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REGIONAL CITY

Back to territory. Positions and forms of sustainability in Germany.

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Designing the periphery of Munich – strategies for the regional city

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Munich is a growing city. The *Demografiebericht München* predicts a population growth of almost ten percent until 2020 and of 15 percent until 2030 (a plus of around 140.000/215.000 inhabitants). From 2006 to 2011 the rental prices for new rents rose again by over twelve percent, as German journal *Stern* reports. Even for those with a good income it is often easier to find a job in Munich than an apartment. At the same time there isn't much space left for building houses within the city borders.

Thus in 2011 the city of Munich invited tenders for four studies to find out how to integrate more housing in the cityscape in the long-term. The studies elaborated on different strategies such as densification, restructuring and the extension of the city.

The design study "vision for the periphery" was elaborated by a joint venture of Stein+Schultz, Cityförster, landinsicht and freiwurf. The study area is on the North- Eastern fringe of the city. The area is known for its harness racing track and horse riding facilities of the Olympics 1972. It is well connected to the city centre and the airport by railway and metro. However, the tracks also separate the land from neighbourhoods in the West.

The team was asked to design concepts for an area of around 800 ha and to specify their findings for a sample site of around 250 ha. Within the 250 ha site they were asked to test if around 12.000 new housing units fit into this area. To integrate this amount of housing into an area with a rather rural character was a challenging task.

How did the team identify strategies and options for a long-term spatial development that will bring such massive transformation to the whole area?

Not (only) by developing housing areas around infrastructure hubs and pushing the city towards its edge – but by understanding the city in its regional context and by drawing an integrated image of the future development of the regional landscape. Therefore, the experts mentally crossed the municipal border of Munich and tried to perceive Munich as part of a larger regional landscape. The closer Munich moves towards its municipal borders, the more important new linkages and synergies with the surrounding cities become. The team found great potential for such new synergies, for instance with the new urban quarter at the former airport Riem in the South and commercial sites of the municipalities of Unterföhring and Aschheim that are located directly at the city's border in the North and East.

The periphery is an area with its own potentials, challenges and dynamics. Large commercial sites, detached houses, agricultural land and large-scale infrastructures are part of the periphery's fabric. Thus the aim was not to build another belt of suburban settlements on the city's edge, but to understand the specifics and diversity of this location as the starting point to create dynamic, characterful neighbourhoods that benefit from a close relationship to the open landscape, highway as well as large-scale and infrastructures the small villages surrounding it.

Therefore three elements were crucial for the design process. First the team explored the area by **walking** it to experience the atmospheres and trace spatial identities. Secondly, the experts **defined principles** to provide a framework for a long-term spatial development **and created designs** based on the atmospheres and spatial identities. Thirdly, ideas for strategies have been elaborated by **telling stories** showcasing scenarios of future use. The designed images and texts work as a communication basis for local stakeholders.

Walking to experience atmospheres and trace spatial identities

As a starting point of the design process, the team explored the North- East fringes of Munich on foot. Therefore, the team designed a framework and a small set of rules for the walks (Fig. 1): Each of the four designers started in a different location on the wider urban fringe and walked towards the centre for about five hours. They tried to engage with the space, talk to people and open up in search of typical spatial structures, unexpected land uses, people's perception of the landscapes and ideas for the future. They finally met to have lunch in a typical *Gasthof* and exchanged and documented their first experiences. After another walk in pairs, they documented their findings in photos and sketches. Those findings played an important role when digging in libraries, talking to experts from the city of Munich and designing maps, images and stories.

