



Improving the quality of life in Large Urban Distressed Areas

Rača, Bratislava, Slovakia

E-Compendium: Good Practice Case Studies



Introduction

The purpose of the e-compendium case studies is to provide information about the experiences of large urban distressed areas in Europe. All of the case studies are linked to the LUDA project, either as partner cities or as reference cities. This case study focuses on Rača in Bratislava. Bratislava is one of the six partner cities in the LUDA project, and the municipality of Rača has been designated as a large urban distressed area because of its characteristics, problems and challenges.

This case study gives a brief outline of the area's history; the challenges it faces and the potential it has for redevelopment. The case study then discusses the current approach to regeneration in Rača, and gives a detailed account of one part of the process. In this case, this covers the use of the 'prospective process through scenarios' method.

The e-compendium is designed to be used online. The text includes interactive links which allow you to move around the document, to link to other handbooks, or to open websites. Links are shown as **coloured text**. You can also find the links by looking for icons in the page margins, as shown here.

web link



If you prefer to read this handbook like a normal book, then you can print it out. Please note that all of the handbooks are designed for double-sided printing.

Acknowledgements

This handbook was prepared by the School of the Built Environment at Napier University, Edinburgh and the Futures Academy at Dublin Institute of Technology. It is based on material produced during the course of the LUDA project. Photographs were supplied by IOER, Dresden and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

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The different faces of Rača: industrial units & residential blocks (top) and gardens in the countryside (bottom). Photo: IOER, Dresden.

I. Overview

Rača is a large district within the city of Bratislava. It covers 6.3 km² and is home to around 3,300 inhabitants. Rača includes residential development as well as open space and a large amount of industrial land. This industrial land covers a large area, and includes a range of uses, although the railway and a rail-freight depot are probably the most important.

2. History & Background

Bratislava-Rača was originally a vineyard village, but developed to become part of the city of Bratislava in 1946. Because it is quite a large area, Rača has its own suburbs - Východné and Žabí Majer - located in the east of the area. Development of Rača began in the 1930s as a result of the railway track, station and depot located there. The area became a railway colony, with homes for railway workers. In the 1970s and 1980s, the colony was developed further with the construction of residential tower blocks, basic facilities, manufacturing and warehouse complexes.

Today, the area is still dominated by the railway. The tracks and the rail-freight depot create physical barriers within Rača, and between Rača and the rest of the city. The situation is further complicated by local administrative boundaries which create an unsuitable segregation of the municipalities *Rača*, *Vajnory* and *Nové Mesto*.



A view across Rača showing the railway yard overlooked by residences. Photo: IOER, Dresden

3. Challenges

Bratislava Rača suffers from a range of problems. These problems include: a lack of social cohesion; economic difficulties; the physical barrier caused by the railway; poor transport links; and environmental pollution. Noise and pollution from the railway are long-standing problems, and the area also suffers from illegal dumping and poor environmental monitoring in the industrial sector. As a result of these issues, Bratislava Rača has a negative image.

Aside from the local challenges within Rača, there are also national issues which affect the regeneration of Rača district. Urban rehabilitation is a new phenomenon in Slovakia. The process of socio-economic transformation has resulted in the decline of traditional industries. As the public sector has been privatised, large industrial complexes have been fully or partly closed and property has been poached. It is not surprising that investment patterns have been affected. In addition, the state has struggled to create a legislative framework for planning and revitalisation. As a result of these national issues, five main problems can be identified for the district of Rača:

- the inefficiency of functional land use;
- poor quality of mass transportation;
- the barriers presented by the railway tracks;
- low income; and,
- lack of social cohesion.

The negative image of Rača is a critical issue. It is a result of waste land, rundown and derelict industrial estates, large single-use sites and an apparent lack of organisation. These factors not only affect Rača, but are also affecting the development of the city.

4. Potential

Despite the problems, the Rača area has great potential. Východné in particular is well placed to develop manufacturing, commercial activities and service provision. This would create jobs, an employment network and the possibility of developing a mixed-use centre in the district. The Východné area also has the potential to provide education across different levels of industrial sectors.

