



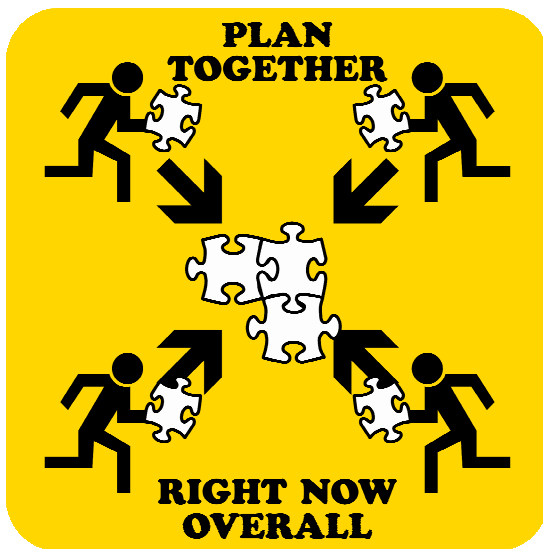
PREFACE

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**WELCOME to REAL CORP 2015, the
20th International Conference on Urban & Regional Development and Spatial Planning
in the Information Society!**



Cities full of life, committed citizens, visionary politicians, a strong economy, attractive universities, a rich arts and cultural scene, joy and fun in the streets, prosperity, curiosity, inclusiveness – dynamic and stable and of course everything sustainable and resilient and “smart” ...

What are the ingredients for VIBRANT CITIES and REGIONS? And how to make them a REALITY?

Cities and regions are and always have been in permanent transition. Ghent, the second largest city in Belgium with a population of approx. 250,000, has been in a leading position regarding smart city planning. The Flemish newspaper “De Standaard” announced “Ghent is the smartest city” in January 2013, and Daniël Termont was elected first runner-up in the 2014 World Mayor Prize competition and therefore was awarded the World Mayor Commendation for services to European cities.

The City of Ghent uses a system called “Ghent 2030” for their long term sustainable urban development. The Smart city development in Ghent is based on participation so that the local government is more an equal partner than a director. Ghent wants their people to be smart citizens;

they are encouraged to contribute to the development of their own living environment and also have multiple chances to forward their ideas to a bigger scale level. To achieve this goal, Ghent also acts as a Living Lab (which is a user-centred, open-innovation ecosystem integrating concurrent research and innovation processes within a various forms of public-private partnership models). The Ghent Living Lab is an open collaborative network led by the City of Ghent. The Living Lab focuses on e-inclusion, e-government, e-participation, digital innovation and green digital development (energy efficiency, smart energy).

What is the role of planning and planners in such a smart environment aiming to development a vibrant contemporary and future city? During the international conference REAL CORP 2015 some 300 experts coming from 60 countries all over the world are exchanging their knowledge and discussing how to manage spatial transitions of the 21st century or how financial instruments for cities, regions and area specific development can be optimised in the background of ubiquitous budget austerity. These fields of expertise will be the leading topics of REAL CORP 2015 on “Plan Together – Right Now – Overall. From Vision to Reality for Vibrant Cities and Regions”. The proceedings comprise about 1,000 pages of hand-picked and mainly double-stage peer reviewed knowledge for planners and for cities.

More than 100 expert presentations and keynote speeches, a round table discussion on “Urban Living Labs for Vibrant Cities” in cooperation with Ghent University as well as an extensive range of excursions to historic and future development sites of the city of Ghent complete the programme of this year’s conference which is the 20th edition of the annual REAL CORP series. It all started 1996 with a handful of presentations on computer-aided spatial planning at Vienna University of Technology. Over the years, REAL CORP became one of the most important conferences for planners, stakeholders from governmental, non-governmental and research organisations and related professions around the world.

What makes REAL CORP unique is the interdisciplinary and highly international approach of our partners, speakers and participants. Welcome to three days of world-wide networking, sharing of thoughts and development of project ideas in the wonderful smart city of Ghent.

Have a great conference!

Manfred SCHRENK, Clemens BEYER & the REAL CORP Team