


# Urban Strategies for Dense and Green Zurich

## From Healthy Neighbourhoods towards Healthy Communities?

**Conference Paper****Author(s):**

[Peric Momcilovic, Ana](#) ; De Blust, Seppe; Jiang, Yingying; Guariento, Nicolo; Wälty, Sibylle

**Publication date:**

2022-12

**Permanent link:**

<https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000583045>

**Rights / license:**

[In Copyright - Non-Commercial Use Permitted](#)

Research Paper

# Urban Strategies for Dense and Green Zurich: From Healthy Neighbourhoods towards Healthy Communities?

Ana PERIĆ, ETH Zurich, Switzerland; University of Belgrade, Serbia

Seppe DE BLUST, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

Yingying JIANG, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

Nicolo GUARIENTO, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

Sibylle WÄLTY, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

## Abstract

*Contemporary healthy urban development goes beyond the traditional emphasis on individual well-being toward a more systemic approach to health: the notions of equity, inclusion and socio-spatial justice are at the centre of such an approach. Using the lens of urban health to explore socio-spatial complexity in Zurich makes an interesting case, given that cooperative (urban) planning is considered a norm in the Swiss spatial planning policy. Set between cooperation as the principal normative value in the legislative and regulative Swiss planning framework and the practical evidence that sometimes lacks the implementation of these values, and using an in-depth case study analysis of the Koch Areal, this paper critically examines: the planners' position and skills in the process of urban densification; the approach applied and values promoted by developers; the strategies by the local community in protecting local identity and needs; the relationship of city officials towards both the (local) public and investors. The findings point to the advantages and shortcomings emerging from the stakeholders' encounter, finally questioning the essence of cooperative planning, and outlining the current state of Zurich's urban development strategy on the trajectory towards an intrinsically healthy city.*

## Keywords

*Cooperation, inclusion, healthy communities, dense and green cities, Koch Areal*

## 1. Introduction

Global challenges, including changing climate, forced migrations, increased digitalisation, and advanced financialisation tools, among others, trigger the quest for healthy urban development. More precisely, the narrative on contemporary healthy cities shifts from the traditional emphasis on individual 'lifestyle choices' toward a more systemic approach to human well-being. That said, the notions of equity, inclusion and sustainability attending to socio-spatial justice are at the centre of such an approach (Pineo, 2022; Jennings & Bamkole, 2019; Grant, 2019). In other words, urban health reflects not only the attitudes of individuals, e.g., healthy diet, regular exercise, work-life balance, and the features of physical space, e.g., green infrastructure, but demands more coordinated activities by numerous stakeholders, hence, highlighting the intangible aspects of healthy cities like mental health, tolerance, democracy, pluralism, and security (de Vries et al., 2013).

At first sight, it seems that such collectively coordinated approaches endorsing some of the basic societal values can be fruitfully implemented in Swiss urban development (Keller et al., 1996; Steiner, 2003; Perić & Hoch, 2017; Hoch & Scholl, 2018): economic prosperity, coupled with a stable political environment, handles cultural diversity well; direct-democracy institutions make a continuous effort to deal with pluralism in power and harmonisation of adversarial interests; and, public officials, private firms and civic organisations often collaborate in strategic decision-making in urban development. Furthermore, different institutional levels cooperate in and coordinate the policymaking processes, as the administrative structure of Switzerland supports strategic and decentralised decision-making in spatial planning, with cantons acting as mediators in coordinating spatial development between the local and federal levels. Finally, complementary to the formal planning context, informal planning instruments and procedures enhance tailor-made and pragmatic solutions for complex planning tasks aimed at achieving public consensus in a planning process.

However, despite all the advantages above, Swiss urban planning practice often illustrates the paradox: the shared responsibility and pragmatic approach are insufficient for improving public participation and social inclusion (Keller et al., 1996; Debrunner et al., 2022). This is evident especially in the large urban redevelopment projects that address a significant number of multiple stakeholders' adversarial interests and also ask for cooperation across administrative units (Füeg, 2016; Debrunner et al., 2020). Zurich makes an interesting case for using the comprehensive lens of urban health to explore socio-spatial complexity, given that cooperation – as an informal norm in the Swiss spatial planning policy – is considered a taken-for-granted prerequisite of any planning activity. Particularly at the local (city, urban) level, the cooperation is set to exceed beyond the compliance of professionals' visions among the public authorities in order to reach a broader audience composed of citizens, community organisations, NGOs, the professional community, and developers, among other stakeholders. Focusing the research on Altstetten, one of two of Zurich's neighbourhoods with the fastest (residential and employment) growth rate in previous decades, with a great diversity in terms of the population structure, and under ongoing densification through a number of redevelopment projects (Stadt Zürich Statistik, 2022), the goal of this paper is to critically reflect on the notion of cooperative planning in the contemporary healthy urban development of Zurich. More precisely, taking a case study of Alstetten's Koch Areal as an exemplary case of dynamic cooperation patterns, we address the following questions: To what extent is cooperation exercised in urban planning practice? What are the obstacles to achieving genuine collaboration? Whose interests are set upfront in defining and implementing urban development ideas? What are the tactics of underrepresented groups in making their voices heard? Briefly, the paper aims to discover the extent and nature of collaboration that can trigger the shift from healthy neighbourhoods (focused on individual and collective lifestyles) to healthy communities (grasping the complexity of structural factors that affect human well-being and social equity).

