Abstract
The role of inner cities in German metropolitan regions has changed in the past decades. Having lost some of its functional properties the “city character” has gained importance in terms of image and identification. As a matter of fact the topicality of formal and informal urban strategies in inner city areas and the inclusion of various stakeholders are regarded as a suitable indicator for the state of a current urban planning discourse. A short survey among the heads of planning of the largest German cities (Berlin, Leipzig, Cologne, Frankfurt, Dresden, Hanover etc.) in early 2010 has demonstrated that there are many current activities under way as regards new strategic inner city concepts. Although the generally identified operational fields for the central areas seem to be similar in most cases, the distinction of local approaches and visions can be found on other levels. The aim of this investigation is twofold. First, general issues about local differences in relation to the mentioned similarities of operational fields will be addressed, seeking for novelties in these rather “classical fields”. Secondly, it has been found that many planning strategies and urban concepts are conceived as updates of former documents. The inclusion of different public and private actors has been identified as one major novelty of these updates. What kinds of actors were involved? Was the discourse strategy- or project-led? Which topics were debated? A selection out of 20 potential cases based on the collaboration with the planning commission of the German Association of Cities (Deutscher Städtetag) seeks to answer these questions.

Keywords: Updating Inner city strategies, urban space, open planning process, major cities

Introduction
Without a doubt, the issue of the inner city is on the agenda again. This finding is not new. On the contrary, compact city form and nearness are standards on the list of any sustainable urban vision. The permanence of the subject may even lead to a certain fatigue. However evidence suggests that there are currently ongoing activities that may justify further investigation. The reason for this paper was prompted by the feedback of a short survey undertaken in early 2010. The heads of planning in more than twenty of the large German
cities were asked about the topicality of the subject of current inner cities strategies and activities. As a result a collection of eighteen different cases was assembled consisting of documents, publications and best practice examples. Fifteen (out of eighteen) cities referred to inner city concepts that were installed, two said these concepts will be put in place in the near future. Given that the collected documents have an authentic character it was striking that in more than half of all cities that responded to the request there were current activities under way. In some cases these activities had only just begun. What are the reasons for the activities regarding inner city concepts? Is updating a frequent practise in urban planning? There are many good reasons for renewing former approaches. First, general conditions and external factors, like for example economic well-being or demographic changes influence local strategies indirectly. Secondly, even if these circumstances remain firm, the perception may be altered. This may apply especially in environmental issues for instance. Thirdly, this also applies for strategies that have become invalid according to reasons of success or failure. Finally, also a shift in (local) political leadership may result in the updating of urban planning strategies. In practice the reasons are rarely isolated. Of course, the listed explanations may also apply for planning strategies in general and are not limited to inner city locations. However, an update seems to be of special importance for historic urban centres since the subject is on since several decades. In addition, negative consequences for not “updating” devices are known for example from computer-software programs. Before the most relevant case studies, their specific approaches and backgrounds are being discussed a short systematic overview will be given resulting in a set of general statements. These concern current circumstances planning practice envisages in terms of social, economic, ecologic, cultural and political dimensions. The aspects are considered with regard to the spatial dimension of historic city centres (Part One). If the time is right for updating former inner city concepts and strategies - what are the most important novelties in this regard? Within a second step the focus is shifted towards the examination of specific spatial, thematic and process-orientated aspects taken from the collection of the case studies (Part Two). With scrutiny the multitude of single cases is clustered into a few exemplary categories. The case studies can thus be examined by specific questions and previously assembled general assumptions. Although the topical explanations might also be true for some smaller town or district centre this paper relates to the cases of larger German cities that are economically comparably thriving.

