



## **EWT/ Eco Web Town**

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### **REGIONAL CITY**

***Back to territory. Positions and forms of sustainability in Germany.***

***edited by Jörg Schröder and Maddalena Ferretti, with Claudia Di Girolamo***

## **What makes Hamburg an Ecowebtown**

***Anna Liebig***

The title „ECOWEBTOWN“ raises the question which towns can be characterized as so called ECO-WEB ones. So the first task is to define the two words „eco“ and „web“ for this paper. Then there shall be an approach to the question in which parts Hamburg can be called as ECOWEBTOWN.

“ECO“

Although the expression nowadays is used very often, it is kind of a „hip“ word to reassure that one is on the „good side“, to be politically correct.

So it is an expression which is not easy to prove but which implies the aim to be ecologically. Ecologically in the way resources and energies are used. For this paper this sense shall be expanded to the definition „sustainable“.

“WEB“

For this article the definition for the word “web” shall be the word “net”. Therefore below follows an examination of two different kinds of nets: the digital one and the analogical net of communication. The digital net includes the internet, such as the world wide web, e-mails, chat and Handy. The analogical net includes discussions “face to face”.

In past times there was a transport of messages from A to B in form of people. Nowadays regarding this action man is substituted with the combination two computers via a cable and the energy that transports the message of an e-mail from A to B. Human being is saving physical energy and stays sitting in his environment.

If one is using the word ecological in sense of the word sustainable, is it then ecological that man stays wordless and motionless, bereft of his analogical handwriting in his surrounding? Therefore there is the need of a study, how far working with the computer is sustainable regarding the human being. If one is assuming that human being in motionless stadium, sitting in front of the computer is using less energy than in motion, than the balance for sure is very “eco”. Based on that a city which is “eco” should focus its development on the tweak of its digital infrastructure to optimize the digital exchange of data. From the first point of view the question if a city is “eco” seems to be related to the issue of the upgrading of the network for the data exchange.

Nevertheless the optimized network of data leads to the stagnation of the physical locomotion. The human being is resting at the same place, the natural motions like the delivery of a message is not comprehensible anymore in the sense of Richard Sennett’s publication “Flesh and Stone”.

This realisation leads to the question if it is ecological that digital connections like the internet or e-mails are faster than the according physical movement of the human being. Is it sufficient that the digital data exchange is just understood in a mental way? Is the single movement of the fingers, the click, sufficient as a physical experience? Or is the human scale of experience such as the real relation to the duration to move a message from one place to another not necessary any more in ECOWEBTOWN?

Does the movement of the touch screen surface substitute the sound of the letter’s paper, the feeling of the paper?

The transportation by plane or train is much more expensive than the digital data exchange but it is more sustainable for the human being in the sense of a real experiential knowledge that is including the whole body.

The analogical communication or the analogical network is related to the experienced environment and the surrounding. It is obvious that the communicating persons in the same place have got a clear common position and surrounding and they can discuss their positions and react to a common background.

Although the meeting in one common place requires the journey to this place, this effort of energy has got a positive effect to the persons because it is a sensory experience. Human locomotion is slower than the transfer of information in the digital network but for the enhancement of the perception it is absolutely essential. From that point of view the effort is less "eco" regarding the costs but from the long-term consideration it is much more sustainable for the development of the persons because the whole body is involved.

What do these thoughts and findings mean to the development of the city and the city planning? How can the new parts of the city such as for example in Hamburg be developed in an "eco" way?

One actual project is the "Husarenhof" in the quarter Wandsbek in Hamburg. It is developed in a very common way but maybe this is the reason why it is more "eco" for the people who live there.

The area is located in the transition of the city centre to the region, in the eastern part of Hamburg. It is planned like a quarter that is working for its own with all the infrastructure you need to have nearby like schools, public transport, facilities for emergencies and shopping facilities. The mix of the uses like shopping, working and living creates a quarter of mixed inhabitants. Although the public transport to the city centre is located near by the quarter itself is planned to be a centre on its own.

You can find different types of housing and also buildings from different historical periods. The centre of the new quarter is built by a new designed open space with water and green. It creates a courtyard for recreation, meetings of the neighbourhood and free time. One can imagine that the inhabitants are using the space to talk and to sit down as it is not defined by commercial uses but it is just set up as a stage for the people. Especially this space can be called very "eco" whereas it is "web" in an analogical and traditional way. You will not find people sitting in a modern café chatting via their computers or mobile phones but you will find people enjoying the artificial nature and talking to each other.

As the quarter is planned as a mixed area you can find various types of housing. There are apartments for rent, apartments for sale and townhouses. Some of the housing types have got a private garden. The size of the housing units is also very different and allows living for singles, couples and families of different ages. Most of the buildings are new and designed in a modern way. They are arranged in a way that they surround the centre and the historical buildings.

The open space in the centre is surrounded by historical brick buildings of the old regiment of the hussars which were used for riding. These buildings are transformed to include very special apartments with high ceilings and partly with private green. They create the special character and identification of the "Husarenhof".

At last there is a retention reservoir which is collecting the rain water of the quarter. This reservoir creates a little lake and another piece of nature for the ecology of the inhabitants.

Altogether projects like the "Husarenhof" create an "EcoWebTown" because they are sustainable in the sense how they affect the people's lives. The order and design of the houses and the uses create a real neighbourhood and not only units for investments. And the open space is not only to be there as a designed space to look at but to use it and to acquire it.

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