The paper is structured as follows. The introductory section is followed by a brief overview of the global trends concerning cooperative ways to achieve healthy cities, serving to set out the main variables to be examined in the central part of the paper. The third section describes the research methodology, while the next one provides an overview of Zurich's formal planning instruments (e.g., city strategies, municipal/communal structural plan) and informal planning toolkits that address cooperation as a normative value. The central part of the paper illustrates the urban redevelopment project of the Koch Areal as an exemplary case study to elucidate diverse actor-networks in a quest for dense, green and healthy cities. The conclusion points to the advantages and shortcomings emerging from the stakeholders' encounter, finally questioning the essence of cooperative planning and opening some pathways toward other, more advanced collaborative planning approaches to be possibly applied in the Swiss socio-spatial context.

## 2. How to achieve green and dense cities? Overview of meta-trends

Informed by the general research framework revolving around the topic of ‘Dense and Green Cities’ (D&G),<sup>1</sup> this section summarises some of the findings (resulting from the D&G’s Work Package on Governance) that address the ways toward more resilient city development. In other words, the focus is not on ‘what’ the essential features of green, dense and healthy cities are but rather ‘how’ to achieve such urban development, inherently attending to the notions of social inclusion and equity. In doing so, we differentiate two main types of meta-trends in healthy urban development: topical and procedural. Informed by the authors’ previous research related to both topical meta-trends (Cairns & Tunas, 2022; Tan et al., 2021) and procedural meta-trends (Perić et al., 2021; Perić, 2014; De Blust et al., 2021; De Blust et al., 2019), and using the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015) as the main pillars to structuring the overview – in particular SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 15 (life on land) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) – we identify the following topical and procedural meta-trends: 1) topical: a) green city, b) climate adaptation and mitigation, c) densification/infill development, d) resilience, and e) sustainable development; and 2) procedural: a) communication, b) cooperation, c) coordination, d) participation, and e) governance.

To situate the narrative and operationalise the above rather abstract meta-trends, Table 1 summarises the findings from the key global and European territorial/urban development policy documents. More precisely, the analysis elaborates on meta-trends through (procedural and topical) principles. Finally, such an overview serves as a backbone for analysing the meta-trends in the local case of Zurich, as given in the following sections.

Documents	Cross-cutting PROCEDURAL principles	Cross-cutting TOPICAL principles
<i>New Urban Agenda</i> (UN, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● civic engagement</li> <li>● development across administrative boundaries</li> <li>● multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● balanced, sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development</li> <li>● resilience and responsiveness to natural and human-made hazards</li> <li>● mitigation of and adaptation to climate change</li> <li>● integrated urban and territorial planning and design</li> </ul>
<i>2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i> (UN, 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● inclusive and sustainable urbanization</li> <li>● participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management</li> <li>● public, public-private and civil society partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards</li> <li>● capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities</li> </ul>
<i>Ljubljana Agreement</i> (EU Ministers, 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation</li> <li>● voluntary, action-oriented, flexible and bottom-up nature of multi-level cooperation</li> <li>● involvement of urban authorities (at regional and local levels)</li> <li>● place-based, citizen-centred responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● greening cities</li> <li>● mitigation of and adaptation to climate change</li> <li>● climate neutrality by 2050</li> <li>● integrated and sustainable development</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> ‘Dense and Green Cities’ is one of 11 research modules of the Future Cities Lab (FCL) Global programme, a research platform aimed at bringing transdisciplinary perspectives on shaping sustainable cities and settlement systems. ‘Dense and Green Cities’ explores the development of sustainable integrated districts (SIDs), as model for high-density high-liveability future cities, attending not only to the factors for the successful implementation of SIDs but also to planning instruments and governance arrangements that enable such developments in different socio-spatial contexts.

<i>Territorial Agenda 2030</i> (EU Ministers, 2020b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● multi-level governance</li> <li>● integration beyond borders</li> <li>● place-based approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● better ecological livelihoods (nature-based solutions, green-blue infrastructure)</li> <li>● climate-neutral and resilient towns, cities and regions</li> <li>● rehabilitation and reutilisation of the built environment</li> </ul>
<i>The New Leipzig Charter</i> (EU Ministers, 2020a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● place-based, multi-level and participatory approach</li> <li>● integrated approach (consideration of all concerns and interests)</li> <li>● flexible urban governance for the common goods</li> <li>● neighbourhood policies to encourage local commitment for community building and inclusiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● integrated urban development</li> <li>● compact cities, urban regeneration, brownfield development</li> <li>● management and conversion of existing built environment</li> <li>● green city (high quality of green and recreational spaces, climate-resilient and carbon-neutral buildings, net-zero carbon city)</li> </ul>
<i>Urban Agenda for the EU</i> (EC, 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● effective urban governance</li> <li>● integrated and participatory policy making</li> <li>● new models of governance (multi-level governance)</li> <li>● place-based and people-based approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● sustainable urban development</li> <li>● climate adaptation (including green infrastructure solutions)</li> <li>● nature-based solutions</li> <li>● urban regeneration</li> </ul>
<i>Integrated sustainable urban development – Cohesion policy 2014–2020</i> (EC, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● dynamic environment of multiple governmental and non-governmental players</li> <li>● increased responsibility of urban authorities</li> <li>● community led-local development</li> <li>● engagement of different territorial scales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● urban resilience</li> <li>● sustainable urban development</li> </ul>
<i>Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020</i> (EU Ministers, 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● territorial coordination of policies</li> <li>● vertical and horizontal coordination</li> <li>● multi-level governance</li> <li>● place-based approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● urban regeneration</li> <li>● sustainable and inclusive urban development</li> <li>● territorial capital</li> <li>● climate adaptation and mitigation</li> <li>● green infrastructure</li> </ul>