PART ONE
Focal Points of Inner City Developments
A first screening of the collected documents looked after general findings in what is considered to be a focal point for inner city development. It is argued that not the general classical operational fields themselves make a difference today. Among these are retail, public space, urban housing, services, culture, leisure (tourism), traffic and mobility as well as education. Moreover linkages between these fields matter as well as the way these concepts are conceived and which stakeholders are involved. What is the difference between these and former focal points regarding historic inner city centres? The former approaches designed for
tackling singular weaknesses caused by functional deficits are no longer effective. Examples for these practices were the focused consideration of private transport accessibility and parking (mainly cars) or pedestrian friendly shopping lanes. Other focal issues were housing developments and retailing. Structural problems of dereliction in central areas also mainly belong to the past. As a matter of fact the way planning is conceived has changed. Strategic approaches addressing a wider spectrum of potential public and private stakeholders have come into play. Moreover the issue of inner city development is a matter of great public concern. Therefore the involvement of local citizens at early stage is a fundamental requirement that can not be underestimated. The quality of life has become a (soft) factor not only for citizens but also in relation with the increasing competition among cities and regions. In this regard public space has received an ever increasing importance. Today inner cities are considered as suitable places to mirror the need for cultural identification and cohesion of whole regions. The character of historic inner city areas is considered as a unique feature compared to large-scale retail locations and the boredom of identical franchise trade chains. The image of a city is also very much influenced by the way public space is outlined alongside with the treatment of historical urban areas. Mainly the most important landmarks and sights are located within the centre of the city. These aspects strengthen both local identification and tourism. But public space itself can be the place of conflicts between traffic and sojourn on the one hand and between different traffic modes on the other hand. There is a growing conscience about environmental problems caused by transport especially related to the car. Although many inner cities adopted environmental zones to ban pollution from the core of the city, many questions remain unsolved. For example, stationary traffic occupies space in particular when the vehicle is not in use. The inner city areas that have been built car-friendly in the past are among the least attractive places for citizens and visitors alike. Therefore many cities have discovered cycling as an alternative urban transport mode constructing express bike lanes throughout the urban street network. The collection of case studies illustrates the need for new forms of functional properties. E-commerce and economic developments put pressure on classical retail typologies like street shops and department stores. As a result multi-storey “shop-in-shop” facilities and shopping arcades flourish in inner city locations. Yet - regarding the selected major cities - shop vacancies are rather found in isolated locations. Living in urban surroundings has also become attractive although the new housing supply is often limited to the high prize segments. The enhancement concepts also involve areas of the inner city fringe like water locations and former industrials properties and areas of dereliction. The public interest for urban spatial development is not limited to local residents but also to a wider range of citizens, economic stakeholders and the media. Generally speaking the issues of the inner city seems to have become more complex than before. As a matter of fact integrated, cross-sectoral and process-orientated approaches are required. What is the stake urban planning does have in this relation? It is argued that the enhancement of public space and different kinds of participation are among the most important novelties as regards current inner city developments. This hypothesis will be verified on the basis of relevant examples in the next chapter.
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*Fig.1: Synopsis of Inner City Concepts*
PART TWO
Screening City Clusters

At first sight the naming of current approaches seems to be casual. However, it can be stated that there are only four (out of twelve) different expressions concerning overall inner city planning activities. The different approaches are named guidelines, master plan, perspective or most commonly concepts. Interestingly all of these can be geographically clustered. The approaches in Dresden and Berlin are “guidelines”, those in the Rhineland respectively Cologne and Bonn “Masterplans”. Further south in Mainz, Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Munich the linguistic term shifts to (Inner City) ”concepts”. The naming might just be a label permitted by the openness of informal planning procedures not indicating much about its content. Can the reason for these over all differences be traced back to local planning cultures? By all means, the naming points to the issue of local differences and conditions. The latter are briefly introduced with respect to each case study.

Although no uniform description of the “inner city” has been defined, the individual cases focus on mainly similar spatial entities. With the exception of Berlin, the historic centres are regarded as a starting point of all concepts. Thus the main spatial elements are the historic centre, the former fortifications and green areas circulating around the centre, topographical elements as rivers and the adjacent urban areas built subsequently. The selected cities are characterized trough a high centrality within the correspondent metropolitan areas. The spatial elements and dimensions of most the historic city centres – with the exception of Cologne - are also of a comparable size. Though, the spatial perimeter that was examined varies. Some cities like Leipzig and Frankfurt have chosen delimited areas identical to the historic city boundaries. Other like Dresden and Cologne take wider urban areas into account. The subject matter itself and its geographical dimensions seem to be of a manageable scale. A closer look shows that inner cities consist of a multitude of spatial and non-spatial interrelations and aspects. Below the complexity of inner city issues is questioned by means of specific cases within a local context. In the next section attention is paid to different case studies focusing on the following aspects. First, the characteristic of each city and its centre is listed briefly. Secondly, current local planning approaches are regarded with respect to inner city concepts. Furthermore the issue of urban space as a public domain and the role of various potential stakeholders are scrutinized. The case studies are put together in two clusters. The first section highlights the examples of Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden. Than the cities of Cologne, Frankfurt and Hanover are examined.

