LEIPZIG UNIVERSITY NEWSLETTER
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TWO REURIS PROJECTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG

In short

Two projects affiliated with the University of Leipzig participate in the *REURIS – Revitalisation of Urban River Spaces* network:

Researchers at the Sociological Institute work on strategies of urban river management for two Leipzig waterbodies (*Wasser im Westen).*

The Institute of Infrastructure and Resources Management will develop general financing tools for future revitalisation of urban river spaces namely by opening and restoring covered canals (*Development of Financing Options for the Opening and Restoration of previously culverted Channels*.)

For more information about *REURIS* please visit: www.reuris.gig.eu

Karl-Heine-Canal in Leipzig

This project is part of

Wasser im Westen

Today city policy-making is challenged by different tasks: It has to support local community economically as well as to maintain social cohesion. Urban communities shall be more than loose co-existence. Urbanity shall be developed through citizens' identification with their urban environment. In this context a rising number of cities become aware of the important and integrative function of urban waterbodies.

The City of Leipzig, too, attached new importance to rivers and canals as discovery and recreation areas. Among successful examples for the social and ecological impact of nature-orientated inner city waterbodies are the Lindenau Harbour and the Karl-Heine-Canal. Since the water front has been opened to the public in 1996 the canal has become more attractive for residents and tourists, and in the area of the disused harbour public interest is also rising.

On the other hand the growing attractiveness has also negative impact on these areas. During summer months waterbodies and watersides are heavily occupied. Thus, the recently developed recreational value is threatened, ecological redevelopment of the canal banks was necessary, and even vandalism has a perceptible detrimental influence on waters and banks. In addition: the planned connection between Karl-Heine-Canal and Lindenau Harbour will further increase the impact on both water bodies and water quality.

Local Project Strategy

The project *Wasser im Westen* ("Water in the West") focusses on the impact public use has on the two inner city waterbodies that are situated in the West of Leipzig. It will draw on different scientific approaches to the problems at hand and will therefore develop methods and concepts that will combine the need for ecological sustainability and for sustainable urban development.

Furthermore, one of the main aims of the project is to bring together local actors like residents, entrepreneurs, city administration, ngo's, schools, and churches, for example. Citizens will not only be involved at planning stages, but their participation shall also relate to the implementation of ideas concerning the local development as well as the environmental situation. Enhancing the social quality for residents and visitors, improving the quality of urban spaces as well as increasing the ecological quality of the waterbodies mark the main targets of *Wasser im Westen*.

Intra-regional Aims

The development, implementation, and evaluation processes will be continuously documented, their applicability to other cities and other waters shall be tested. Therefore it will also be necessary to consult German and European urban water initiatives and discuss their experiences. Thus, in addition to the practical initiatives directed towards the two local waterbodies in Leipzig the project will gather best practices and transform experiences into general policy recommendations.

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Development of Financing Options for the Opening and Restoration of previously culverted Channels

The urban opening and restoration of previously culverted channels offers the chance to use and to aggregate leisure potentials and thus to work against the destruction of peripheric natural river spaces. Usually one can assume that the opening and restoration of previously culverted channels is not financially profitable for the owner – in most cases the local or regional authorities. They have to bear the costs but only benefit indirectly from the value enhancement of the urban surroundings that the opening of previously culverted channels results in. Those who mostly benefit are people in the private sector, e.g. investors and property owners.

At this point, there are analogies between the characteristics of previously culverted channels and brownfields. Both of them involve high costs for the owner without being financially profitable for him. There exist already some working financing plans for the domain of brownfield redevelopment, e.g. interim acquisition, urbanistic contracts, public-private partnership as well as successfully implemented projects in Leipzig and other cities. Further there are new instruments which were proposed within the research field "Area in circles – Recycling management in the urban land allocation" in addition to the existing instruments of the regional development.

Aim and Approach

The aim of the project is the development of financing options that are supposed to help Leipzig and other European cities to further develop urban river spaces. Experiences that already exist concerning this subject will have some influence on the development of the financing instruments. In addition it will be analysed to what extent existing financing plans from the domain of brownfield redevelopment can be adapted to the opening and restoration of previously culverted channels. At the end it will be examined to what extent the legal framework allows a practical application of the financing options and some proposals for the legal adaptation will be formulated. While Leipzig will definitely be used as a case study and the development of proposals and strategies will focus on this city the cross-national transferability of this exemplary approach will be the point of focus during the process of consideration.

Stretch of Pleißemühlgraben in Leipzig, re-opened in 2000

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