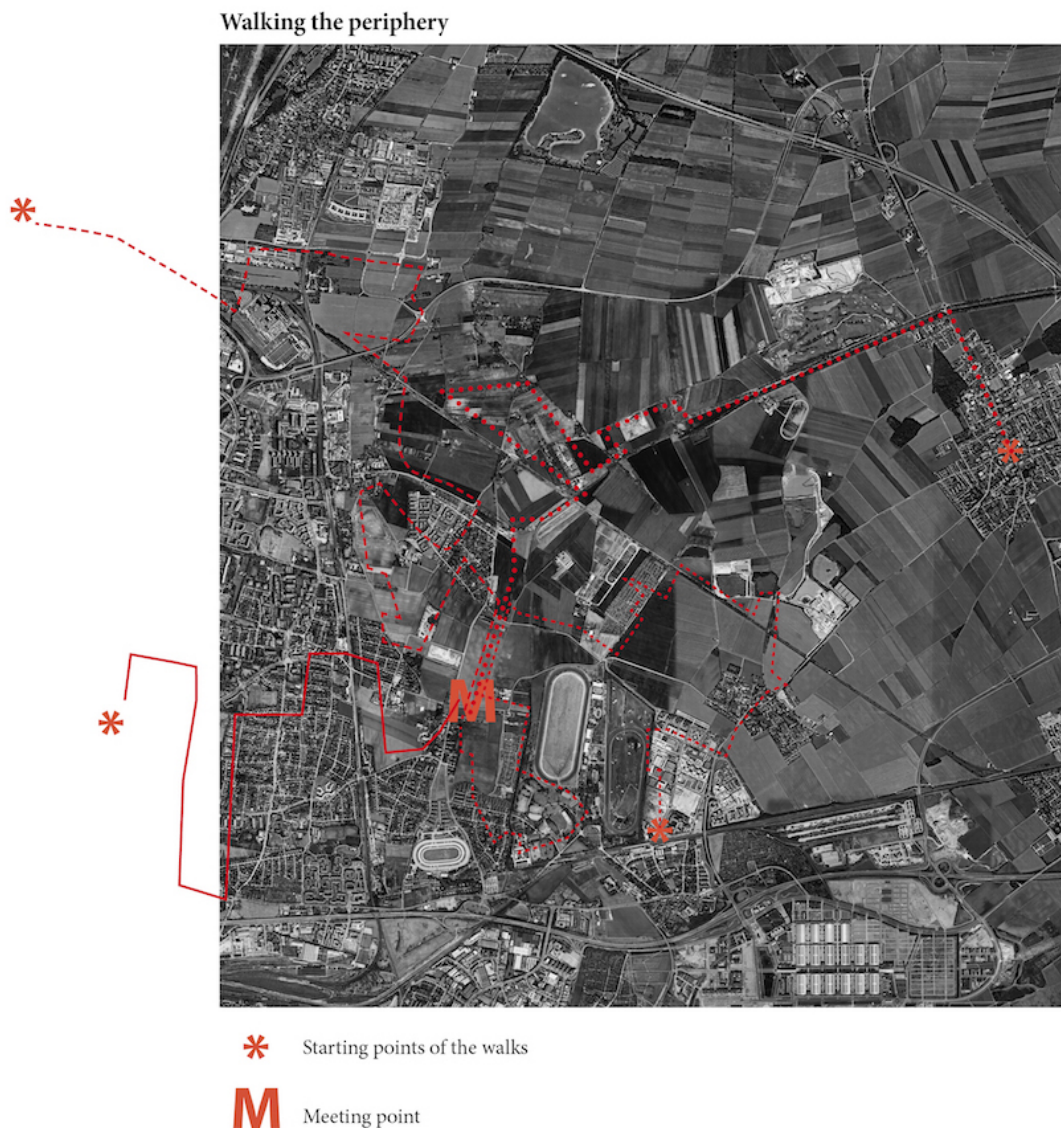