Table 1. Principles of the major global and European territorial/urban development policy documents. Source: Authors.

### 3. Methodology and data

To explore a systemic approach to healthy cities, i.e., to go beyond the traditional lifestyle options and urban design principles and grasp the notions of well-being for all and the stakeholders' possibilities to express the viewpoints, interests and needs related to diverse aspects of healthy urban environments, the in-depth case study analysis was selected as an appropriate method. More precisely, by elucidating the site of Koch Areal in Zurich's neighbourhood of Alstetten, the paper examines the following: the position of professional planners in urban densification (including different phases, e.g., first idea on development, formulating the development proposal, and implementation steps); the approach applied and values promoted by developers; the strategies used by the local community to protect the local identity and local needs; and the relationship of public officials (city leaders) towards both the local public and investors.

Accordingly, qualitative research methods were applied to generate the data. Firstly, to situate the current and future strategic urban development in Zurich according to the previously mentioned global and European meta-trends (as identified in Section 2), the method of content analysis of the most relevant city policies and documents was applied. Such a study aims to reveal official standpoints on Zurich's urban development as well as the challenges concerning the implementation of both procedural and topical principles. Secondly, to take into account the more complex narrative on urban development enabled by participation (to a greater or lesser extent) of diverse urban stakeholders in the production of place (i.e., the case study of the Koch Areal), the method of discourse analysis of the newspaper articles (from the Zurich daily press – *Tages Anzeiger* and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*) and the interviews with diverse stakeholders (developers, local residents, planning professionals, city officials) was applied. In narrow terms, such stakeholders' analysis aims at elucidating the nature and extent of cooperation, major bottlenecks in achieving effective cooperation, the main allies and key opponents, the ways of identifying compromise, and the main cooperative mechanisms undertaken. In broader terms, the findings critically reflect upon the norm of cooperative planning, hence, highlighting its advantages and shortcomings.

#### 4. Urban planning tools in Zurich: cooperation as a norm

This section presents the key messages of some of Zurich's critical and most recent urban planning policy toolkits. On the one hand, such an approach interrelates current and future urban development in Zurich to some of the previously mentioned (topical and procedural) principles of the global and European meta-trends. More precisely, the goal is to reveal how the global narrative has been translated into the local setting and to identify the main city-specific instruments and mechanisms to tackle the meta-trends. In doing so, the analysis enhances both formal and informal planning tools and particularly highlights the procedure of cooperative planning. Finally, the main challenges of implementing cooperative planning are briefly described.

Table 2 shows how the previously defined cross-cutting procedural and topical principles are ingrained into two crucial city-level planning documents. What is indicative is that the procedural principles (communication, cooperation, coordination, participation, governance) are not elaborated in the Communal Structural Plan, i.e., a kind of master plan serving to transfer the main priorities defined at the higher administrations (federal, cantonal office) to the city level.

Documents	Cross-cutting PROCEDURAL principles	Cross-cutting TOPICAL principles
<i>Communal Structural Plan</i> (Stadt Zürich, Hochbaudepartement, Amt für Städtebau, 2021)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diverse and 'smart' (pres. identity) densification</li> <li>• high-quality open public spaces</li> <li>• preservation of city nature</li> <li>• 'kurze Wege'</li> <li>• environmentally friendly development</li> <li>• garden city</li> <li>• ecological corridors</li> </ul>
<i>Strategien Zurich 2035</i> (Stadt Zürich, Stadtrat, 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cooperative representation of interests: new, nuanced forms of collaboration (reflecting current challenges)</li> <li>• diverse horizontal collaboration of City of ZH (with public, private and civil sectors, grassroots groups and property owners)</li> <li>• vertical cooperation (ZH metropolitan area, Canton of ZH, federal, international level)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sustainable growth</li> <li>• socially responsible and ecologically compatible densification</li> <li>• high-quality densification</li> <li>• high-quality recreational spaces</li> </ul>

Table 2. Principles of the major local (city of Zurich) urban development policy documents. Source: Authors.



