

Introduction

Sustainable Centres of the Future?!

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Inner city development and in particular sustainable inner-city development is *en vogue*. In 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Agenda 2030 with the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), especially SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities with a focus on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Recently, the 2023 SDG Summit confirmed the necessity to accelerate actions towards sustainable development up to 2030 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2023). But inner cities and local centres are facing strong changes and increasing challenges (Deutscher Städtetag 2021; Klemme 2022: 5; Rieper and Schöte 2022: 43). For example, in many cities in Germany and other parts of Europe, shopping habits are changing due to the increase in online retail or stores in the stationary retail sector get abandoned because of a lack of consumer buying and rising rents. The pandemic has exacerbated a number of these challenges (BearingPoint GmbH 2015; Bundesstiftung Baukultur et al. 2020; BMI 2021; Deutscher Städtetag 2021; Handelsverband Bayern e. V. 2021; Klemme 2022: 6), intensifying structural upheavals and impacting various sectors, such as health, retail, labour, housing, and mobility (Hesse and Lange 2023: 19). Increasingly, city centres are characterized primarily by a loss of functions (Anders & Stoltenberg 2022: 47; Rieper & Schöte 2022: 43). The framework conditions and background situations of different city centres are very heterogeneous (Renner 2022: 18). Cities react very differently to the challenges and therefore, each city centre requires individual and tailored future concepts that weigh all functions (Klemme 2022: 10f.). But how can city centres develop sustainably? What planning approaches and possible solutions exist? The following contributions explore different perspectives on sustainable inner-city development.

Opportunities and Challenges from a Planning Practice Perspective

Katerina Danadiadou presents the planning practice perspective on the development of the Greek city of Thessaloniki. In particular, challenges and opportunities for the city are formulated. She introduces several strategic instruments, such as the General Urban Plan and the Municipal Plan for Reducing CO2 Emissions. Finally, she points out the importance of city partnerships such as the „100 Resilient Cities“ network, in which Thessaloniki is also involved.

Life between buildings: Using Public Space: The history of Jan Gehl's book and the legacy of its philosophy for designing cities at human scale

Garyfallia (Fyllio) Katsavounidou introduces the perspective of Danish architect and urban planner Jan Gehl on public spaces using the book „Life between buildings: Using Public Space“. Based on the human scale, an attractive and sustainable form of urban planning is demonstrated in her contribution. Using New York as an example, she shows in detail how this can be achieved. She calls for a human-centered approach in urban design creating more liveable city centres in the future. Finally, she derives general recommendations in order to achieve a human centred form of urban planning that can be applied in different cities around the world.

Thessaloniki for People: Developing a Postmodern Vision for Sustainable Urban Mobility

Jonas Lamberg's contribution deals with Jan Gehl's second well-known book: Cities for People. Based on this publication, he describes the emergence of modernist urban planning in the 20th century and its transformation into a criticised era of urban planning, especially caused by the shift away from human scale. He uses the example of Thessaloniki to describe the effects of modernist planning on the urban built environment. Finally, solutions are developed on how Thessaloniki can be developed towards a more sustainable future. These findings serve as a blueprint for many other cities around the world where modernist urban planning has also been practised in the past.

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