The lake Kalná area holds potential for new uses—including leisure and tourism. However, the lake area needs to be protected because of its nature conservation value. The presence of the lake demonstrates the potential to develop Rača as an attractive place to live. Connecting the natural sites to the residential area offers a wonderful opportunity for Rača.



Lake Kalná: an attractive feature with potential for development as a tourist or leisure destination.

Photo: IOER, Dresden

5. Approach

The preparation of an urban study and the development strategy is the starting point for the regeneration of Rača. The documents are being developed in co-operation with stakeholders. Both documents will be coordinated with the city's masterplan and development strategy. Long-term plans for the Rača area include:

- the creation of an effective management system;
- the strengthening of stakeholder co-operation;

- a balanced policy of stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process; and,
- the creation of public-private partnerships.

The objective of this strategy is to balance political and economic priorities and create the conditions for mutual cooperation, networking and competitiveness.

Some of the problems of Rača require specialist responses. For example, GIS is being used to help monitor and assess problems related to unclear landownership as well as look at the development of new facilities. Similarly, discussions are taking place with investors to find out about their interests and priorities. The purpose of these discussions is to focus on the economic development of smaller areas and buildings—actual projects— rather than general concepts and ideas.

Some large-scale projects are already underway in Rača. For example, the Bratislava-Shopping Centre project is developing a production and retailing area. Local citizens were influential in the reconstruction of the Rača-Východné primary school, where the local council has approved a proposal to convert the school into a mixed-use facility. Other important activities include the reconstruction of the railway and depot areas and the development of a road connection from Pány to Šajby. This connection will increase the accessibility of surrounding neighbourhoods.

6. Tools & methods



As part of the regeneration process in Rača, a ‘futures workshop’ was held in 2004. The purpose of the workshop was to help stakeholders think about the future of their area using the ‘**prospective process through scenarios**’ approach. (This method is discussed in detail in **handbook E3 and E4**)

The workshop was facilitated by Futures Academy from the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) for a small group of participants from the city of Bratislava. Participants were invited from the Departments of Spatial Planning, Environment, Regional Development and Business Activities, as well as field representatives and other stakeholders. The participants were chosen to ensure there was a broad knowledge base which represented academic and local interests and expertise.

Preparation for the workshop involved the following:

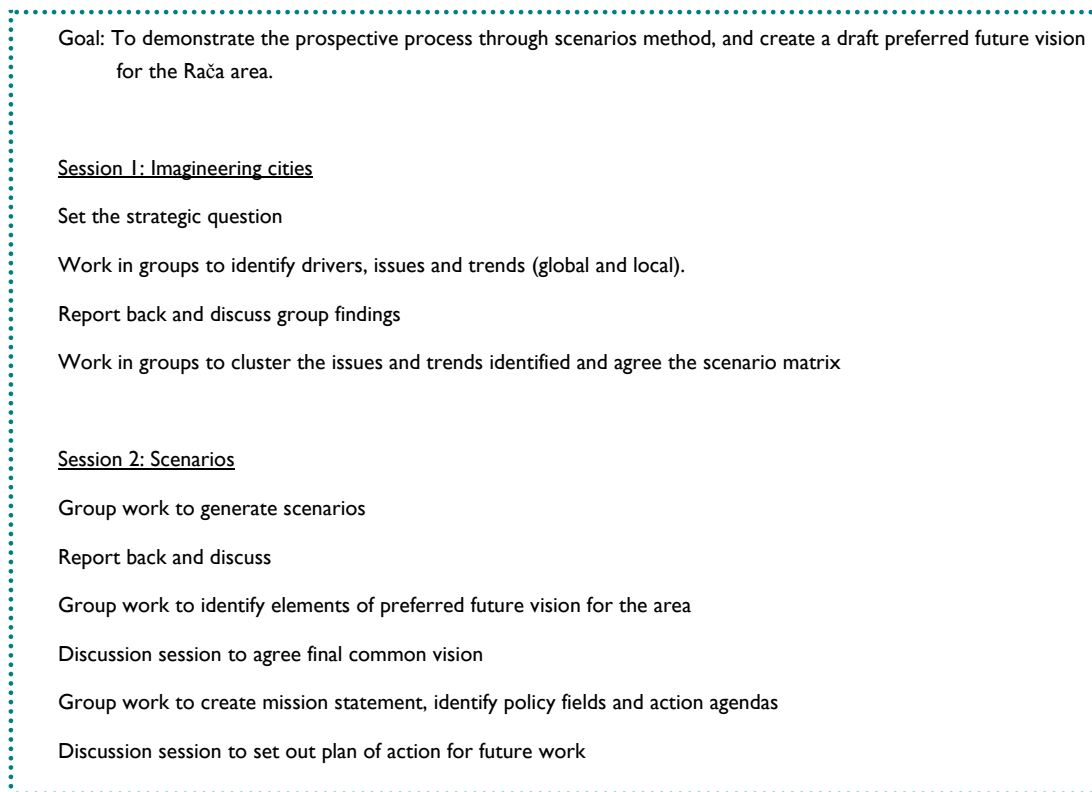
- agreeing the main aim or purpose of the workshop;
- organising a suitable room and equipment (e.g. white-boards, flipcharts etc.);
- identifying the participants;
- arranging for a qualified facilitator(s) to be present;
- including a translator; and
- assessing how much background research was required (including the distribution of a survey questionnaire and analysis of the results prior to the workshop).