However, the absence of procedural principles in the legislature does not necessarily mean that urban planning instruments lack cooperative aspects. Namely, the procedure of ‘cooperative planning’ is an informal planning instrument yet widely used as complementary to official planning tools. The procedure can be initiated either by landowners or public authorities (city), coordinated by the city planning office (and other relevant city departments), while other interested parties (developers, citizens) can be included. The planning instruments that rely upon the cooperative planning procedure are numerous and widely used in Swiss planning practice, like the test-planning process, feasibility studies, competitions, etc. The essence of cooperative planning is ingrained into these informal tools; however, the strong emphasis on cooperation can also be found in some formal planning instruments (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Overview of the formal and informal urban planning procedures and instruments in Zurich. Source: Perić, 2021

## 5. Case study: the Koch Areal

The following section focuses on the Koch Areal, the recent urban redevelopment project in Zurich’s neighbourhood of Alstetten. The case is relevant for examination as it offers dynamic patterns of actor-networking, critically addressing the widely praised notion of cooperative planning, as indicated in the previous section. This section provides a brief overview of the site’s features, continues with a presentation of the critical stakeholders and their roles in the site’s redevelopment initiative over time, and, finally, points to the relationships that emerged among stakeholders with diverse needs and interests.

### 5.1. The Koch Areal: a brief overview of the site

The Koch Areal occupies approximately three hectares of land in Altstetten, a Zurich neighbourhood characterised by a mix of residential, office, and commercial buildings (Figure 2). The neighbourhood has also been defined as one of the city zones to be highly densified in future (Figure 3), with several ongoing (re)development projects (Figure 4). Throughout its history, the Koch Areal was mainly designated as industrial land, and after the industry moved from the site, the area was bought by UBS AG (Swiss bank). The City of Zurich purchased the site from UBS AG in 2013 to fully transform the site’s current land use and image. Due to the slow revitalisation process, and as UBS AG did not use the site long before the selling, the area has been occupied by approximately one hundred people living there (squatters) and about a hundred others using the site regularly. On the side of the site, there are two long halls from the beginning of the 20th century, which were used to store coal, a multi-story office building and other older commercial buildings. There is also a café, a bicycle repair shop, and facilities to host regular cultural

events with visitors from all over the city. In addition, the Asylum Organisation Zürich (AOZ) and the children's Circus Chnopf are based on the site, making it a vibrant area.

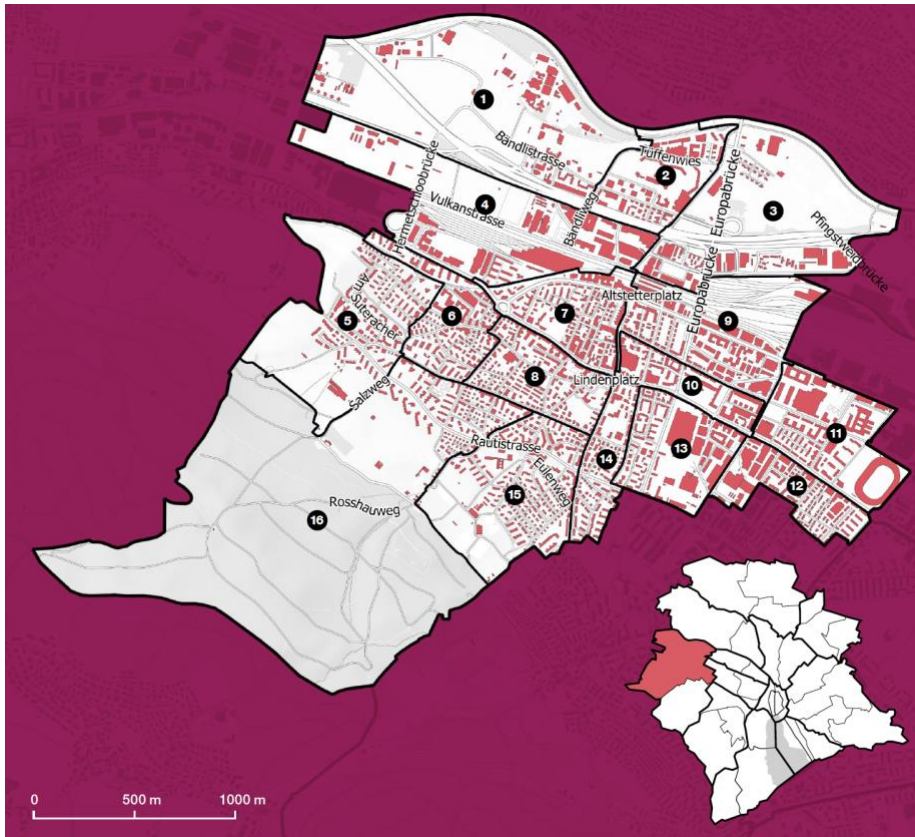


Figure 2. The position of Altstetten within the urban area of Zurich. Source: Stadt Zürich Statistik, 2022.



Figure 3. Densification area (in pink) in Altstetten. Source: Stadt Zürich, 2021.