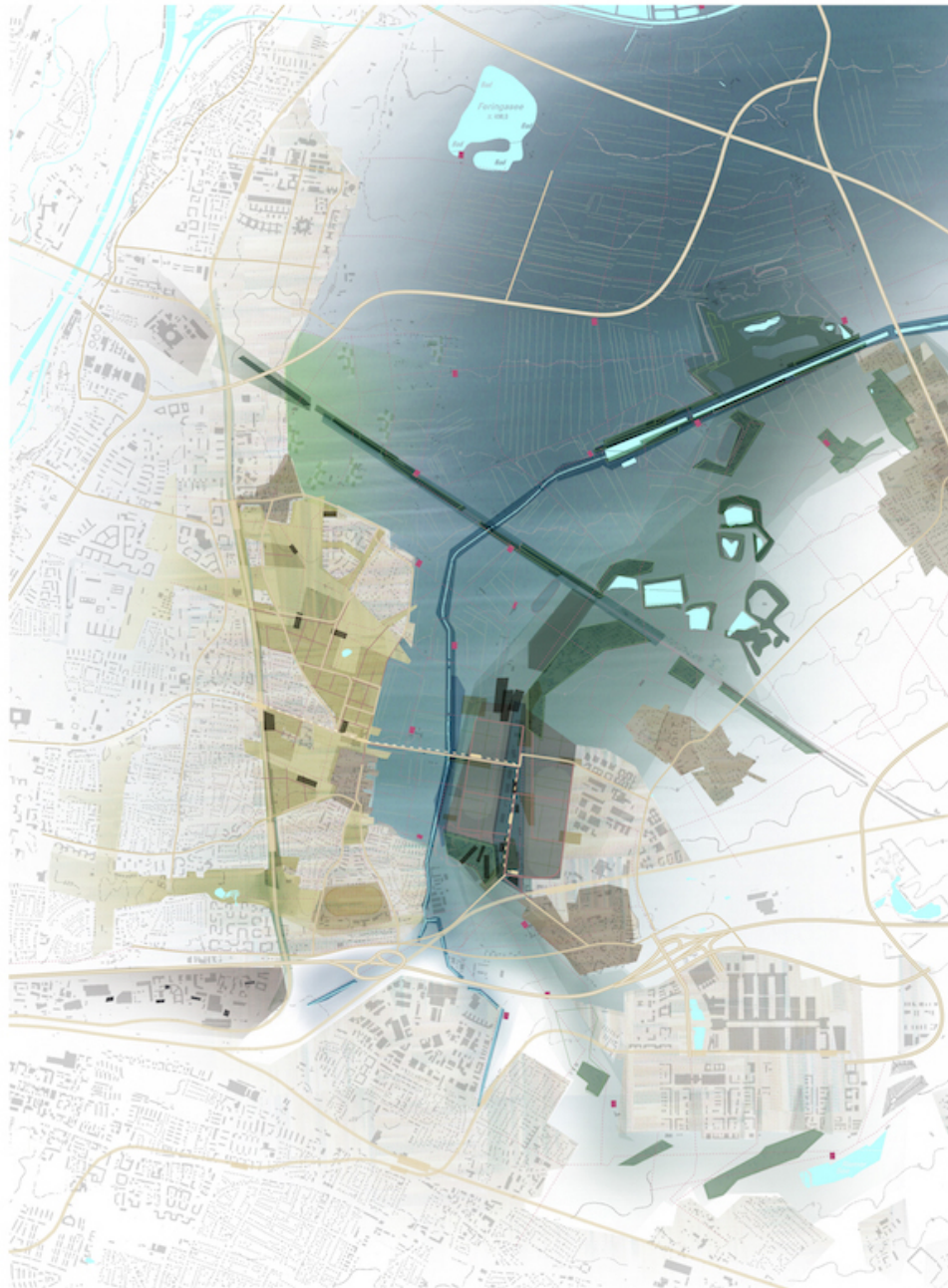