The main aim of the workshop was to demonstrate the ‘prospective process through scenarios’ to the participants. The workshop did not aim to provide solutions to the problems and challenges facing Rača, but it attempted to offer the participants new ways of thinking about the future of the area and more creative ways of addressing its problems and challenges. In short, the workshop attempted to achieve the following objectives:

- illustrate how to run a futures workshop and how to implement the ‘prospective process through scenario’;
- encourage interest and participation in activities pertaining to the future of the area;
- brainstorm driving forces and issues and trends that might affect the future of Rača;
- outline three alternative future scenarios for the area; and,
- produce a draft preferred future vision for Rača.

The agenda for the workshop is outlined in Figure 1 below,

Figure 1: Workshop Agenda



The workshop enabled the participants to anticipate and perceive what might happen in the future (illustrated by the use of scenarios), what they might want to happen (conveyed by the preferred future vision) and how the two could be reconciled (detailed in the policy fields and action agendas). The emphasis of the Rača workshop was to encourage the participants to think more imaginatively about the future of the area and to consider how present actions or inactions *might* evolve or play out within alternative scenarios; the process, therefore, is above all a learning process.

The following sections describe the stages of the workshop in more detail.

Stage 1. Set the Strategic Question:

The starting point of the workshop was to set the strategic question. The question was devised after analysing survey questionnaires received from the workshop participants prior to the workshop. The strategic question was presented as follows:

'What strategic policies should be formulated for the Rača area to meet the following five key challenges?'

- *economic viability;*
- *functional accessibility;*
- *social inclusion and participation;*
- *environmental sustainability; and*
- *collaborative decision-making?'*



Workshop participants at work during the brainstorming session. Photo: Dublin Institute of Technology

Stage 2. Identify the Driving Forces of Change:

Once the strategic question was set, the next stage focused on the 'driving forces of change'. The 'six sector approach' was used to identify these forces, and groups were asked to spend approximately 30 minutes discussing the most significant macro-drivers (i.e. international, European and Slovakian) under the specific sectors allocated to their group. At the end of the 30 minutes, the groups presented their findings. A general discussion followed and any additional contributions were incorporated into the results. Table I [overleaf] lists the driving forces identified by the participants under the six headings.

Stage 3. Determine the Main Issues and Trends:

The groups reformed to discuss the micro-forces (i.e. Bratislava and Rača) that are likely to impact on the strategic question. This task does not simply involve trend extrapolation but rather a full consideration of what local factors might matter in the near future. Table I [overleaf] lists the issues and trends identified.