The project for the future redevelopment of the area (Figure 5) includes around 329 affordable housing apartments, commercial space and a roughly 12,000 sqm-large, publicly accessible neighbourhood park. The future construction is to be supported by two cooperatives (non-profit residential building companies) – the ABZ (*Allgemeine Baugenossenschaft Zürich*) cooperative, which will build two residential buildings, one of them a high-rise, and the KW1 (*Bau- und Wohngenossenschaft Kraftwerk 1*) cooperative, which will construct a mixed-use building, as well as the private development company SENN (Senn Resources AG), in charge of building a multi-story commercial building (ABZ et al., 2021).

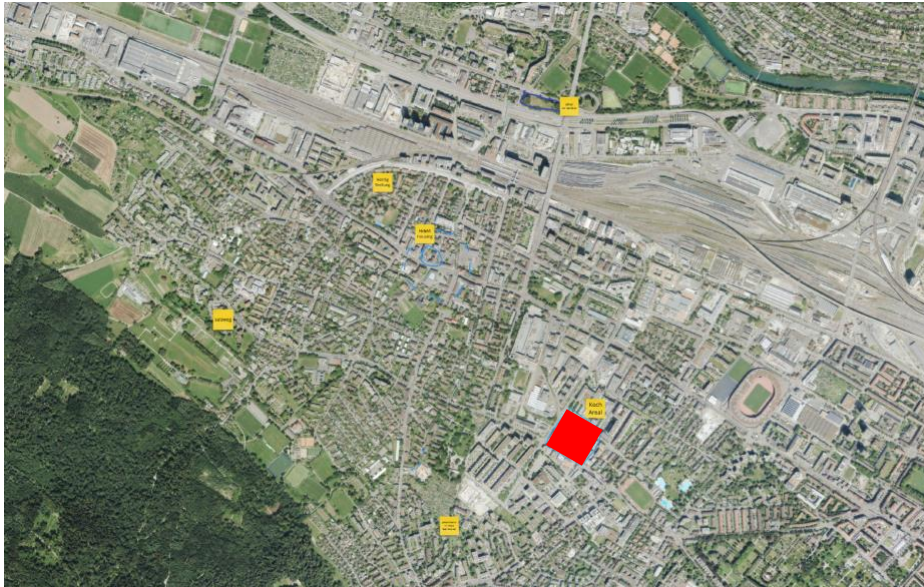


Figure 4. Ongoing densification projects in Altstetten (in yellow), the Koch Areal (in red) (above); site plan of the Koch Areal framed in red (below). Source: Holenstein, 2022.





Figure 5. The Koch Areal: a model. Source: Stadt Zürich, 2022.

## 5.2. The Koch Areal: timeline and key stakeholders in the redevelopment process

The narrative on the Koch Areal has been present in public since 2013. Over time, numerous stakeholders raised their opinions on the future development of the site. The key milestones and decisions along the process are illustrated in Figure 6 and summarised below.

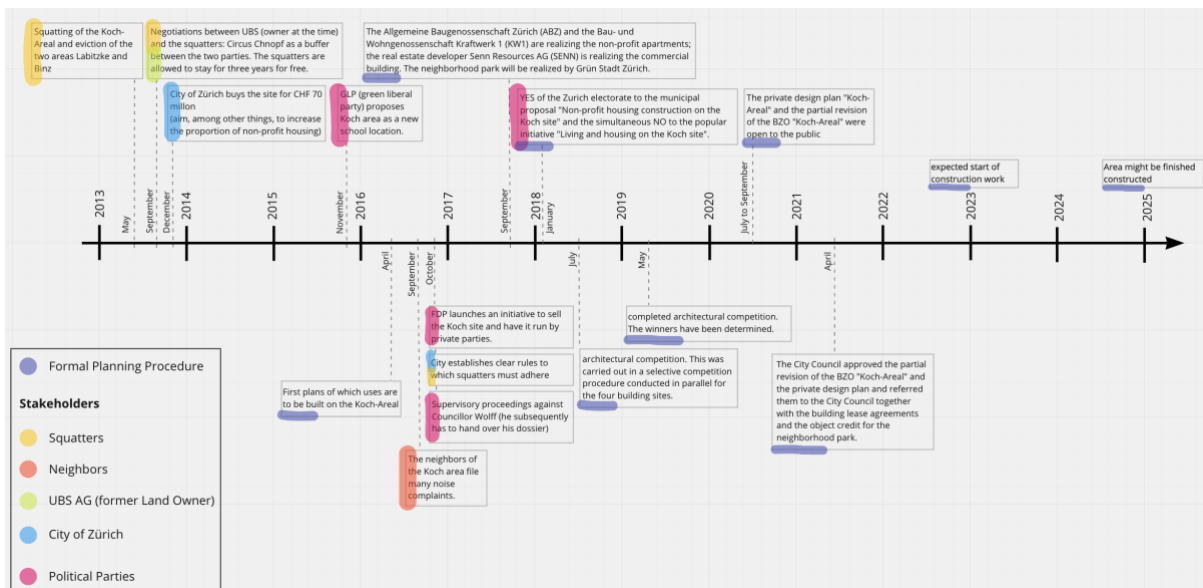


Figure 6. The Koch Areal: the process timeline. Source: Authors.



