but also opening up new horizons for creative industries and crucial for the evolvement of communities. These initiatives are linked with questions how to organise new mobility in rural areas and how to set up a housing strategy that faces touristic occupation. Research towards a new spatial strategy already focused on the re-use of post-agricultural building stock and the strengthening of the multifaceted micro-polycentric networks in the area with a creative paradigm for circular economy (Schröder, Scaffidi 2019).



Image 5: // Between Berlin, Hamburg, and Hannover: Wendland.Elbe region // Elements Wendland.Elbe region. Images: Regionales Bauen und Siedlungsplanung LUH.

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The region Wendland.Elbe (48,000 inh, 1220 km²), as Province Lüchow-Dannenberg the smallest and least populated province in Germany, is organised in 27 municipalities with overall 303 small villages, with the rural towns of Lüchow, Dannenberg, Gartow, Hitzacker, Klenze, and Wustrow. Demographic data (2018): Average age: 48 (Germany 44), Immigrants: 5.4 % (Germany 12.2 %), Under 18: 15.30 % (Germany 18.0%). Heritage-led regeneration in the area can build on civil engagement, e.g. Rundlingsverein, the association promotion 18 historic villages as UNESCO site, received the Europa Nostra Award in 2014. Furthermore, the area is characterised by a creative and alternative movement since the 1980ies with multifaceted linkages with the metropolises, originating from protests against nuclear energy.

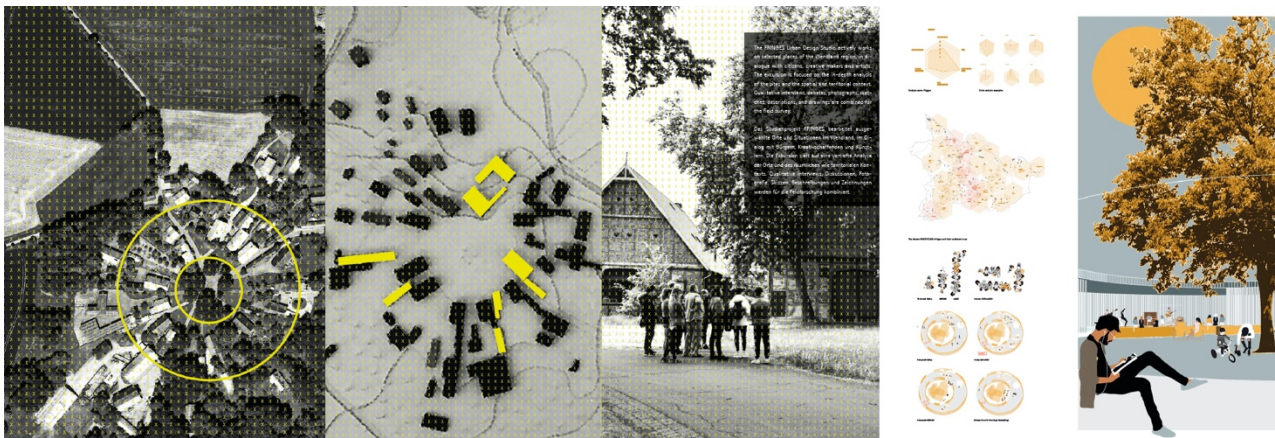


Image 6: Round villages in Wendland.Elbe. Graphics: Marie Schwarz // Project Co-working space in the village green. Anne Ruff, Regionales Bauen und Siedlungsplanung LUH.

A study project addressing new co-working models in Wendland region, addressing digital design and crafts, new living models in the post-agricultural/inner-town building stock, temporary citizenship, start-ups, new mobility, and new forms of social infrastructure.

A Design Paradigm

Facing the increasingly diverse contextual challenges and the demand for more strategic, more adaptive, and more integrative processes for transition, that are also able to bundle, sustain, and guide social innovation and entrepreneurial initiatives, innovation in urbanistic tools will need to be accelerated. Approaches such as integrative process-design, pro-active context-building, and conceptual narratives (Schröder, Carta, Ferretti, Lino 2018) combine bottom-up and participatory approaches, the active use of territorial capital, and the qualities of liveable spaces into processual and strategic innovations that connect across scales and link to other disciplines. The aim of a new and dynamic interaction between energies of people, of places, of nature, and of ideas calls for revision of tools. E. g., the construction of scenarios can support shared visions and a specific notion of branding in territorial scale (REGIOBRANDING:⁶ Schröder, Ferretti 2018); collaborative urbanism targeting advanced networks and models of co-creation and social innovative initiatives can support expressions of *Local Resilience* (Lino 2018). *Design Thinking*—deployed to shape ideas to become a practical and attractive part of life—as creative methodology of the interaction between creativity and community feedback can enhance processes of territorial innovation (Schröder 2020): by opening up new modes to read potentials, to envision transformation pathways, to reconnect communities with flows and constellations, to draw shared strategies and processes for transition towards sustainability.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Answering to the demand of housing and at the same time responding to the objective not to expand settlement areas unsustainably, municipalities in the region are starting debates for new solutions. For a study of alternative models, e. g. of shared housing and low rise high density, developed for the case study Memmingen, see: Schröder, Diesch 2020.