Table 1: Driving Forces of change: main issues and trends

	Driving Forces of change (global, European, Slovakian)	Main Issues & Trends (Bratislava & Rača)
ECONOMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic relationships • Job opportunities • Improving lifestyle • Law & government • Land-use • Imported labour • Oil crisis • Alternative job opportunities to multi-nationals • Competitiveness • Transfer of skills • Impact of multinationals • International markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection between public & private stakeholders • Barriers: accessibility of the site and within the site • Lack of appropriate housing within Rača • Problems with infrastructure
ENVIRONMENTAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature protection • Environmental feeling • Monitoring • European legislation • Energy sources • Impact of climate change • Law & government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources: monitoring of air, water, soil and air pollution • Increasing environmental quality benefiting public & private stakeholders • Noise from the railway & airport • Monitoring of illegal garbage
SOCIO-CULTURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserving strong identity • Social cohesion • Historical and traditional values • Identification within living spaces • Assessment of socio-cultural capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Striving for own identity: railway, education, wine • Community life having different identities: railway community, business community, educational community—cooperation between these? • Transport problems: global and local (local problems unmanageable)
GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic decision-making • Increase participation and public awareness • Decentralisation delegation • Effective controlling • Increased self-esteem & self-awareness by citizens • Safety and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance: semi-directly, particular success, in larger dimension rather ineffective • Property ownership: to clarify, to increase responsibility, Rača is a minor owner • Controlling: quite effective
TECHNOLOGICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of infrastructure • Transportation • Information technologies—on-line society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsideration of the railway depot area • Clean industry without pollution • Transport accessibility—Zabi maver
DEMOGRAPHIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer to nature • Decentralisation of urban settlements • Transportation • Migration—global/international level, employment • Inter-generational tension • Ageing population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster public transport system—connection to city centre • Housing—improving quality and capacity • Service development • Sports area and recreation facilities

Stage 4. Scenario Creation:

The scenario creation stage involves developing and fleshing out usually three or more stories to illustrate a number of possible alternative pathways into the future. Creating scenarios is not an easy task; it requires a lot of time, effort and above all a significant amount of preparation and a good understanding of the steps involved. Owing to time constraints on the day of the Rača work-

shop, this stage of the process was condensed. To start the process the driving forces, issues and trends were clustered into a number of themes. The following themes emerged from this step:

- economic competitiveness
- transportation,
- governance
- employment opportunities
- social cohesion
- cultural identity
- quality of life

These themes would then usually be rated according to 'impact' and 'uncertainty' in order to determine the most critical uncertainties for the future of the Rača LUDA. This step was, however, by passed (again owing to time restraints); instead a simulated matrix was presented to the participants, from which, three alternative scenarios for the future of Rača were subsequently developed.

In order to create the final scenarios, the participants were divided into 3 groups, each of which was assigned a particular scenario to work with. The groups tried to expand and develop the basic characteristics of the scenarios into useful, coherent narratives about the future. There is no correct way to do this, although the participants were given a number of important guidelines to follow as outlined in Figure 2 [below].

Figure 2: Guidelines for scenario creation

When creating a scenario, you should...

- Think about the year 2020: what issues might lead to particular changes?
- Imagine the future—but don't try to predict what will happen
- What will the world/situation look like in your scenario?
- Think broadly, and outside-the-box
- What might be the most important driving forces of change for: the world; Europe; Slovakia? And, what events might occur in each scenario as a result?
- What shocks?
- What changes?
- What impacts might these have for Bratislava & Rača?
- Consider the global and local level up to and including the year 2020
- Describe Rača—what impact might the scenario have locally for the Rača area?
- Have an evocative title or catchy name
- Describe key events that cause/have caused change
- Address different sectors of society (stakeholders)
- Address/examine each major theme previously identified from the clustering exercise
- Think about 'what if...?'

A summary of the scenarios developed in the Rača workshop is given in Table 2 [overleaf].

Table 2. Outline of Alternative Scenarios for Rača LUDA

	SCENARIO 1	SCENARIO 2	SCENARIO 3
Title	Corruption	Clean City, Clean Connection	Synaps
Basic characteristics	Strong economic competitiveness and weak governance	Strong economic competitiveness and strong governance	Weak economic competitiveness and strong governance
Outline	A global future shaped by the powerful forces of globalisation and the free market. The influence of state governance and regulation in Slovakia is weak, leading to increased corruption at almost every level of decision—making, particularly in relation to economic development. This has significant implications for the city of Bratislava and the Rača area.	A future with mutual co-operation between economic and governance resulting in the achievement of effective functioning relationships within the country and capital city. The economy is regulated with national public interest in mind. For example: better living standards, development of infrastructure, facilities and the achievement of sustainability. The impacts for Rača are positive.	In conditions of weak economic competitiveness and strong governance, this future portrays how Slovakia and Bratislava has become decentralised, with autonomy of regions and local areas (including Rača). People are able to migrate freely. Rača as an effective entity relies on local characteristics to survive and complete with other regions.