The Koch-Areal first appeared in the media in May 2013, when the squatters inhabited the area to prevent further 'demolition of facilities.' The squatter scene at the Koch Areal proliferated as the then squatted sites Binz and Labitzke had to be cleared. Many squatters moved to the Koch Areal for this reason. Subsequently, the activists and UBS AG, as the landowner, negotiated the temporary land use. Accordingly, the squatters were allowed to use half of the site for three years, while the Circus Chnopf moved to the northern part of the site, thus acting as a buffer towards other USB properties.

Around the same time, an SP (Social-democratic Party) politician within the City Council proposed buying the area. In December 2013, the City of Zurich bought the 30,000 sqm site for 70 million CHF. The purchase was made to increase the non-profit housing share in Zurich, as stipulated in the Municipal Code of the City of Zurich from 2011. In the following two years (2014 and 2015), the narrative on the Koch Areal was out of public attention. Sporadically, the right wing-party (SVP – Swiss People's Party) called for the eviction and sale of the site, while the GLP (Green Liberal Party) proposed to build a school on the site to have enough school space for the neighbouring area of Freilager.

In 2016, after many noise complaints from neighbours and a previous attack on a police officer, the question of the future development of the Koch Areal appeared at the centre of the public debate. The squatters estimated such dispute as 'much noise about nothing,' whilst the city council faced tremendous political and media pressure, with right-wingers vehemently demanding an eviction. A solution was found to define clear rules for the squatters, however, with an eviction applicable only in the case of extreme emergency. However, in the fall of 2016, the FDP (Liberal-democratic Party) began to collect signatures for an initiative aimed at selling the Koch site and having it developed by a private investor. As a reaction, the City of Zurich started the development process using the procedure of test planning, which included several planning offices. Based on their solutions, the city planning department made the development concept: the site was divided into three construction plots with a public neighbourhood park in the centre. The tender for the residential plots was carried out by the Housing Cooperative Zurich (*Wohnbaugenossenschaft Zürich*). In September 2017, two cooperatives (ABZ and KW1) received the contract for building the non-profit apartments, and developer SENN was assigned to construct the commercial facilities. The neighbourhood park is to be realised by Green City Zurich (*Grün Stadt Zürich*), a city department in charge of green open spaces. In the meantime, the popular FDP initiative "*Wohnen und Leben auf dem Koch-Areal*" (Residing and Living in the Koch Areal) was rejected by the City Council as it was not in line with the city strategy (to grant building rights to cooperatives and not private developers). In January 2018, the citizens of Zurich (through the referendum) approved the proposal by the City of Zurich.

Between March and May 2018, in preparation for the architectural competition, public participatory workshops were held debating the site's development. The competition, announced in the summer of 2018, ended in May 2019, enabling citizens to get a clear picture of what the Koch site will look like after completion. Although the planned residential high-rise (80 m) was publicly criticised, several formal planning steps followed the architectural competition. The first step was the approval of the partial revision of the Zoning Plan and the Design Plan (based on the result of the competition) and their submission to the City Council, together with the building lease agreements and the financial credit for the neighbourhood park. The City Council approved these documents in December 2021, and the credit was finally approved through a referendum by the citizens of Zurich in April 2022. The construction is expected to start in 2023 as soon as the planning documents become legally binding, and the relevant permits have been issued. If everything goes smoothly, the site will be completed in 2025.

### 5.3. The Koch Areal: redevelopment initiative as a cooperative process?

The Koch Areal redevelopment project features numerous participants and often conflicting mutual narratives (Figure 7). The city administration has taken the lead in the entire development process. However, most of the project implementation thus far has been carried out by external partners and leaseholders, and only the neighbourhood park is to be implemented by the city as the developer. The respective planning and financial decisions are to be made by the political bodies and, in part, by the electorate.