Figure 1: Walking the periphery

Walking the fringe and approaching it from different directions (and not only from the city of Munich) made it possible to experience the atmosphere of the landscape and understand the city within its region. For instance, the walks were occasions to experience and map the wide views from the old village centres into the open landscape and other distinctive spatial structures of the fringe. They became one basic element of the *spatial vision* (Fig. 2). Apart from that, the walks revealed the great potential for a new type of open landscape that is organized through a system of paths for walking, cycling and horseback riding (a leisure activity rooted in the history of the area). The spatial vision shows that the new housing developments can be organized along this system of paths. The new schools, shopping facilities and neighbourhoods will be connected to each other and to the surrounding cityscape.



Spatial vision

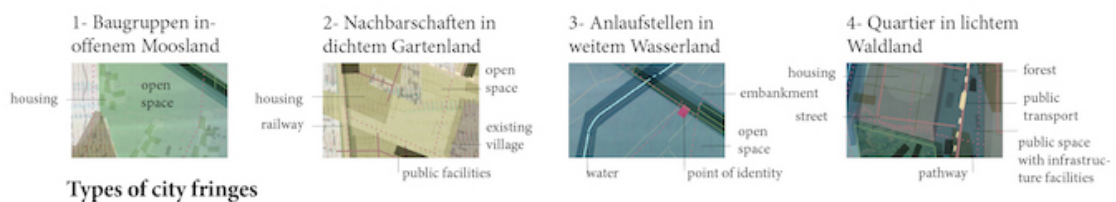


Figure 2: Spatial vision

Thus the approach exemplifies the benefits of walking as part of a design process. Since the designers experienced the different atmospheres while engaging with the landscape they were able to draw a *spatial vision* that suits the area and is able to cope with the huge transformation process.

Defining principles and making designs on different scales

The spatial vision is an integrated perspective for the future development that highlights spatial qualities and shows various connections of the area to both the city and its regional context, mainly the open landscape. In order to discuss the strategies that go along with this interpretation of the area, the team combined two perspectives: defining *principles* for a sustainable development and creating *designs* for the development.

The *principles* provide guidance and inspiration for future designs on different levels and scales. They focus on showing qualities to be respected in future planning phases. In the design process the design team addressed a variety of questions including: How to deal with natural resources? How to combine uses for a multi-functional, lively area? How to organize urban mobility and infrastructure in times of demographical changes? Which housing typologies fit the city's fringe? One principle is called "Physical Region – Respecting topography, soil and groundwater!" It stresses the idea that spatial development has to respect the relationships and characteristics of the open space with its historic structures, soil and ecological sensitive areas. The principle "Pathways and connections– Offering flexible mobility!" (Fig. 3) guides designers to focus on innovative forms of mobility between the neighbourhoods of the area and the city and the region.

Principles for a sustainable development



Figure 3: Principles for a sustainable development

Developing designs means to differentiate the area in *types of city fringes* (Fig. 4), which are part of the *spatial vision*. They are specific combinations of built and unbuilt areas: A new, densely built urban quarter with excellent transport-links will be developed close to Messestadt Riem (Fig. 2, 1). New public infrastructures, housing and urban gardens will be added to the urban structures east of the railway line to the airport. The villages will attract visitors and provide accommodation and places to eat and have a beer (Fig. 2, 2). Around the *Hüllgraben*, a large-scale open landscape with leisure facilities will be developed. Access to water will be improved. This urban water-landscape has links to the regional green-structures and the Messepark Riem (Fig. 2, 3) and keeps an important ecological zone. Innovative housing projects with local solutions for sewage and energy supply will be designed (Fig. 2, 4). The new neighbourhoods can facilitate unique encounters with leisure and agriculture landscapes. In the future, each of them includes a specific mixture of settlement and open landscape. One of them (Fig. 2, 2) for example builds on the potential of existing and new community gardens and small agricultural plots. Another *type of fringe* is likely to become a diverse green space, in which the existing farms will be complemented by infrastructures that serve recreational purposes. The amount of newly built houses depends on the character of the neighbourhood. Instead of spreading houses evenly all over the periphery, the team proposed to create dense areas and to keep the characteristic wide open spaces. By this the existing neighbourhoods will be improved and extended without losing their identity.