Cluster One: Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig
The three cases share a common geographical position. Being located in the former East Germany all of them have been challenged by far greater distortions than the cities in the western part of the country after 1990. This is also true for West-Berlin having been divided and isolated from its hinterland for almost half a century. Leipzig, for example lost large parts of its industrial jobs in only short time at the beginning of the 1990ties. As a result of this shared challenges all of the three cities adopted planning strategies and guidelines more
or less at the same time. After more than a decade these are now due for updating.

The “Guidelines of the City West” in Berlin from 2009 intend to tackle the disregard the western centre has gone through in the decades after the reunification and the renaissance of the historic eastern centre. The process is accompanied with the relocation of the former high speed train station Zoo to the new Central Station in 2006 and the planned closure of the near by airport Tegel scheduled for 2012. The new arrangements of transport infrastructures signify the eccentric position of the western centre today. The linkages between both western and historic centre were also subject of the first “Planwerk Innenstadt” adopted in 1999 - followed by further ones for other parts of the city. The document highlighted two focal points in the western centre. These were the central public space around the Gedächtniskirche, the former emblem of West-Berlin and an important linear street connection (Lietzenburger Straße). The current document focuses exclusively on the western part of Berlin. It is less concerned to the outline of urban form but to the inclusion of various stakeholders in the area. These groups lobby for investments that have been conceived during the 1980ties but were than cancelled after 1990. The informal concept received an official legally binding character (Sonstige Städtebauliche Planung). It is therefore linked to land-use planning and the potential updating of the “Planwerk Innenstadt”. Although the Guidelines of the City West were frequently communicated, local citizens had no particular stake within the procedure guided by a steering group initiated by the planning department. The stakeholders comprise of the two large universities, local politicians, the chamber of commerce and representatives of local retail traders. As a result the spatial concern is shifted towards the Kurfürstendamm - the former main shopping alley - the Zoo, the Tiergarten and the University area. The final document outlines eight guidelines. One is about the quality of sojourn. In this regard an improved inclusion of the two large parks Tiergarten and Schlosspark Charlottenburg into the urban fabric are considered necessary. The diverse campus areas around the two large universities have been granted a more important role in the future. Since these are no classical urban spaces they are dealt with in a separate “Masterplan for Universities” that is linked to the process of developing the City West.

The “Strategic Concept for Public Space” (SKS) in the city centre of Leipzig from 2007 seeks for spatial solutions for prioritised investments due to scarce public financial resources. The new document replaces a previous concept from 1996. This has backed private investments with the upgrade of public space during the process of recovery of central retail facilities in contrast to out-of-town locations. Since the 1990ties the amount of retail floor space has multiplied from about 50,000 m² to almost 200,000 m² today bettering the position of the historic centre in terms of regional competition. The upgrade involves Leipzig-specific solutions like the integration of a significant shopping centre into the large central station or the reconstruction of the former urban trade fair buildings for retailing. The renaissance of the historic centre of Leipzig is fuelled by large private and public investments. These are undertaken by trade chains and the federal state of Saxony regarding the modernization and new construction of the university quarter including the demolished university church.
A further measure is the construction of the City-Tunnel rail link scheduled for completion in 2011/12. The later elaborate project was first conceived in the early 20th century and is considered a milestone in terms of the connectivity of key functions like airport, trade fair with the centre as well as reducing travel time from many regional locations to the centre. More over several new stations will be located in and around the historic centre. The project costs are pooled together from various public levels including the EU. The investments were mainly focused on the southern part of the inner city resulting in an imbalance within the compact city centre measuring only 600 x 800 m. The northern part was modified to a greater extent through socialist times, for example replacing a former quarter through a relatively large public square (Sachsenplatz). Scale and size of the intervention disrupted the compact urban fabric. Its repair resulted in a museum complex that has been partially finished until today. Further projects are under way in the northern centre aiming to create a more attractive and visitor friendly atmosphere in proximity to the large central train station. A part from concentrating public financial resources into public space the strategic concepts intends to improve the connectivity of the city centre with respect to the barrier effects besides and around the Inner Ring. The measures involve barrier free crossings and the construction of about 6,000 car parking spaces mainly underground. The SKS is an internal document created by the planning department and approved by the municipal council. It is regarded as the local public contribution to strengthen the competitive position of central Leipzig attracting external visitors and economic benefits likewise leaving aside public involvement. The concept serves as a reference for other smaller projects in central public spaces like the concept of urban play (Spielraumkonzept).

