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District Future – Urban Lab: Experimental Space for Sustainable Urban Life

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Abstract

Cities play a major role in an overall socio-ecological change towards a sustainable way of life. On the one hand cities are affected by the deficits of sustainability: Climate change, shortage of resources, demographic change, deterioration of the ecological sphere or social inequality and fragmentation. On the other hand cities offer spaces for new, progressive ideas, social and technological innovations and lifestyles.

This presentation deals with the transdisciplinary urban research and development project District Future – Urban Lab. It is an urban experimental space for sustainable urban life, which is implemented in a defined district of Karlsruhe, Germany. The main goal of the project is to transform the district into a sustainable one.

At the same time the sustainability transformation process of the project area shall be initiated and understood, as well as structures and networks shall be implemented in order to stabilize this development.

To achieve this transformation it is necessary to work on different methodological scales. In general, sustainable urban life will be done research on by use of quantitative and qualitative analysis, e.g. adaption of indicators for sustainable development. Furthermore society's different interests and needs are worked out. Different forms of participation and education will be tested. New research methods are tried out.

Specific grassroot participatory projects support urban sustainable development and provide opportunities to connect urban society, science and other stakeholders (scientific public private partnerships).

District Future-Urban Lab is an active driving force and passive scientific observer of urban sustainability. It causes new challenges and chances for urban sustainable transformation in an experimental space.

District Future – Urban Lab is based on the scientific “Integrative Concept of Sustainable Development” (cf. Kopfmüller et al. 2001; Schutz et al. 2008).

Keywords: sustainability, transformation, urban laboratory, Integrative Concept of Sustainable Development

Literature

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