Section showing two types of city fringes



Figure 4: Section showing the two types of city fringes “Gartenland” and “Wasserland”

Jumping from overall principles to designs for specific neighbourhoods helps to test the different levels of strategy. Both, principles and site-specific designs can support the City of Munich and its partners when discussing directions and overall strategies for urban development. While the principles set goals and benchmarks, the designs make sure that conclusions are always based on the spatial characteristics of a site. Thus the discussions can be fundamental and practical at the same time.

Connecting long-term with existing - telling stories about the future change

Long-term visions need instruments and visualizations that explore and show the opportunities of such a fundamental transformation process and allow discussions about the way it will take place. Therefore the team introduced new forms of descriptions and visualizations that complement existing instruments and plans.

Stories or episodes of potential users talk about the qualities of the *types of city fringes*. By spotlighting representative situations, the stories describe how the place has changed and give an impression of how it will be like to live in the new neighbourhoods (Fig. 5). The design team invented protagonists for each *type of city fringe* that would be a typical inhabitant of the future neighbourhood or visitor of the spaciouly laid out open spaces.

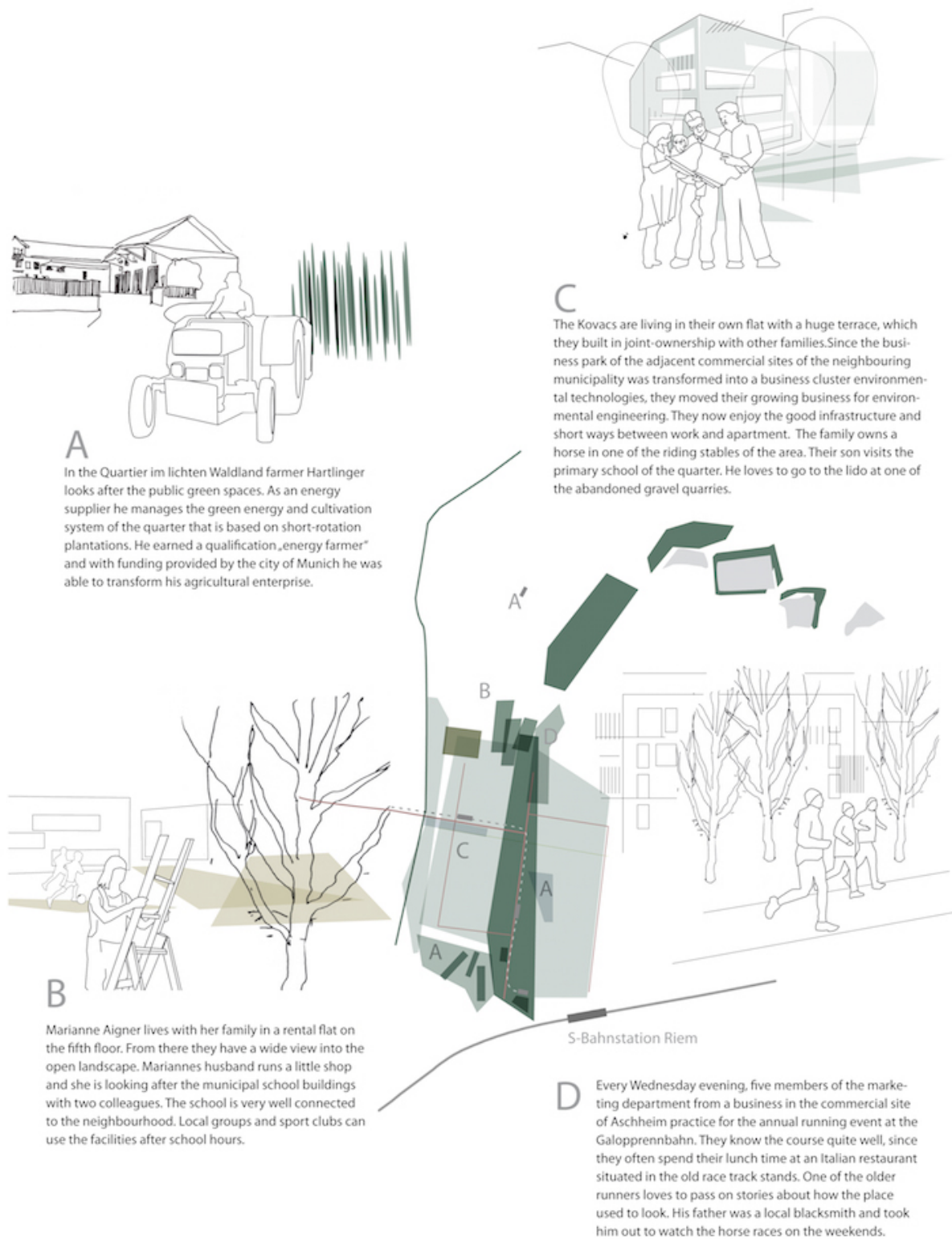


Figure 5: Story “Waldland”

Illustrating the identity of new neighbourhoods through stories brings strategies alive. Since they show the area through the eyes of the everyday user, the stories are different from the perspectives and plans our discipline usually uses to describe a process and future spatial qualities. Landscape episodes integrate social components into the physical structures as well as time, relationships and movement. Thus these stories made it also possible to test the first designs for the *types of city fringes*: Who would possibly live there? How can the existing structures be transformed? What are plausible management concepts and productive relationships?

During the long-term spatial transformation ways to communicate the change process to the inhabitants, to neighbouring municipalities, the whole community of Munich as well as the region - becomes more and more important. The disciplinary planning tools – zoning plans, land-use or development plans – are difficult to read for most of the stakeholders and therefore not entirely useful as a communicate tool. Especially in the beginning of such a process these tools are also often too precise and fixed to be suitable for a discussion about overall perspectives and the way changes will take place.