The historic centre of Dresden, the former “Elb-Florenz” is considered one of the most valuable but also most destroyed inner city areas during World War II. It is a symbol for the cruelty of war and a challenge for future generations causing international attention. Therefore the “Guidelines for the Inner City Development” (Planungsleitbild Innenstadt) from 1994 seek to rebuild the historic urban spaces and views. The most symbolic project in this regard has been the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche and the nearby square Neumarkt. The update of the guidelines adopted in 2008, require continuity in consideration of the magnitude of given challenges. However the initially planned volume of new constructions was overestimated. Today more attention is paid to public open spaces. Other novelties are matters of scale and the ways planning is mediated likewise. First the centre is defined as the catalyst for the development of whole Dresden prioritising inner city projects and activities. As a result new guidelines widen the spatial focus from the city core to ambient areas. The major green spaces in particular the river floodplains with their panoramic view points are highlighted in the document. The integration of urban spaces and open green areas is seen as a precondition for further developments. This also involves the integration of different large scale green areas. In this regard public space is considered as the bases for many new or renewed linkages at different scales. Public space and green areas are an integral element of the integration of the historic centre with the urban fabric surrounding it. The headline of the planning guideline 2008 “Vital History – Urban Landscape” underlines the issue.
The guidelines are less concerned with the ongoing reconstruction of single buildings and urban spaces but follow a rather strategic approach with partly long term visions. The latter are categorised following different temporal priorities. Highest priority is given to the North-South axes taking in the remake of the inner ring (Promenadenring). The process was mediated by external experts bringing together various administrative and political levels as well as the local economy and the citizens of Dresden. The inclusion of stakeholders was among the most important novelties the new guidelines set in place – a lesson learned with respect to the former document of 1994.

The first cluster of cases exemplifying the update of inner city planning concepts demonstrates a great variety of informal concepts and guidelines. It has become obvious that although all of them have to face similar basic conditions after 1990 (German unification, European integration) the local approaches vary. This is not only because of the differences informal planning instruments may have. In this regard guidelines are tailored according to local conditions. In Berlin and Leipzig the lead-management was located at the planning department. The much larger operation in Dresden required the support of external experts. In all cases the necessity for an update of former concepts arouse after more than a decade. Some concepts now involve frequent updating (Dresden). In Berlin and Dresden the inner city areas were confronted with fundamental challenges referring to the outcomes of the Second World War - although leading into contrary directions. Whereas the centre of West-Berlin lost importance, the centre of Dresden has become a focal point of urban development for the whole city. In the case of Leipzig the background of the strategic approach seems to be less fundamental. The focus there is on the economic recovery of the inner city regarding its centrality in terms of retail space and connectivity. In this regard the role of urban planning seems to be limited to upgrade the quality of the public realm around new private or institutional investments. A part from these locally appearing differences there are similarities. The issue of urban space applies for different scales. On the city wide level improved linkages along river zones and large parks are considered (Dresden, Berlin). The next, smaller level brings in the linkages between different urban districts. This applies to the handling of inner city rings along former fortifications creating barrier effects between the centre and its immediate surroundings (Leipzig, Dresden). The most concrete scale, the layout of public space is an explicit subject in Leipzig. However the conflicts of traffic and sojourn can only be solved comprehensively. Whereas the examples of Dresden and Leipzig demonstrate the importance of public space for any inner city development on various scales, the case of Berlin strengthens the involvement of institutional stakeholders. In this regard Dresden “learned its lesson”. The formation of the new guidelines consisted of public involvement - as a remarkable difference to the former strategy. Nevertheless in times of scarce financial resources public discussion seem to be one aspect. Another aspect lies in the communal concern to find locations of prioritised investment without public guidance (Leipzig).
Cluster Two: Cologne, Hanover and Frankfurt

The three cases share a common geographical position being located in the former West Germany. In relation to the previous examples the development of Cologne, Frankfurt and Hanover has taken place more continuously leaving aside the great distortions that took place in Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig since 1990. Nevertheless, these cities have also experienced major changes since the 1950ties. Frankfurt, for instance has developed to the premier German and further to one of the most important European locations for banking alongside with aviation and logistics. Hanover has evolved as an internationally known trade fair city boosted by the Expo 2000. Cologne looks back onto a long historic and cultural heritage. Resulting in common attributes like civic pride, patronage and an active citizenship. Today the city also plays an important role in terms of trade, the media and cultural activities.

