

Laatzen-Mitte City Quarter Development Programme

Social Networking and Development Perspectives

“Stadtteile mit besonderem Entwicklungsbedarf - Die Soziale Stadt” (“Social City”) is a joint support programme by the German federal government and the federal states, running since 1999. It is contributing to the reduction of socio-economic problems in certain town quarters and follows a social-integrative approach of urban development. This means that in addition to structural upgrading, there is a special focus on social projects and mobilising citizens. Nationwide, “Die Soziale Stadt” is put into effect in almost 500 town quarters with an annual financial volume of app. 315 million Euros. The costs of the different project measures are shared by the federal government, the federal states and the municipalities.

Social Framework and Integrated Action Plan

The local realisation of the programme begins with the development of a social framework. It delineates the general direction of the upgrade and renewal process as well as the timeframe for urban redevelopment. Updated annually, the integrated action plan consolidates ideas and strategies of the framework into concrete projects and measures. All phases of the implementation require a systematic participation of citizens, social actors and municipal authorities.



Redevelopment area Laatzen-Mitte
photos: Dagmar Bode

Tasks in the Research Area

The City of Laatzen, located south of Hanover, was accepted into the programme in 2004. The University of Potsdam (Department of Geography, Workgroup on Regional Sciences) was assigned for the preparation of the Social Framework and the integrated action plan. Additionally, the university runs a local “quarter office” which carries out expert monitoring tasks. The office staff is working to assure, promote and develop Laatzen-Mitte’s still stable living conditions by transforming scientific approaches into practical efforts and measures. In this process, the social framework and integrated action plan are used as fundamental guidelines for the socio-economic, structural and cultural development of the research area (fig. 1).

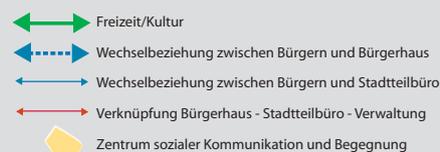


fig. 1: social framework; map: Ute Dolezal

Considering this, a number of social and urbanistic projects were realised and funds were raised. For instance, the rearrangement of the Leine-Vorplatz was started. Besides, citizen workgroups were formed; they realise small projects, and their ideas and suggestions are taken into account in the planning process (fig. 2). At present, numerous micro-projects are being run in the context of the promotional programme “Stärken vor Ort” (“Strengths on Site”). Their aim is the occupational integration of disadvantaged young person and the occupational re-entry of women.



fig. 2: Ausstellung Ideenspiegel; photo: Sarah Meier

Possibilities for the Combination of Research and Teachings

The project in Laatzen is a good opportunity to let students have an insight in the combination of scientific and practical work. Doing this, a rich spectrum of research methods can be employed. In the frame of project seminars, students have locally collected data for the Social Framework by conducting qualitative interviews, workshops and household surveys. The results were also used for a first evaluation of the project proceedings. In this way, the theoretical knowledge can be deepened by transferring it into practical work. This builds up an excellent foundation for the practically oriented working routine of geographers and regional scientists.

The students’ consistently positive feedback confirms this approach; it has already spawned ideas for future joint projects, e.g. in the field of improving the cohabitation of locals and migrants.