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- 2 The mentioned studies and initiatives are online at: <http://standort.allgaeu.de/flyer-und-broschueren> (25.09.2020): Nachhaltige Gewerbeflächenentwicklung im Allgäu; Wohnraum Allgäu: Eine Bedarfsprognose für das Jahr 2030; Neue Ideen für die Innenentwicklung im Allgäu. The mentioned project of shared housing is Marienhof in Leutkirch, see: <http://www.german-design-award.com/die-gewinner/galerie/detail/14800-marienhof-leutkirch-im-allgaeu.html>. For the initiative for regional building culture: <http://www.architekturforum-allgaeu.de> (25.09.2020).
- 3 The Allgäu area and its innovative branding and development model has been a focus region within the project RURBANCE, in the framework of the Alpine Space Programme cofunded by the European Union 2012-15 (lead partner: Lombardy Region). The multi-stakeholder project focused on rural-urban inclusive governance strategies and tools for the sustainable development of deeply transforming Alpine territories. Due to a fragmentation of policies, territorial governance often fails to efficiently tackle spatial development issues related to urban and rural mountain areas. RURBANCE aims to achieve balanced spatial development by treating urban and rural areas as one coherent territorial system, and creating a platform for exchange between them. The Chair for Territorial Design and Urban Planning of Leibniz University Hannover as project partner specifically addressed the co-creation of inclusive territorial visioning for sustainable development and measures to facilitate agreement on a co-development model between territories.
- 4 The International Lake Constance Conference, an international cooperation since 1972, sets its strategic focus on the enhancement of positioning in economy, work, research and innovation; differentiated spatial structure with future-oriented mobility access; attractive region, high quality of life; unique natural spaces. See: <http://www.bodenseekonferenz.org> (25.09.2020). The area is since 1997 an Euroregion with 4 mio. inhabitants, formed by 3 regions in Germany (in the States Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Vorarlberg region (Austria), Liechtenstein, and 6 Cantons of Switzerland. Influenced by the advanced models of innovative sustainable and capillary mobility in Vorarlberg (Austria) and well developed public transport in Switzerland, a common touristic ticket (Lake Constance Ticket, for train, bus, and boat) has been introduced, a catamaran speedboat connects Konstanz and Friedrichshafen every hour, since 2005, and further mobility projects are on the agenda (Lake Constance circular train).
- 5 Strategie 100% Klimaschutz (100% Climate Protection Strategy) national project of excellence funded by the Federal Ministry of Environment. Initiatives comprehend: *Design Camp* (Funding association for Science in Germany); *PostLab* co-working space in Lüchow: re-use of former post office as co-working space; *Wendland Startercamp* (funded by associations of local enterprises, for start-up initiatives), part of *Wendlandlabor*; *Wendland Leben* agency to attract and keep skilled workforce (funded by European Social Fund); *Rural Carsharing* (funded by Federal Ministry of Environment); digital infrastructure provision in all villages, set up by the Province; furthermore, *Bauwerk Wendland*, an association of SME in building construction, of architects, and real estate; and *Grüne Werkstatt Wendland*, a regional think-tank for sustainability. A new innovation project targets a transregional strategy for structural change based on sustainability, lead by Wendland.Elbe (in the Federal State Niedersachsen), with the adjoining regions Ludwigslust (Federal State Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) and Altmark Prignitz (Federal State Sachsen-Anhalt).
- 6 The research project REGIOBRANDING has been funded by the German Ministry for Education and Research BMBF in the programme Research for Sustainable Development from 2014–19 (leadpartner: Institute of Environmental Planning LUH). The Chair for Territorial Design and Urban Planning of Leibniz University Hannover as project partner focused on building and settlement development with the overall framework of innovation strategies for peripheral areas in the Hamburg Metropolitan Region. The transdisciplinary project aimed at new rural-urban alliances in a deeply transforming spatial context, through evolving innovative tools as accelerators in knowledge and decision processes linked to the concept of Regiobranding: to combine imagery, economic positioning, identification processes, and visions of future habitat. In an architectural-spatial approach, explorative scenarios and relational patterns are shown to open up design-driven knowledge production for larger spatial strategies and for territorial planning.

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