The long and meaningful history of Cologne dating back to the roman age is reflected rather in the size and layout of the inner city than in the quantity of historic buildings and public spaces. Comprehensive bombings during World War II affected almost the entire historic centre. After 1950 many buildings were reconstructed. The inner-city districts have a comparatively high number of residential uses - about 120.000 inhabitants live within the different historic rings. Since the 1980ties the transition from the industrial to a service-orientated economy subsequently produced physical outcomes namely the conversion of a former railway area into the “Mediapark” and the former port Rheinauhafen has been converted into a mixed use urban development. The latter is aimed at opening the city towards the Rhine – a connection that has so far been impossible. Both conversion areas are still located within the inner city. A part from an overall positive reception of these projects other evolutions have had a negative effect for the image of the city culminating in the collapse of the historical city archive due to construction works of a new north-south public transport tunnel link in march 2009. During that time the coordination process of the “Masterplan Köln Innenstadt” had already taken place. Origins and practice of the Plan are specific. Primary initiative and financial resources came from representatives of the local economy. In parallel the city of Cologne was responsible for the procedure of involvement of all kinds of relevant stakeholders to “have their say”. Both local economy and city council instructed external experts that elaborated the “Masterplan Köln Innenstadt” in close partnership. Consultation and elaboration of the Plan took only twelve month including continuous sessions with different interest groups. The consultation was held on four separate levels. In particular these were operational, informational and accompanying as well as discourse-orientated levels. The operational level involved different kinds of administrative representatives as well as local politicians and parties. The discourse-orientated sessions applied for professionals (Fachöffentlichkeit) whereas the involvement of citizens was held on an informational level. Additionally the media were included on an accompanying level. The process of elaboration required at least four consultations of each group during the different phases of the procedure. The plan has been approved in 2009 by the city council as a strategic concept. Since then the process is kept alive through two annual meetings, an up-to-date website and frequent meetings of the steering group. The Masterplan itself consists
of seven spatially defined fields of actions that were considered as specific areas for the inner city. These are the river area and the opposite side of the Rhine, the core area, both transport axes, North-South and East-West and the subsequent rings, Inner Ring and Inner Green Belt. The seven general fields of action are systematically scaled into focal areas where a need for action was identified. Within these specific areas projects of high priority were suggested and labelled as lead projects. All measures can be classified into short, mid term and long term perspectives. Today (August 2010) twenty-four projects of different size and duration are due for realisation as soon as financial resources are pooled together.

