

Post Growth City - the role of the Transition Town movement and urban planning

a case study in Bielefeld

post growth city, urban planning, transition town movement, Scenarios and models of a post-growth economy

Summary

A study concerning spatial structures that support the transition to post growth societies shows the need of cooperation between urban planning and citizen players. Concluding that post growth needs space and players. Space for local production of food and goods, local possibilities for repair and conversion and the support of social life and community. Players are needed in bottom up as well as top down approaches to support the transition. The observed group of Transition Town Bielefeld as a player of citizens follows the principles of a post growth society and plays an important role to kick off a civil movement. Their counterpart is the urban planning who is indispensable when it comes to the development of spatial structures. The collaboration of these players is of prime importance.

Assuming, that an economic system without the force of growth is an effective solution of many ecological problems and path to a sustainable development in the future, I want to present the role of the urban development regarding to a spatial and social transformation into a post growth society.

In the state of research the spatial dimension and the role of urban development got little attention, when it comes to their influence on the transformation to a post growth society. Therefore the presentation, based upon the results of my master's thesis, will prove which spatial structures will support the life in a post growth society. Most thoughts are based upon the post growth economy concept of Niko Paech (Paech 2009, Paech 2012).

Furthermore a single case study will show how Transition Town Bielefeld as a player of citizens pushes the transformation into a post growth society on the spatial and social level.

Also the perspective of civil players in urban planning is taken into account to highlight their approaches and their spheres of activity and to find interfaces between Transition Town Bielefeld and the civil players.

Post growth needs space

A post growth city needs spacious conditions to make new economies and lifestyles possible and attractive. The spatial structures should support decentralized economic cycles and shortened value chains. In terms of a resilient city agriculture should have a big

importance in the city and in its surrounding area. For example models like community supported agriculture can be useful to support regional agriculture-activities.

Besides space has to simplify subsistent lifestyles as a supplement to foreign supply and areas to grow one's own fruits and vegetables have to become mandatory in cities. Beyond that there is a need of infrastructures that give people the possibilities to extend the useful life of their goods themselves or by professional support. Spaces and infrastructures which enable people to use things in community are also an important component in a post growth society.

In relation to sufficient lifestyles urban space has to be less aligned with consuming activities. Furthermore it should impose a "spatial sufficiency", for example by reducing infrastructures whose use and operation depend on the availability of fossil energy sources.

In conclusion there are distinguished three basic functions that urban space has to assume for the transition to a post growth city:

Production. Many diverse spatial structures are needed to enable the food production in cities and their surroundings. These spatial structures should support professional farmers as well as citizens who want to grow food for their own needs and access to urban agriculture in all its varieties should be made easy. In addition the city of a post growth society needs areas that support and enable the local production of goods and close regional value chains. Besides local craft businesses infrastructures should be supported, that enable citizens to develop and produce products themselves.

Repair and conversion. Spaces and infrastructures that enable the repair and conversion of goods are essential parts of a post growth economy. This means public workshops and spaces of non monetary trade- and service-connections like swap and give-away shops or repair-cafes.

Support of community and inner change. In addition there is a need for spaces that support community use of facilities like community gardens or lend shops, but also protected spaces that give people the possibilities to talk and discuss with each other, cherish their relationships or to co-create processes in their city. The institutional inclusion of these spaces may be organized in many different ways such as citizen-cafes, reskilling institutions or centres of culture.

Post growth needs players

By means of the case study in Bielefeld I found out that Transition Town Bielefeld is a social movement that significantly supports the transition to a post growth society. For example it established community gardens, offers regular repair cafés and supports post-fossil mobility. Furthermore it completes the transformation to a post growth society with one further aspect: In their special "trainings for transition" they discuss the inner change as an emotional requirement for external change.

Urban planning in Bielefeld has no explicit guiding principles that advance a post growth society. Nevertheless their objectives are not completely contradictory to the post growth concept. They also plan urban gardens and strengthen economic structures on a small scale.

Furthermore possible connections for citizen players were identified, which were actually not exploited to their full potential by Transition Town Bielefeld, because they were not enough acquainted with them. There is a need of far more transparency concerning the possibilities of cooperation between citizen players and urban administration.