

Rand_Stadt?! : Urbs in suburbe?!

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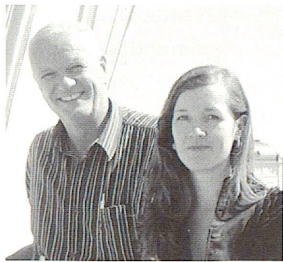
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RAND_STADT?!¹ URBS IN SUBURBE?!

Michael Koch and Maresa Schumacher



The working title of the Ladenburger colloquy on the Zwischenstadt² was "Mitten am Rand" ("in the midst of the edge"), while "Zwischenstadt – inzwischen Stadt?"³ was the title of the anthology containing an overview of significant findings by the research group.⁴ Sufficient and telling evidence had been found to permit the postulate that the urban-rural overlaps on the edges of towns and cities definitely have urban characteristics: the quality of life in these areas is defined by the varied and specific spatio-functional and socio-cultural forms of urbanity.

Polarization

The return of certain groups of the population to city centres, for which there is certainly evidence, is optimistically set in stone as the "renaissance of our towns" and seems to be the result of the "lure" of their urbanity and dense town structure. However, there is no evidence for a comprehensive abandonment of peri-urban and suburban living spaces. Peri-urbanity and semi-urbanity are frequently treated as being unfortunate states of affair, states that are also provincial and backward because they are also semi-rural with rural morals and therefore possibly even anti-urban.

Readings

The metaphor of urban entropy or Cedric Price's notion of modern cities being akin to scrambled eggs vividly portray the spatio-functional development processes that level centralities and hierarchies. Ubiquitous accessibility-conditions drive these trends. An estimated 80% of the built-up habitation area dates from after 1900 and followed the different guiding principles of the modern city. In the enormous urban expansion areas of the 20th century, the built-up areas feel like an archipelago whose edge has taken on the shape of a rugged coastline. In this fractal, being "on the edge" does not mean being "on the fringe". The outskirts are not marginalized. On the contrary, these places offer urban, material and cultural amenities in the immediate vicinity of rural locations and attractions.

Capabilities

Research is increasingly interested in an urban concept of landscape and has now found its continuation in a more in-depth occupation with the inner peripheries. Peri-urbanity must be understood as a specific manifestation of our current urbanity, which, in the context of the sustainability debate, holds special potential for the future. Post-industrial and post-fossil living conditions are moving towards a city typology that picks up on the functional and structural ideas of the garden city (Ebenezer Howard) and transforms them into guiding principles for the towns and cities of the 21st century. This process very much requires the expertise of landscape architecture and landscaping.



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¹ Translator's note: literally: Edge Town

² Translator's note: the German term means "in-between town" and is defined as "an area that can neither be classified as rural or urban, but which is not adequately described by the term 'suburb' either".

³ Translator's note: the German play on words cannot be captured in English: the meaning is "in-between town – town by now?".

⁴ Sieverts, T.; Koch, M.; Stein, U.; Steinbusch, M. (2005): Zwischenstadt – inzwischen Stadt? Entdecken, Begreifen, Verändern. Wuppertal.