The city of Hanover is of smaller size and less famous than Cologne. However it has evolved as an important location for trade fairs after 1950. The Expo 2000 event strengthened this role putting the city on the map of an international audience. Even though the Expo grounds are located outside the inner city, the centre has benefited indirectly from the event. The benefits are not limited to image questions but to the investments that have been undertaken around the year 2000. For example, the public transport infrastructure was improved upgrading the central station in terms of regional and international connectivity. Subsequently the public space around the station has come into the focus of renewal. A milestone of urban development that originated in Hanover goes back to the post war period. Like many other cities the historic centre of Hanover suffered from heavy destructions as a result of World War II. The damage enabled urban planners like Rudolf Hillebrecht to implement the vision of a car-friendly urban landscape at early stage long before it became a common guideline. The characteristics of the new urban texture were the avoidance of axes and the abandonment of correspondent linear building structures. The early vision culminated in an Inner City Plan (1949) and the Constructa (1951), an international building exhibition for reconstruction. Even many years later in 1959 the miracle of Hanover (Wunder von Hannover) was published as the headline of the weekly magazine “Der Spiegel”. The vision of urban landscapes has outdated itself already long time ago. What has been left is the respect to the pioneering role of Hanover during the 1950ties and the car-friendly urban landscapes separating the inner city from its immediate surroundings. Today Hanover has the ambition to follow up its former role in terms of the recognition of its planning approaches. The scene for this intention is the inner city particularly focusing on the urban landscapes built after 1950 that today separate the centre of Hanover from its adjacent areas. The scheme “Hannover City 2020+” comprises of two principal parts that are interrelated. At first, the concept for the inner city upgrading the urban landscapes built after 1950 that today separate the centre of Hanover from its adjacent areas. Secondly an elaborated dialog process has been drafted beginning in 2008 culminating with the planned adoption of the inner city concept by the city council scheduled for early 2011. The involvement of various stakeholders is a complex endeavour that requires various steps as well as different technical measures. The dialog sessions started with preliminary talks where potential stakeholders were interviewed. The interviews served as a basis for the first series of public presentations. These were mainly given from external experts pointing out thematic aspects and referring to experiences taken from best practice cases. The external perspective took one of three years. The second year, 2009, was dedicated to the internal perspective taking in different kinds of
stakeholders that were asked to “have their say” according to three principal subjects. These “forums” highlighted the vibrant city (functional aspects), the aesthetic city (visual aspects) and the active city (aspects of involvement and implementation). Each of the three forums was discussed with single groups of stakeholders that were identified. The formation of the groups resembled the selection that made in Cologne. Administrative representatives, professionals and citizens were considered as relevant stakeholders. The process was attended by the same external experts than in Cologne. The third and last year, 2010, is ongoing bringing in selected interventional measures. A sequence of international com-petitions was held. The aim was seeking for solutions to upgrade the connectivity of the inner city with respect to the barrier effect caused by the “urban landscape” around it. The proposals were not of dogmatic character but looked for specific solutions. The competition was held in two phases. During the first phase a public presentation was organised before the jury had taken its decision. The current state (August 2010) is still considered as opinion making. However at the end a decision making will be required. The latter will be effectuated under the lead management of the planning department until 2011.

The role of Frankfurt as a premier place for banking and service industries is significantly expressed through the skyline with several skyscrapers being located within the borders of the historic centre. The change of scale concentrates on the western boundary of the inner city alongside the former city walls. The high centrality of inner Frankfurt within the polycentric region of Rhine-Main causes enormous flows of commuters rising the number of people within the centre of Frankfurt during day-times diminishing its number again on evenings and weekends. In recent years many new urban developments have been implemented or began just outside the historic city. Among these is the remake of the riverside areas including new waterfront housing (Stadtraum Main) and an ongoing conversion of the former freight railway station (Europaviertel) around the near by fair grounds. Another large project is the relocation and new construction of the towers of the European Central Bank contrasting the current skyline. Also within the historic centre changes are due. Public space is one main aspect of the current measures. For example, the main shopping area Zeil has just been refurbished. A central through-road at the Hauptwache has been closed for motorised traffic alongside with the remake of the nearby squares of Rathenauplatz, Goetheplatz and Roßmarkt. Like in Cologne and Hanover the historic centre of Frankfurt suffered from heavy bombings during Word War II. The rehabilitation consisted of several phases bringing in heterogeneous approaches ranging from the post war linear housing constructions to modern buildings as well as historical reconstructions (timber frame buildings). Just this year a building complex of municipal back offices is torn down again making way for a small scale urban repair within the historic centre. The reconstruction efforts are accompanied by a public debate about the sense of newly built historical constructions. The first phase of such reconstructions dates back the 1980ties at the Römerberg. A part from the Zeil most of these measures have been put in place without any larger public or stakeholder consultation.
Yet a concept for the inner city has been considered necessary. It is currently elaborated through the planning department with the assistance of external experts taking in an open planning process including participating elements. The process is underway although will not be finished until the end of 2010. The principal aim of the concept is the vision of a vibrant inner city besides the river. Therefore two main fields of action have been identified. Firstly, the quality of public space is considered partly inadequate and the outline of the inner city street network is irregular. As a result the river Main and its north-south access streets are disconnected caused through the barrier effect of two highly frequented east-west axes. The concept seeks for cautious solutions reducing the number of lanes instead of tunnelling or withdrawing the trough traffic. Secondly, new housing projects within the inner city shall be stimulated. For this kind of moderate densification typology and locations of small high rise buildings - around ten storeys - are proposed. Another impetus might be possible through the transformation and relocation of run down office buildings into new housing developments. The focus of the concept is strictly limited to the city “intra muros” including the rampart zones named Wallanlagen. The design of the consultation process does not focus on specific groups of stakeholders (like in Cologne and Hanover) but on thematic sessions including public space, housing, offices, tourism and culture and traffic. The number of participants and the duration of the consultation process seem to be rather straightforward than excessive. The outline of the concept has truly been an open planning process because the deadline for submission was prolonged two times. However, it remains unclear whether the need of the many commuters has been taken into consideration. On the other hand the concept seeks to define smaller quarters within the inner city with regard of the potentials of identification.