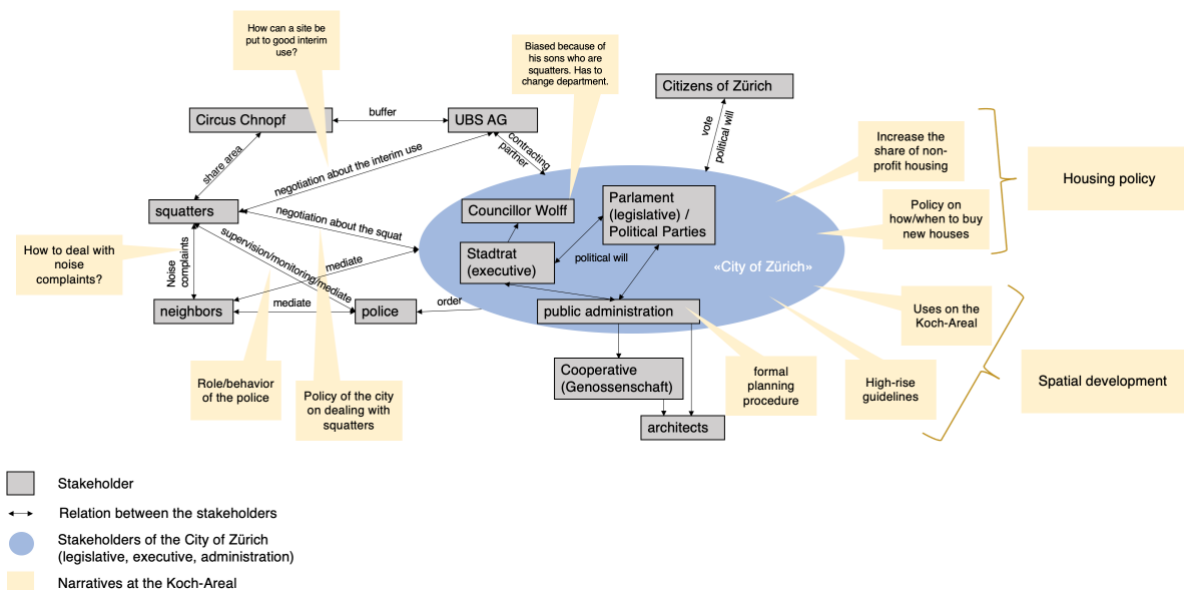


Figure 7. The Koch Areal: stakeholders and the dominant narratives. Source: Authors.

The residents of the surrounding area were included selectively through participatory events. At the time the events happened, however, the development concept was created, and developers had already received the contracts, hence, a fundamental discussion about the future development of the area was no longer possible.

The city administration inevitably strongly influenced the entire management process for the area development. This can be approved through the mandate given to the current City Council by the voters to increase the proportion of cooperative, affordable apartments. Hence, although the participation of the residents of the areas surrounding the Koch Areal was relatively weak, it is to be expected that the cooperatives, as the leading developers of the site, will consider the interests of future users.

Through the building lease agreement model, the City of Zurich secures extensive influence on the programming of the planned buildings. This is done through a tender for the building lease contract with qualitative award criteria, with which developers are selected based on their utilisation concepts. Through the collaborative project organisation with the developers for the site development up to the design plan and the decision of the architectural competitions, the city secures far-reaching control over the planned buildings.

The participation of the current users (squatters) in the planning process was not foreseen by the city (the exception is the Circus Chnopf, which will remain on the site), and they are not expected to play an active role in the future process. The question is whether the city has missed an opportunity to expand the area with space for a wide variety of residents and to integrate the creative potential of the current residents.



## 6. Conclusion: towards healthy communities

The Koch Areal case inevitably shows the development that includes the elements of healthy cities – this is mainly seen in high-rise buildings, thus leaving plenty of green space on the site (i.e., a 12,000 sqm-park in the centre of the site). Considering other elements of healthy cities that go beyond the urban morphology and green infrastructure, the Koch Areal can be regarded as a good example due to the rising number of affordable housing apartments: two buildings will be built by two cooperatives, in contrast to one to be constructed by the for-profit company. Yet, it seems that intangible values that existed in the area before the ideas of redevelopment emerged, e.g., the Koch Areal as a cultural hot spot of the entire neighbourhood and a crucial element in the city cultural scene, have been neglected. The citizens' voices pointing to such immaterial space values were overruled. Furthermore, the new redevelopment process put a final closure on squatting as an acceptable residential practice: the current squatters are to be displaced to other sites, while the synergy between the city officials and developers is a clear sign of the globally promoted 'pro-development' paradigm spatially manifested also in Zurich. Finally, the Koch Areal case also shows the strong influence of politics, as the standpoints of city planners were greatly influenced by the shifts in political campaigns.

Under such circumstances, the procedure of cooperative planning as a norm in Zurich's planning practice has yet to evolve through inducing more intrinsically bottom-up approaches aimed at broader community engagement. Accordingly, the global shift from healthy neighbourhoods toward healthy communities appears to be at the beginning of the path towards its maturity. The Koch Areal clearly shows that social equity is still challenging to achieve even in Switzerland, as a traditionally open society with a solid direct-democracy setting. With a global strengthening of neoliberalism, imminently evidenced in the urban development field, social exclusion is expected to be prioritised within both political and professional agendas. From the professional perspective, and taking the stand that planning is inherently embedded into a socio-spatial setting, approaches such a transformative planning – planning *for* and *with* people – may advance both the future planning procedures and planning practice in Switzerland.

### Acknowledgment

This research presented in this paper has been funded through the Future Cities Lab Global programme, one of the three research programmes of the Singapore-ETH Centre, established in Singapore in 2010 as a joint initiative between ETH Zurich and Singapore's NRF (National Research Foundation).

## 4. References

- ABZ, Senn, Kraftwerk 1 and Grün Stadt Zürich. (2021) *Koch-Quartier. Projektdokumentation Stand April 2021*. Zurich.
- Cairns, S. and Tunas, D. (2022) *Future Cities Laboratory Indicia 3*. Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers.
- De Blust, S., Devisch, O. and Schreurs, J. (2019) 'Towards a Situational Understanding of Collective Learning: A Reflexive Framework', *Urban Planning*, 4(1), 19-30.
- De Blust, S., Devisch, O. and Vandenabeele, J. (2022) 'Learning to reflect collectively: how to create the right environment for discussing participatory planning practice?', *European Planning Studies*, 30(6), 1162-1181.