Designing images and strategies

What are the key findings for the growing regional city?

Designing city fringes is a great opportunity to experience and think about regional city as diverse network between city and land. In this context, new housing and facilities that are carefully added to this landscape can bring life to the area, support sustainable land uses and help to find new perspectives for historic elements. For example, the new leisure facilities in one of the *types of city fringes* may help to keep the agriculture profitable.

This regional landscape perspective demonstrates: Just pushing the city towards its edge isn't a good idea. Instead there is need for a robust structure for a regional landscape that is designed by tracing the potentials of the area. This structure can cope with such large amount of houses in a rapidly changing landscape. New sustainable types of housing can create interesting neighbourhoods that have strong connections with the regional open spaces. In fact, more sophisticated strategies to design regional landscapes offer bright perspectives for the neighbouring cities, too. On a small scale new synergies can qualify areas like the commercial site of Aschheim that today faces vacancy.

Furthermore, the regional open space can become a common point of reference for regional cooperation. If these spaces are associated with quality of life and become a shared good, they might be the best starting point for regional discussions on future developments. This approach and its tools serve as a basis to initiate such a dialogue. The *spatial vision* and the *stories* can have the role of a promoter. Both can foster discussion with the neighbouring municipalities on how a sustainable regional landscape can look like.

The proposed perspectives for this area arose from a specific course of action that combined strategic thinking and site-specific design work (Fig. 6). Therefore, the principles can be applied to other city fringes. Nevertheless, design work has to be done to integrate the spatial characteristics, talents and atmospheres of each area. So, there are four key conclusion of the methodological approach: Dare to think large scale and across borders! Walk the area and experience its atmospheres! Discover the potentials of the existing regional landscape and transform them into new designs! Tell stories and make the old and the new qualities visible and thus comprehensive for different groups of stakeholders!