In contrast to the first cluster the cases of Cologne, Hanover and Frankfurt do not exemplify an update of existing inner city planning concepts and guidelines. Interestingly the approaches have much in common. The most important novelties of the second cluster refer to the procedure of implementing an open planning process including the participation of distinct stakeholders. It is remarkable that particularly in the second cluster, the term “identification” seems to play a special role with respect to inner city developments. Why is the identification of people with the inner city of such a particular importance today? Open planning processes and participation have been identified as one important novelty as regards the updating of inner city concepts. It is argued here that these measures are closely linked to a construction of local identity as described by Hauser. In this regard two aspects particularly matter. First, the formation of local identity is very much related to an internal perspective in opposition to branding of a city that rather refers to an external perspective required for competitive reasons. Secondly, identification is described as a process that has to be renewed - and not as a fixed spatial characteristic (Hauser, 2010, 2006).

Historically European cities used to have a high degree of identity according to their independence and the privileges their citizens had compared to rural inhabitants. However
the cities today seem to have lost their strong identity caused by processes of homogenisation ranging from the loss of mercantile rights to the effects of globalisation. Human activities also have gradually lost their local bonds. This equally applies for production and services. Other aspects are the increasing mobility and the multitude of pictures distributed via the mass media (ibid). All these aspects lead to the phenomenon of homogenisation in the way urban space is perceived. Places seem to appear uniform and their perception has become indifferent. Nevertheless the importance of cities has not vanished. Economically rather the national states have lost power. Today cities compete with each other for human and material resources struggling for both a positive image and a unique identity. Identity is related to spatial issues only in an indirect way for example to a certain territory. The meaning of identity implies to be distinct from others as well as to have something in common. Though, to have a strong identity means both to be unique and to share values.

The term “identification” that is frequently used in relation to the inner city concepts as discussed here, refers to the process towards identity. Related to each individual the process is an active procedure. As a result to identify with something means the joint adoption of practices. These may refer to collective knowledge und memories, common stories and topics as well as shared emotions (Hauser, 2010). Traditional festivities - typical for a city - where people associate among themselves and the city are an example of such practices. The consultations sessions within an open planning process might have a similar outcome. The number of participants and the occurrence of such sessions is a potential indicator for the degree of identification with a city. Thus identification and participation can reinforce each other. In Cologne and Hanover the number of participants and the amount of sessions held was much higher than in Frankfurt, for example. What are the potentials of historic centres for a successful identification? It can be stated that identity is related to an indefinite social space that can be incongruent from the physical spatial framework like the city “intra muros” for example. Particularly inner cities have a surplus meaning. As the oldest part of the city the core areas contain the historic memory often related to landmark buildings, squares and places. Further the inner city usually hosts central functions of city wide importance like city hall, central train station, museums and churches, main shopping areas, courts, universities. Again these functions are related to buildings, squares and places. A part from historic and functional aspects the multimodal accessibility also matters. Finally the network of pedestrian-friendly compact spaces creates a distinct atmosphere. Therefore the centre is usually the stage for festivals and events of regional interest. As a matter of fact inner cities seem to be suitable for the identification of a city wide audience. However the already mentioned tendencies of homogenisation in the way space is perceived also apply on the scale of inner cities. It is not only the similar planning paradigms that mainly guided post war reconstructions and building typologies but also the car-friendly urban spaces and later the pedestrian zones with a rising proportion of chain stores that equally appeared in many places. As a result the construction of local identities can not be a single matter of planning departments but have to be opened requiring a wide spread range of different local groups like the Cologne example demonstrates. There a private initiative of the local economy was taken
over by administrative bodies backed by local citizens. The later opted for the need to find a Cologne-specific solution rather than a state-of-the-art Masterplan. Hanover established a three-year open dialog and planning procedure including a wide range of stakeholder groups. In both cases distinctions were made between administrative, professional and residential groups. Contrasting to these examples the sessions in Frankfurt were not divided into specific groups and were therefore related to topical issues. Yet in all the cases the identification is considered as an active process where people are able to gradually discuss about their perceptions regarding inner city concepts as proposed by Hauser. However the surplus meaning of inner cities may complicate an open planning process for example regarding the issue of urban space. Streets and places within local quarters or sub-centres often are more applicable in terms of local identification. Though, the inner city housing areas “the veedel” in Cologne were excluded from the consideration because local residents fear potential gentrifications. In Frankfurt the concept also leaves the housing areas built during the 1950ties untouched. The aim is to include the notion of a historic centre consisting of several quarters with specific characteristics. On the other hand Frankfurt excluded two principal elements of urban space, the Zeil and Goetheplatz, from the open planning procedure. The refurbishment there has been terminated shortly before the consultation sessions started.

