

Vhs to the power of 3 - developing the qualities of a third place in the adult education centre Förde-vhs.

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The pilot project in Kiel is dedicated to developing the adult education centre, Förde-vhs, into an open and inclusive community space. This initiative focuses on creating areas where people can gather, socialize, and build connections without the influence of commercialization. We believe this in turn will foster cultural, educational, and social engagement among all citizens. Through this pilot project, the City of Kiel aims to enhance the appeal of its educational offers and make the institution more visible, open, and adaptable to the diverse needs of its users.

WHY | Purpose

The aim is to rethink public services and make the adult education centre more attractive and accessible to different target groups. The pilot, located in a heterogeneous neighbourhood, is characterised by a diverse building structure and population structure with a high number of single-person households. The pluralisation of society is visible here in all its facets. It is therefore important to create a space for interaction and education that is inviting and empowering for all.

Creating these spaces can empower the public by creating a non-commercial space that is easily accessible to all citizens and an open space for experimenting with new formats of participation and education. As an intangible benefit, education has the potential to create lasting impacts on citizens' lives.

For public services, this pilot project is a transformative opportunity to unite across departments, fostering collaboration and discovering innovative perspectives.

HOW | Field of Action

- Research by students of the geography department at the University of Kiel (CAU) on the current situation of the adult education centre and its integration into the neighbourhood, SWOT Analysis
- Identification of key topics to work on: visibility, accessibility, usability and neighbourhood involvement.
- Development of first measures based on research results, analysis as well the qualities of third places as a concept to foster community building
- *Kozy kitchen* – transformation of an existing tea kitchen into a tiny example of a third place, testing different forms of involvement and co-creation
- *Tasty* – weekly community lunches in the tea kitchen in the form of a bring-and-share buffet, trust-building activity, opening room for conversation for further action
- *Kozy corridors* – furnishing the corridors of the adult education centre with tables & chairs to improve quality of stay for course participants & visitors

WHO | Actors

- Employees of the city administration, e.g. adult education centre and the department of social services
- Geography department of the Christian-Albrechts-University Kiel
- Course participants and visitors of the adult education centre
- Citizens from the neighbourhood and beyond
- Civil society organisations and independent social services.

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Lessons learned

- Conversations between actors reveals history and resistances. It creates fertile ground for further collaboration.
- Integrate resistances into solutions.
- Less is more: avoid overwhelming participatory spaces.
- Building trust should come first.
- Presence and availability is key: open-up the space and see what comes, make it attractive to come by offering coffee, food and a welcoming and attractive atmosphere
- Site-specific: create a concrete feeling of liveability in a certain place (e.g. a tea kitchen).
- Do not present ready-made solutions: leave space for ideas, alterations and propositions of the users – convey an authentic feeling to users that all ideas are welcome. They create ownership.
- Humour breaks barriers.
- Inspire to get active: people want to contribute and have ownership.

Potential follow up activities

S Parking Lot – developing & testing different measures to improve the quality of stay in the outdoor areas of the adult education centre

Vhs is colourful – painting the multifunctional enclosure in front of the building with participants; collaboration with art department

Courtyard Festival – celebrating the centres diverse visitors by co-creating a festivity in the courtyard of the centre.

Rooms for X – testing alternative room uses for externals.

Contact

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"Isolation is growing in our society. However, we can only tackle the challenges of daily life and multiple crises if we unite and support one another. That's why it's crucial, now more than ever, to create inclusive spaces where we can gather and connect with each other." - Anna Emil –City of Kiel