Transferable Knowledge

course of action

design work

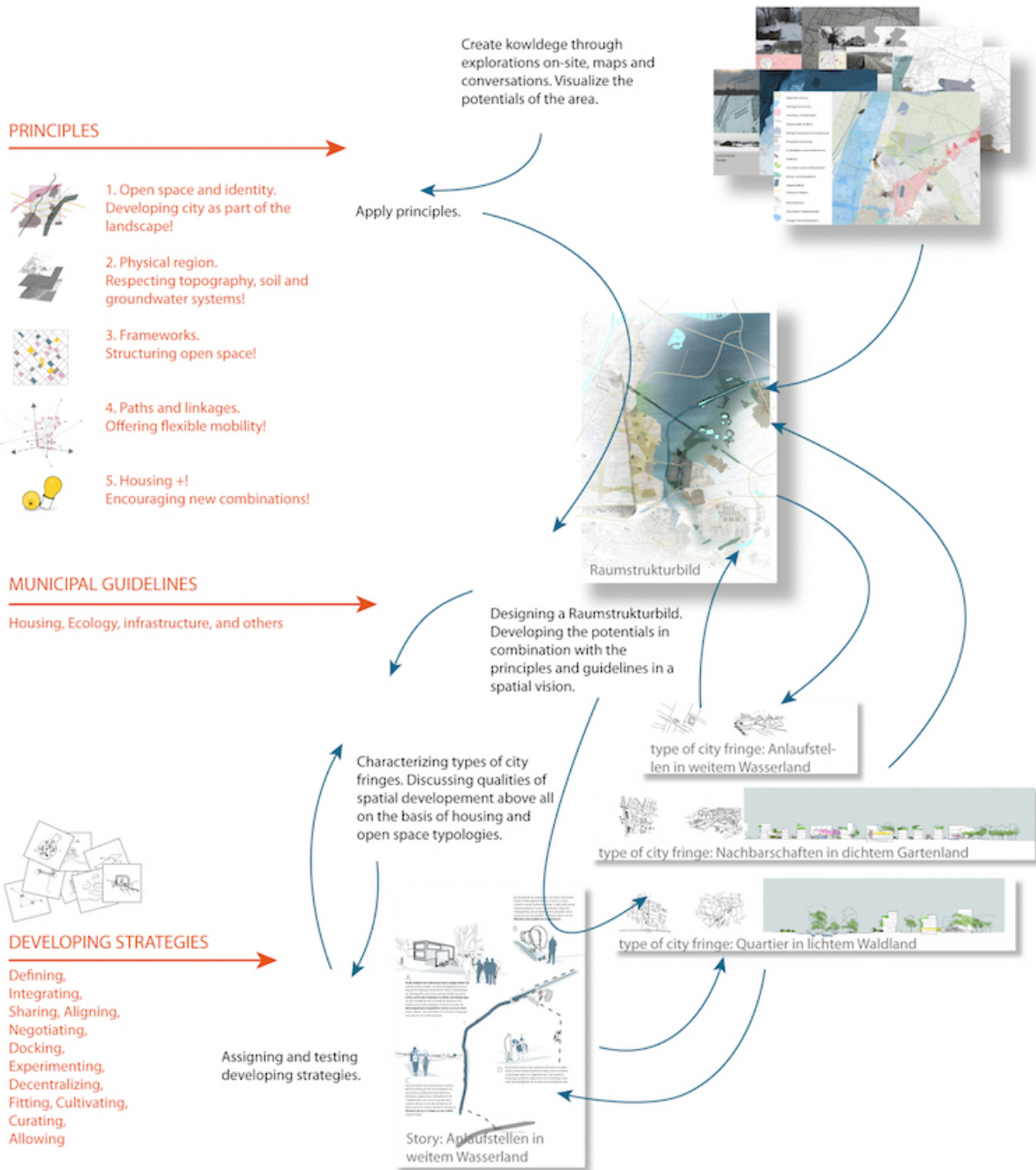


Figure 6: Methodological approach of the team