SUMMARY
From post-war reconstruction to current open planning approaches
The examined German major cities have in common that all of them were the target of vast destruction as a result of World War II. Yet, it is sometimes forgotten that their historic inner cities were among the most destroyed places. As a matter of fact, their current historic inner cities are the result of a comprehensive reconstruction process that has been launched since the 1950ties. Even though the layout of the city was mainly kept as a “historic footprint” physically the historic centres have undergone several reconstruction phases related to specific concepts for building type and urban space. The need for car-friendly cities and fluent spaces lead to the alteration of the urban layout. As a result through-roads carving into the urban fabric and the widening of existing streets were frequent measures. By all means reconstruction is an ongoing process. Particularly in Leipzig and Dresden after 1990, the previous phases were questioned and comprehensive new measures implemented (cluster one). In other cases like Hanover and Cologne, for example post war achievements require updating (cluster two). Today the car-friendly areas in and around the historic centres are a large challenge because of the barrier effects they cause and the low standards of the adjacent urban spaces.

There are two main trends regarding the selected current inner city strategies. At first, urban space is attributed a high importance related to vibrant inner cities. Secondly, the involvement of various stakeholders has opened up planning processes. The notion of public space can be regarded on two different scales considering large scale linkages and the quality of public realm alike. The large scale refers to the recovery of the liaison of historic centre and rivers
and to improved spatial linkages of the centre and its adjacent quarters. In many cases the
disruption is caused by the layout and traffic of the circulating ring roads. The need for a
better inclusion of the inner city is also related to the increasing importance it gets as a
catalyst for future development of the city as a whole (Leipzig, Dresden). The large, strategic
scale also might address a cooling effect necessary to create a micro climate. The later is not a
principal element of any concept. The most common idea to achieve the large scale
requirements is the generation of a continuum of urban space. However far reaching solutions
– like in London (congestion charge) or Paris (push for public transport) – are not in sight.
Instead the proposed solutions are rather cautious than radical and they are rather multifaceted
than dogmatic. The proposals for the refurbishment of public space are a common issue since
the city of Barcelona demonstrated the benefits of such measures for local citizens and
visitors alike. In theory the refurbishment of public spaces seems to be a suitable issue for
public consultation procedures. In practice however this is not the case: Only Hanover closely
linked several competitions regarding its inner city urban spaces to the open planning
procedure of Hanover City 2020+. The surplus meaning of historic inner cities causes
difficulties regarding the choice of potential stakeholders. This applies particularly for the
refurbishment of urban space. Practices show that public involvement with respect to inner
cities requires rather a set of stakeholders than just “the public”. The process design is still a
tacit knowledge that cities have to delegate to external experts. Therefore the procedure can
rather be called an open planning process than just a consultation. Even though the usually
identified stakeholders were of administrative, professional and residential origins, each case
may call for distinct procedures tailored for its needs. Such open planning processes require
financial resources that are often not included within the usual budgets. Some people argue
that these have not much in common with daily planning routines (TU Darmstadt, 2009).
However, an increasing number of cities discover the need to tackle the homogenisation in the
perception of their place. The role a renewed understanding of identity can play has been
drafted in this article. Nevertheless most procedures are still under way and it will be of great
importance that these are followed by successful implementations. Interestingly current issues
like new urban mobility and climate change are mainly missing in relation to the inner city
concepts. These subjects might be due for the next updating of inner city strategies.

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