

CASUAL – Co-creating Attractive Sustainable Urban Areas and Lifestyles

Keywords	Sustainability, lifestyles, urban development, mobility, living labs
Projectleader (NL)	Diminic Stead, Delft University of Technology
Consortium	Austrian Institute for Regional Studies and Spatial Development (Austria), Delft University of Technology (the Netherlands), Nordregio – Nordic Centre for Spatial Development (Sweden)
Duration	2013-2016
Website	http://www.nordregio.se/casual

Summary of results

Urban policies and projects that are expected to promote sustainability are often focused on the built environment and the technical infrastructure. Less attention is given to changing lifestyles and everyday practices, even though citizen and consumer behaviour have a tremendous impact on resource consumption in our cities. CASUAL investigated how to promote sustainable living and consumption patterns by including citizen and consumer perspectives in the governance of urban areas. New forms of inclusive urban governance were explored by looking at collectively organised initiatives outside formal planning procedures as models for the future. In addition, planning for sustainable mobility was investigated through a focus on so called transit-oriented-development.

Sustainable urban areas and lifestyles

Individual lifestyles and consumer practices are increasingly seen as a way to address sustainability challenges, and the importance of individual consumption choices for promoting sustainability has been emphasized by both policymakers and the media. We need to rethink our ways of living, our consumption patterns and travel behaviours, and how we organize our everyday lives. This is more radical and demanding than can be currently imagined and managed. Framing environmental concerns as the responsibility of the individual has implications for how planning for sustainable lifestyles is developed. For sustainable urban development, it is evident that focusing on the urban form or technological solutions is insufficient. It is also insufficient simply to shift the focus from urban form and technological solutions to changing individual behaviour. In order to promote sustainability, an improved understanding of the actual everyday practices of urban inhabitants is required.

Recommendations

1. Make the effects of changed behaviour visible on a human scale.
2. Target specific lifestyles without stigmatizing them. Sustainable consumption policy needs to allow for learning, rather than segregating different lifestyle groups.
3. Integrate key individuals or partners as drivers of integration into citywide strategies.
4. Understand that citizen participation and the role of citizens varies. In some strategies, citizens will be co-decision-makers, whereas in others they will simply be consulted.



Urban development, planning and transportation

Several conclusions can be made in terms of urban development, planning and transportation. First, the impact of the relationship between land use and transportation depends upon the existing conditions in a city or region when new transportation is developed. Second, the result of studies on land use and transport interactions can differ depending upon the intervals investigated. Third, the spatial scale of study areas also played a role regarding the significance of the land use/transport relationship. Fourth, the kinds of indicators that are used to measure effects matter immensely to the outcome. Fifth, further knowledge about the relationships between public transit and land use is needed. Sixth, although many studies model population density in general, and residential, employment and commercial densities in particular, only a few studies have measured long-term changes in land cover.

Urban Living Labs

As an analytical concept, the urban living lab is a way to understand, compare and evaluate existing urban strategies, policies and projects. As a constructivist approach, it creates a social platform on which experimentation with urban development issues can occur.

In this research project, the urban living lab was used both as an analytical concept and as a practice tool for the development of urban exhibitions in Vienna and Stockholm. Certain urban areas are more suitable for experimentation than others. The positive effects of urban living labs, such as inclusion, are difficult to achieve in an otherwise conflicting political environment, and urban living labs may temporally conflate strategy and implementation. It should be recognised that urban living labs do not alter situations completely or strategically reorient them. They can be characterized as a soft mode of urban governance that can help to unlock creativity and to open avenues for experimentation and alternative solutions. However, care must be taken not to overvalue such approaches, particularly since they can lead to exclusive expert involvement instead of wider public engagement.

Video on the research question

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYSEPoxo1jw>

Read more

- CASUAL - Co-creating Attractive and Sustainable Urban Areas and Lifestyles Synthesis Report ([web](#))
- Urban policies for sustainable living and consumption ([web](#))
- Transit-oriented development and sustainable urban planning ([web](#))
- Experiments and innovations in 'soft' urban planning: urban living labs ([web](#))
- Planning for sustainable lifestyles: political limitations and possibilities ([web](#))

Verbinden van Duurzame Steden