Stage 5. Produce Preferred Future Vision for Rača:

A preferred future vision for Rača was created following an in-depth analysis of the scenarios and a comprehensive discussion of the thoughts and ideas provoked by them. This allows for the creation of a vision based on an insight and awareness about the future that might not ordinarily have been achieved i.e. the participants should be able to detach themselves from any preconceived ideas that they might previously have had about the future.

During the Rača workshop, each participant was asked to identify at least 3 elements of a 'preferred future vision' for Rača. Usually, an entire workshop should be allocated to discussing the vision and refining it. For the purpose of this study, this stage was condensed into a shorter timeframe and a 'draft' vision produced. The elements identified by the participants were recorded by the facilitator(s) and a lively discussion followed. Additional comments were recorded and repetitions eliminated. The final vision is presented in Figure 3 [below].

Figure 3. Draft 'Preferred Future Vision' for Rača LUDA

- A quality, balanced and healthy environment—clean, green and attractive
- Safety & security
- Capability of local inhabitants to empower/persuade for their interest
- Good transport links within the city/area (connectivity)
- Regional development links with hinterland
- Mixed, integrated, friendly, flexible environment—activities and people
- Implementation of technological information infrastructure
- Better perception of area by everyone—local identity
- Social cohesion and feeling of togetherness of all inhabitants
- Conversion of land to its best use—multi-functional area
- Flexibility and adaptability—competitive area
- Better access to funding
- Transparent property rights
- Strong leaders in local area (champions)
- Good employment opportunities



Workshop participants discuss the driving forces for change. Photo: Dublin Institute of Technology

Stage 6. Identify Policy Fields and Action Agendas:

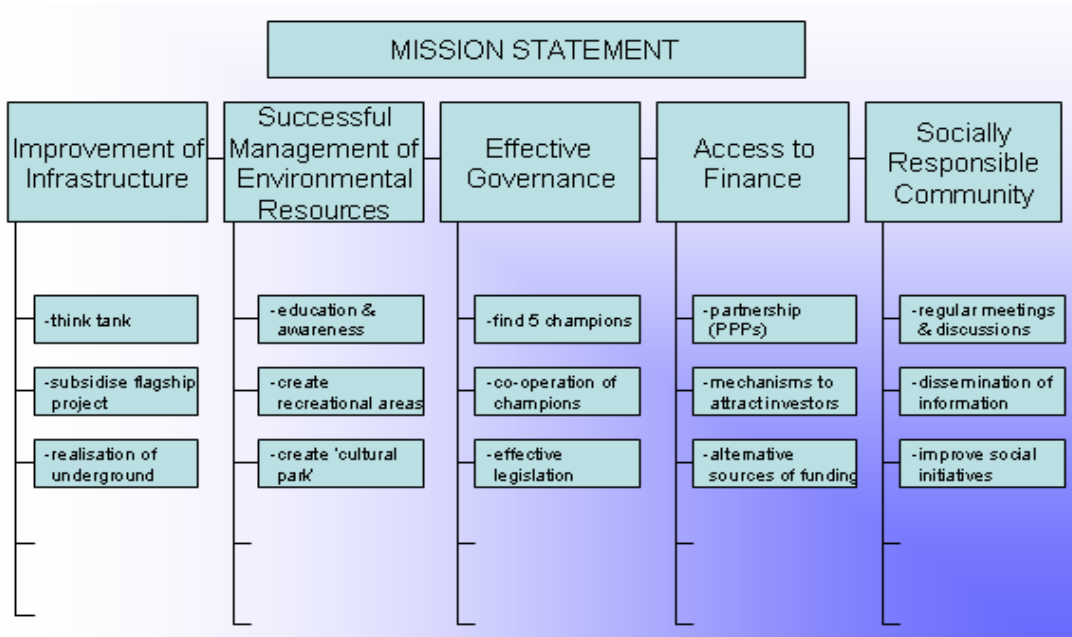
The next and final stage of the process involved asking the question: ‘*How can we begin to move towards this ‘preferred future vision’?*’ The groups considered what actions need to be taken now in order to strive towards the future vision; it requires a reconsideration of the strategic question.

