

Real-world Lab Wins “Transformative Science” Research Prize

Award Goes to the “District Future – Urban Lab” Project of KIT



The “Future Space for Sustainability and Science” is the office of the “District Future” project in Karlsruhe’s Oststadt district. (Photo: Tanja Meißner, KIT)

How can we live sustainably in urban districts? What should our cities look like in the future? To answer these questions, a team of researchers of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) tests new ideas in Karlsruhe’s Oststadt district. The real-world lab “District Future – Urban Lab” is to make urban life more participative and more sustainable. Now, the project has won the “Transformative Science” research prize in the amount of EUR 25,000. As part of the Darmstadt “Transformation Days,” the award will be presented officially on January 16, 2019 by the Wuppertal Institute and the Zempelin Foundation.

Climate change, a shortage of resources, demographic change, indebted public finances and social inequalities call for comprehensive, sustainable development – at local and global level. In many respects, towns and cities have a central role to play on the journey towards a transformation affecting the whole of society, aiming to achieve a lifestyle that is fit for the future. But how can urban areas be transformed into sustainable living environments? “Our society will only develop sustainably when all those involved take part in the development process,” states Head of Project, Oliver Parodi, with conviction.

Monika Landgraf
Chief Press Officer,
Head of Corp. Communications

Kaiserstraße 12
76131 Karlsruhe, Germany
Phone: +49 721 608-21105
Email: presse@kit.edu

Press contact:

Justus Hartlieb
Press Officer
Phone: +49 721 608-21155
Email: justus.hartlieb@kit.edu

In Karlsruhe, they are taking action. With the support of partners including the "Reallabor 131: KIT findet Stadt" real-world laboratory project funded by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry for Science, Research and Art (MWK Baden-Württemberg), the real-world laboratory "Quartier Zukunft – Labor Stadt" (District Future – Urban Lab) is trialing a culture of sustainability. The transdisciplinary research and development project from KIT aims to work with local residents to make a city district an area with a future suitable for the next generation. For this purpose, the Head of Project, Dr. Oliver Parodi, and his multi-disciplinary team are investigating the questions of how sustainable urban living can succeed and how European cities can be transformed into sustainable living environments.

The jury was particularly impressed by the innovative concept addressed in the real-world laboratory's approach and by its close involvement at a local level. As a result, the project is this year's recipient of the "Transformative Science" research prize. "The real-world laboratory in the Oststadt district is one of the most extensively developed real-world neighbourhood laboratories in Germany. In Karlsruhe, many innovative formats are setting an example for how fruitful the joint development of knowledge can be for the scientific community and stakeholders on the ground when it comes to future-proof urban development," says Professor Uwe Schneidewind, President of the Wuppertal Institute.

The official award presentation will begin at 2.30 p.m. on 16 January 2019 as part of the "Tage der Transformation" (Transformation Days) at the Schader Forum, Goethestraße 2, Darmstadt. With the "Tage der Transformation" in Darmstadt, the Schader Foundation has established a new format to address themes from transformative research and scientific work.

Real-world laboratory: "District Future – Urban Lab"

The urban lab is an approximately 130-year-old city district in Karlsruhe's Oststadt. The research team works closely with local people, civil society, policymakers, the council and other local stakeholders on the ground. By doing so, it links scientific expertise with local knowledge to create a collaborative experimental space. As part of the research and development project "District Future – Urban Lab", promising technological and social innovations conceived by and with KIT will be put into practice. Dr. Andreas Seebacher of Reallabor 131



At the lab, inhabitants add cards to an interactive participation tool with a map of Karlsruhe's Oststadt district. In this way, sustainability ideas or problems can be identified, located, visualized, and discussed. (Photo: Quartier Zukunft, KIT)

adds: "The range of topics extends from the transformation of the urban energy system to everyday climate-friendly behaviour and the slowing down of our way of life.

In 2017, the project was awarded the "Project Sustainability 2017" quality seal by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) and recognised as one of the country's four "transformational projects". The quality seal highlights social initiatives that are making a special contribution towards sustainable development.

The project team intends to invest 10,000 euros as start-up capital in the society to support the planned "Karlsruhe Transformation Centre for Sustainable Futures and Cultural Change" and thereby strengthen sustainability initiatives launched by civil society. The research team plans to use 7,500 euros to support visiting scientists from abroad who want to visit the District Future or to help refugees who have a connection to transformation research and would like to develop future prospects in this field. The remaining prize money will be set aside for the microfinancing of active partners, such as an initiative supporting neighbourly relations in the Oststadt district, wild urban bees or a platform for sustainable consumption at the local level.

More information: <http://www.quartierzukunft.de> (in German only)

About the “Transformative Science” Research Prize

The “Transformative Science” research prize acknowledges all forms of research that inspires society, promotes social change, and integrates civil society. Transdisciplinary research designs play an important role. The prize money of EUR 25,000 will be spent to support award winners in implementing project ideas in the field of transformative science. In addition to the prize money of EUR 25,000, the winning team receives a sculpture forged from the steel rails of the Wuppertal suspension railway built in 1898. The Wuppertal Institute awards the research prize funded by the Zempelin Foundation for the second time this year.

More information: <https://wupperinst.org/en/research/research-prize/>

About the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, the Environment, and Energy gGmbH

The Wuppertal Institute undertakes research and develops models, strategies and instruments for transitions to a sustainable development at local, national and international level. Sustainability research at the Wuppertal Institute focuses on the resources, climate and energy related challenges and their relation to economy and society. Special emphasis is put on analysing and stimulating innovations that decouple economic growth and wealth from natural resource use. Research focus are the transition processes towards a sustainable development. Based on scientific disciplinary findings, the research conducted towards this end combines its approaches to generate practical and actor-oriented solutions. Problems, solutions and networks are equally focused on global, national and regional/local levels.

Information: <https://wupperinst.org/en/>

About the Zempelin Foundation:

<https://www.deutsches-stiftungszentrum.de/> (in German only)

<https://www.stifterverband.org/english>

Being “The Research University in the Helmholtz Association,” KIT creates and imparts knowledge for the society and the environment. It is the objective to make significant contributions to the global challenges in the fields of energy, mobility and information. For this, about 9,300 employees cooperate in a broad range of disciplines in natural sciences, engineering sciences, economics, and the humanities and social sciences. KIT prepares its 25,500 students for responsible tasks in society, industry, and science by offering research-based study programs. Innovation efforts at KIT build a bridge between important scientific findings and their application for the benefit of society, economic prosperity, and the preservation of our natural basis of life.

This press release is available on the internet at
http://www.sek.kit.edu/english/press_office.php.

The photos in the best quality available to us may be downloaded under www.kit.edu or requested by mail to presse@kit.edu or phone +49 721 608-21105. The photos may be used in the context given above exclusively. More photos can be found on the website of the "Transformative Science" research prize at <https://wupperinst.org/forschung/forschungspreis/>.



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