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METREX Expert group

THE PRODUCTIVE CITY

8/4/2022 - Adrian Vickery Hill. Reviewed by Thierry Petit.

The 2020 New Leipzig Charter (NLC) introduced the Productive City as one of the three main programmes. The Charter presented an ambitious but loosely defined narrative of how cities and metropolitan regions should embrace production, particularly new forms of production.

The 20th century saw a rapid rise and decline of production in European cities. The concept of manufacturing and production is often regarded as incompatible with modern living and services oriented employment. But production has far from left European metropolitan areas and remains a vital part of the economy. In the shadow of unreliable supply chains, war, pandemics and geo-political instability, local forms of production must urgently be re-explored. There are good reasons for cities and metropolitan regions to embrace production and an urban environment that makes physical things. This includes attracting high-tech companies and talent, retaining craft and culture related activities, creating space for local innovation, providing diverse and accessible employment, ensuring that cities can be maintained and developed with local skills and materials, addressing waste and resource flows and so forth.

But for many policy makers and planners, the Productive City remains conceptual. Decades of modern planning, with separated economic activities from living areas, increased environmental regulations, increased tension between residents and 'places of production', increased land prices and speculation, all render local production a complex challenge. What can public authorities do? Considering limited resources and available land, what activities should be prioritised? Where should production happen?

The METREX Expert Group on The Productive City will explore what production means for 21st century cities and what public authorities can do to support it.

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The group will build on recent research projects such as ESPON's MISTA (Metropolitan Industrial Strategies & Economic Sprawl) and other, more specific research projects like ESPON IMAGINE (Developing a metropolitan-regional imaginary in Milan-Bologna urban region) etc. Through a series of workshops, a handbook will be developed to help share experiences, inspiration and concrete tools for action.

The following two-years programme includes:

- 1st Meeting (Spring Conference in Turin, May 2022) - *What is the Productive City?*
 - Exchange on lessons learnt from various studies, what are conclusions and what should be worked on?
 - Presentation on types of production (foundational activities, high-tech clusters and industrial commons), scales of production (city vs the metropolitan region) and the role of the public sector.
 - Exploration of the focus of the working group.
- 2nd Meeting (Autumn Conference in Amsterdam-Almere, October 2022) - *What does the Productive City look like?*
 - Solutions to overcome key obstacles
 - Development of the 'inspirational cases' building on those from the MISTA project (see [here](#))
- 3rd meeting Late Autumn 2022 - *What tools are available to the public sector to support the Productive City?*
 - Exploration of tools for the public sector.
- 4th Meeting (Spring Conference in Wrocław, May 2023, or Excursion)
 - Review of tools and inspirational cases based on case study projects.
- 5th meeting METREX Autumn Conference in Helsinki 2023
 - Draft 'handbook' on approaches
- 6th Meeting (place tbc) Spring 2024
 - Final handbook and presentations