Initially, it is important to identify a number of policy fields that must be addressed, and then within each of these, to agree specific target actions known as ‘action agendas’. The group was asked to discuss which policy areas they considered important for the Rača area. As they did this, the participants focused on the issues raised during the workshop, including the scenarios and the goals identified within the vision. The following five policy fields were identified:

- Improve infrastructure
- Good environmental resource management
- Effective governance
- Access to finance
- Socially responsible community

For each of these areas, the group identified a list of appropriate action agendas. In Rača the list was provisional, as a more comprehensive study would be necessary in order to define specific actions agendas that should be implemented. Figure 4 [overleaf] illustrates the outcomes.

Figure 4. Policy Fields and Action Agendas



The 'futures workshop' undertaken for the Rača LUDA served primarily as a demonstration, to introduce futures methods and techniques to the participants. Such workshops can encourage the incorporation of imaginative thinking into planning on both a local and regional level, but more notably, they encourage communication and cooperation between different stakeholders in the regeneration process. As a result, it is best to undertake such a workshop (particularly owing to the 'visioning' aspect of it) at the take-off phase of regeneration. Workshops can then be undertaken on an on-going basis throughout the regeneration process to monitor progress towards the agreed future vision.

7. Innovation/unusual features

In recent times, the process of participation in Slovakia has been quite weak, although it is required by law. There is a tendency for planning bodies and institutions to avoid the process both on a formal and passive basis. As a result, the public is not familiar with its role in the decision-making process and so plays no participative role in the planning process. There is still a lack of initiative to mobilize stakeholders and inhabitants in a process of participation.

The area of Východné/Žabí Majer is well-known for extreme disintegration within the Rača Municipality, although there has been some reduction in social exclusion as a result of communication and cooperation with stakeholders. In 2004 a network involving the public, business sector, service providers, developers and different institutions was successfully established. Questioning stakeholders helped to identify the main problems and potentials and also seemed to be very productive for the area; action such as this has not been explored enough until now. The statements recorded have proven very important for 'Surveys and Analysis' as well as for planning documents.

8. Results

- Stakeholder analysis (May 2004)
- Surveys & analysis (May 2004)
- SWOT analysis (May 2004)
- Strategy of development (draft) (May 2004)
- Draft of urban study and visions for future development
- Amendments to master plan (December 2004)

9. Further Information & Links

If you would like to explore the futures methods more fully, then the following books will help:

web link



Gannon, J & Ratcliffe, J. (2005), Futures Workshops: a handbook for urban practitioners, The Futures Academy, Dublin Institute of Technology. See also: <http://www.dit.ie/DIT/built/futuresacademy/publications/>

Lindgren, M & Bandhold, H. (2003), Scenario Planning: the link between future and strategy, Palgrave Macmillan, UK.

Schwartz, P. (2001), The Art of the Long View, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, UK.

web link



If you would like to find out more about the Rača experience, then you can visit their website <http://www.raca.sk/>

Appendix I: Sample Survey Questions

This is an example of the survey questions used in Rača to gather the views of participants prior to the futures workshop.

1. What do you think are the main trends and issues that might influence the future development of the Rača LUDA (for example, in terms of economy, society, environment, governance, demography and technology)?
2. What do you see as the main opportunities for the successful development and regeneration of the Rača LUDA?
3. What do you perceive as the major threats to the future development of the Rača LUDA?
4. What would be your best dream for the future of the Rača LUDA?
5. What would be your worst nightmare for the future of the Rača LUDA?
6. How do you imagine the Rača LUDA in 20 years time?
7. Additional Comments:

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LUDA is a research project of Key Action 4 City of Tomorrow & Cultural Heritage from the programme Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development within the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Union.



<http://www.luda-project.net>