

## Fostering sustainable and fair transformation together in Münsterland

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### Background

This participatory project explores how sustainable and fair transformation processes can be designed and supported. It is an interdisciplinary approach by researchers from landscape ecology, sociology and the arts together with citizens. The starting point for the joint research is the current institutional social-ecological renewal of the residency program for international artists known as: the 'Künstlerdorf' (Artists Village) located in Schöppingen, in the Münsterland Region in Northwest Germany. In this reframing process of the institution, the exploitation logic of the higher arts is questioned and a direct exchange with the local society is sought. For this transformation process through socially committed arts, the Künstlerdorf opens up so-called 'social spaces' in their own facilities and surrounding area, namely: the artist workshop hall, a community garden, and the 'living' library. These become places of learning and knowledge, experimental meeting places for different perspectives and realities of life, as well as forms of knowledge and professional disciplines. The University of Münster has been cooperating with the Künstlerdorf Schöppingen Foundation since the summer of 2022 through participatory accompanying research. On the one hand from landscape-ecological-ethnographic perspective through intensive field observation on the understanding of sustainability lived in the Künstlerdorf and on the introduced activities and guiding principles to fulfill the transformation goals [1]. On the other hand, as part of a social science bachelor thesis a field study and a social-ecological mapping of the Künstlerdorf were carried out as a living lab [2]. Following on from these initial explorations, the questions arose: What can the Künstlerdorf achieve as a social-ecologically oriented actor? How can citizens take part? This led to the successful application for the Citizen Science Award of the Foundation of the University of Münster and thus to the continuation of the research.

### Research and Teaching

The exploration and evaluation of the 'experimental setting' of the living lab was carried out by both interdisciplinary research and teaching. The latter consisted of a students' project called: Subtle Networks: The Künstlerdorf Schöppingen as transformative living lab'. Together, we explored on the following topics:

- Community building and rules of conduct for the institution inspired by the garden and the ethics and design principles of permaculture.
- Exploration of visible and invisible networking of the people from the Künstlerdorf and the citizens of Schöppingen through the water and their representation on water-connection-maps, inspired by the knowledge sharing proposed in the living library.
- Dialogs with citizens about their perception of the Künstlerdorf during a Vision Day and exchange on possible collaborations with the Künstlerdorf in a Discussion Forum.



'Living lab' Künstlerdorf Schöppingen as an experimental setting for the investigation of Community building through permaculture principles and through the visualization of the Networking through water, as well as for intensive exchange with citizens during the Vision Day and the Discussion Forum, and the teaching and research activities based on this. Photos: Cornelia Steinhäuser

### Methods

The interdisciplinary students' research project was mostly organized by themselves. At the same time, the interdisciplinary accompanying research goes on. The students' project begun with a tour around Schöppingen guided by a local citizen and accompanied by the university lecturers, as well as the artist Grashina Gabelmann, who had been fellow at the Künstlerdorf. The tour focused on different topics related with water. The next weeks, data collection methods and analyses included document studies, actor-network-analysis, questionnaires, narrative and expert interviews, participant observation as well group discussions. In collaboration with the participating artist we applied storytelling and deep mapping methods. Simultaneously to this intensive knowledge exchange about water and local actors, we co-organized events with citizens to explore their perspectives on the Künstlerdorf.

### Conclusion

The collaboration on questions of a successful, sustainable and fair social-ecological transformation led to a differentiated examination of one's own disciplinary approaches and provided inspiration for integrative thinking between art and science. As part of the students' research project, we experienced the difficulties and opportunities of interdisciplinary work and at the same time learned an unusual variety of perspectives, contents and methods. Different competencies were trained like creativity; decision making by consensus; open, exploratory approach in research; and, last but not least, a constant reflection on the research process as well as on the degree of participation in the design, coordination and implementation of activities. As a result we strengthened our skills for future inter- and transdisciplinary collaborative projects at the University of Münster and with the Künstlerdorf; and we initiated participatory scientific and artistic interventions in both institutions.

### Sources

- [1] Steinhäuser, Cornelia (2022): Begegnungen mit Mensch und Natur im Künstlerdorf Schöppingen: Socializing with people and nature at the Künstlerdorf. In Julia Haarmann (Ed.), Ecosystem Künstlerdorf (pp. 21-41). Stiftung Künstlerdorf Schöppingen.
- [2] Kreß, Jakob (2022): Das 'Künstlerdorf Schöppingen' als Reallabor: Erkundungen einer sozial-ökologischen Transformation im Kulturbetrieb (Bachelorarbeit)

Further information about the Foundation Künstlerdorf Schöppingen at: <https://stiftung-kuenstlerdorf.de>