

Transkript Podcast Stadtbegrünung

<p><b>Anja Stedeler</b></p>	<p>Good morning, Mr. Bohne, permanently rising temperatures, increasing heat, extreme weather events. Climate change is in full swing and doesn't stop at cities. Today, we would like to talk about the effects climate change has on cities. How does the ecosystem of a city change? We are going to focus on the changing plant population in the cities. You are an expert in this field. You are a specialist in plant life, author of guidebooks on plants and gardening, and a consultant on urban gardening as well as plant encounters and sustainable gardening. Thank you so much for being our interlocutor today! Let's start with our first question: How does climate change affect the flora and the fauna, that is the plants and the animals, in our cities?</p>
<p><b>Burkhard Bohne</b></p>	<p>We can observe different transformations. On the one hand, it is getting warmer. On the other, it is becoming dryer. This leads to numerous periods of draughts. In the cities, this means some plants must withdraw while others become stronger. Overall, diversity decreases. Mediterranean plants or plants that need a Mediterranean environment are on the rise. Different plants in turn feed different insects. And where there are no plants, there are no insects. And where there are no insects, there are no birds. This is a downward spiral, a race to the bottom.</p>
<p>A</p>	<p>In your opinion, which of these effects are the most dangerous?</p>
<p>B</p>	<p>The most dangerous effect is the declining biodiversity, also leading to decreasing feed for insects. And heat increases the less plants there are. In consequence, the climate becomes incompatible for human beings.</p>
<p>A</p>	<p>Who is the main origin of this climate damage?</p>
<p>B</p>	<p>Well, in the end, it is the human being. But in different fields. Climate damage we notice in the city was not caused in the city, that must be pointed out. Industrial activity pollutes the air, traffic routeing is unfortunate. Land consumption is a dominant issue. Also industrialized farming that sets limits to biodiversity. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as a matter course. All these are origins of climate damage. We notice this in the cities especially because of the soil sealing and concrete buildings that absorb the heat and very little air exchange and air pollution at the same time.</p>
<p>A</p>	<p>Who pays the price, both monetary and non-monetary for these climate damages?</p>
<p>B</p>	<p>Let's start with the non-monetary price. This is paid by people who already are under the weather. People suffering respiratory problems and cardiac conditions, elderly people, they are affected directly since they experience an entirely different quality of life, a worse one, mind. The monetary price will sooner or later be paid by all of us. Climate change is a continuing process. Eventually, we will have a water problem, and a lack of resources or raw materials. The longer we do not act, the higher the price will be.</p>
<p>A</p>	<p>Do you have a proposal for solution to avoid or to at least ease climate damage in the cities?</p>

B	Yes, there is a number of proposals. First, cities shouldn't consist of only concrete and tar. Fortunately, there already is a movement in this direction. Plants must permeate the cities. We need to develop a different approach and an according mindset. What we can do at once without changing procedure elaborately is to vegetate balconies, to establish common green areas, to uncover soil, to vegetate roofs and building faces where possible. As immediate measures, this would lower the temperature, increase air humidity, and air cleanliness.
A	What would a strategy for cities look like?
B	We must count in that climate change can be worked against. This starts when planning a city. Adequate green areas between the buildings, vegetated in a more sensible way than lawns or parking spaces. Biodiversity must be included from the beginning. There must be common areas where wild plants and crops can thrive, cool the air, feed insects, and improve quality of life. All this must be counted in right from the beginning.
A	Who in your opinion is responsible for implementing this strategy?
B	We all secretly wish for the property developers to become active in this sense. There always are rules and recommendations, but I am convinced it is the policy makers who are responsible. Regulations must be changed in a positive way. There are certain regulations for investing into the social housing schemes for example. If agricultural crop land must give way to a building area, we need a specific package of measures, for example vegetated roofs, faces, maybe compulsory cultivation of crops on balconies. And an obligation to farm the areas between the houses intensively. Intensively not in the sense of monetary yield but in the sense of biodiversity.
A	Which economic policy measures do you think are necessary for facilitating a sustainable development of our city?
B	On the one hand, we need guidelines and specifications. And on the other, it needs financial aid. It will cost money. The price cannot be imposed on investors alone, who then will pass it on to buyers and tenants. There must be grants. To facilitate the development, it needs subsidies and direct means of conveyance. Cost of change needs to be allegorized. Moreover, awareness raising must be addressed. We need to make room in education for broaching the issue of sustainable development.
A	What are the costs to society if either we do or do not act?
B	If we act as necessary, we would have to dedicate financial grants and allow subsidies accordingly. Sustainable development is not for free. If we do not act, there would be immense costs in the future. Cities would not be habitable for weak or sickly human beings. There would be problems with the quality of air and water. The price would be a multiple of what we would have to pay if we invested today.
A	In your opinion, Mr Bohne, what does the city look like in 20 years?
B	I am an occupational optimist. Cities will be wonderfully green, building faces will be vegetated, there will be fruit orchards on the rooftops. There will be no individual traffic between buildings, but kitchen gardens. The air will be clean, and there will be water to cool the air. Most utopian: a garden of trees in which there are buildings.

A	If we planned a school trip into a sustainable city or a sustainable urban district, where would we go?
B	<p>Sustainable cities are not common, but the city of Andernach for example has introduced the concept of the Edible City. All over the city, in parks as well as in front gardens, there are fruit trees, both berries and pome fruit. In parks there are kitchen gardens as well and visitors help themselves and nibble. Where food is grown there also is space for insects, so this is an example for a forerunner of a sustainable city. A sustainable district can be found in Berlin. A Berlin garden project called Prinzessinnengarten has recently moved to Neukölln, a moloch of a city district. It is the most densely populated district of Berlin. The garden project has implemented urban gardening on a former cemetery. They have created an oasis, an oasis with clean air for flora and fauna, and for the human beings who live there. This project is worth a visit!</p>
A	<p>Mr. Bohne, all this has been a lot of very interesting information. You have shown us corelations and effects and possible solutions, including a tip for a school trip. We have to think this through to grasp the situation in our cities to prevent the consequences. As city inhabitants we must become active ourselves, but we also have to demand political action of the people responsible.</p> <p>Thank you very much, Mr. Bohne, for this inspiring conversation!</p>