- Debrunner, G., Hengstermann, A. and Gerber, J.D. (2020) 'The business of densification: distribution of power, wealth and inequality in Swiss policy making', *The Town Planning Review*, 91(3), 259-281.
- Debrunner, G., Jonkman, A. and Gerber, J.D. (2022) 'Planning for social sustainability: mechanisms of social exclusion in densification through large-scale redevelopment projects in Swiss cities', *Housing Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2022.2033174
- de Vries, S., van Dillen, S.M.E., Groenewegen, P.P. and Spreeuwenberg, P. (2013) 'Streetscape greenery and health: Stress, social cohesion and physical activity as mediators', *Social Science & Medicine*, 94, 26-33.
- EC (European Commission). (2014) *Integrated sustainable urban development – Cohesion policy 2014-2020*. Brussels: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- EC (European Commission). (2016) *Urban Agenda for the EU*. Brussels: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- EU Ministers. (2011) *Territorial Agenda of the European Union: Towards an inclusive, smart and sustainable Europe of diverse regions*, Agreed on the Occasion of the Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development, May 19, Hungary.
- EU Ministers. (2020a) *The New Leipzig Charter*, Agreed on the Occasion of the Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, November 30, Germany.
- EU Ministers. (2020b) *Territorial Agenda 2030: A future for all places*, Agreed on the Occasion of the Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, December 1, Germany.
- EU Ministers. (2021) *Ljubljana Agreement*, Agreed on the Occasion of the Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters, November 26, Slovenia.
- Füeg, R. (2016) *Funktionale Räume in der schweizerischen Raumplanung*. Norderstedt: Books on Demand GmbH.
- Grant, M. (2019) 'Planning for Healthy Cities', in Nieuwenhuijsen, M. and Khreis, H. (eds.) *Integrating Human Health into Urban and Transport Planning: A Framework*. Cham: Springer, pp. 221-250.
- Hoch, C. and Scholl, B. (2018) 'Linking Informal and Formal Responsibility' in Scholl, B., Perić, A. and Signer, R. (eds.) *Spatial Planning Matters! Inspiring Stories and Fundamental Topics*. Zurich: vdf Hochschulverlag AG, pp. 197-199.
- Holenstein, D. (2022) *Innenentwicklung in Zürich. Eine kritische Würdigung aktueller Planungsinstrumente und deren Anwendung* (ETH MAS Exposé). Zürich: ETH Zürich.
- Jennings, V. and Bamkole, O. (2019) 'The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Urban Green Space: An Avenue for Health Promotion', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(3), 452.
- Keller, D.A., Koch, M. and Selle, K. (1996) "'Either/or" and "and": first impressions of a journey into the planning cultures of four countries', *Planning Perspectives*, 11(1), 41-54.
- Perić, A. (2014) 'Stakeholders' Collaboration in Brownfield Regeneration: A Theoretical Approach' in Djukić, A., Simonović, D. and Vujičić, T. (eds.), *BROWNINFO. Toward a Methodological Framework for Brownfield Database Development* (pp. 43-55). Banja Luka: University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy.

- Perić, A. and Hoch, C. (2017) 'Spatial planning across European planning systems and social models: A look through the lens of planning cultures of Switzerland, Greece and Serbia' in Ferreira, J.A. et al. (eds.), *E-proceedings of the AESOP 2017 conference "Spaces of dialog for places of dignity: Fostering the European dimension of planning"*. Lisbon: University of Lisbon, pp. 1247-1258.
- Perić, A. (2021) 'Dense and Green Cities. Work Package 4. Interim Presentation' (December 2021).
- Perić, A., Trkulja, S. & Živanović, Z. (2021) 'From conformance to performance? A comparative analysis of the European Union territorial policy trends in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina', *European Spatial Research and Policy*, 28(2), 21-41.
- Pineo, H. (2022) *Healthy Urbanism: Designing and Planning Equitable, Sustainable and Inclusive Places*. London: Palgrave.
- Stadt Zürich, Stadtrat. (2016). *Strategien Zurich 2035*. Zürich: Stadt Zürich.
- Stadt Zürich, Hochbaudepartement, Amt für Städtebau. (2021) *Kommunaler Richtplan Siedlung, Landschaft, öffentliche Bauten und Anlagen. Richtplantext*. Zürich: Stadt Zürich.
- Stadt Zürich Statistik. (2022) *Quartierspiegel Alstetten 2022*. Zürich: Stadt Zürich Präsidialdepartement, Statistik Stadt Zürich.
- Stadt Zürich. (n.d.) Koch-Areal. Available at: <https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/prd/de/index/Projekte/laufende-projekte/koch-areal.html> (Accessed: 30 August 2022).
- Steiner, R. (2003) 'The causes, spread and effects of intermunicipal cooperation and municipal mergers in Switzerland', *Public Management Review*, 5(4), 551-571.
- Tan, J.K.N., Belcher, R.N., Tan, H.T.W., Menz, S. and Schroepfer, T. (2021) 'The urban heat island mitigation potential of vegetation depends on local surface type and shade', *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 62, 127128.
- UN (United Nations). (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/RES/70/1.
- UN (United Nations). (2017) *New Urban Agenda*. Ecuador: Habitat III Secretariat.