„THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE”

Model of the “Sustainable University” in 2030

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www.hoch-n.org
Abstract

Shared Mental Models, Design Thinking and Serious Play:
Using Lego® for Envisioning a Sustainable Future (I & II)

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Research on team processes and performance shows that shared mental models play an important role for effectiveness and achievement (Mathieu et al., 2000). Design Thinking (Kelley, 2006; Brenner & Uebernickel, 2016) as well as Serious Play (Schrage, 2000) are recent trends not only in business organizations but also in educational settings to generate new insights and perspectives.

What if we use these findings, methods and tools for purposes such as envisioning a sustainable future? What if we (re)activate playful mindsets and collaboration techniques for creating shared models of how organizations dedicated to sustainable development would look and feel like? What if we can facilitate sustainability-oriented organizational development by applying innovation modes (cf. Schmitt & Palm, 2017)?

In this workshop, first a short introduction into the above mentioned theoretical frameworks is given; moreover, Lego Serious Play® (LSP) is proposed as one example tool for generating experiential knowledge, to develop new shared views and to discover hidden opportunities within transformational processes (cf. Dornaus et al., 2015): The practical section of this workshop offers the occasion to get familiar with basic LSP related to sustainable development challenges and visions. It shows one way of how inter- and transdisciplinary topics are approached within the HOCHN project, a research collaboration on fostering sustainable development at Higher Education Institutions, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF; www.hoch-n.org). A joint discussion on the models, team processes and method per se will be the closing section of this workshop.

Workshops I and II will be structured alike and will take into consideration for participants’ interests and expectations; procedures and example topics are flexible and will depend on the needs of the participants.

Literature:

Goal

Goal of the workshop is to introduce LEGO-Serious-Play (LSP)-method and create shared visions of Higher Education Institutions in 2030 and beyond. Small groups of participants have the challenge to build a model of a sustainable university. Each group focused on one specific field of action (research, teaching, operations, governance).

Structure

- Introduction of the theoretical background of the LSP-method
- Playful introduction into the method with a short building exercise (skill-building)
- Introduction of the leading question, individual models to represent the answers
- Building of a shared group model for the university of the future with focus on one of the HOCHN-fields of action

Results

Results sum up the experience of 1 ½ hours with the LSP-method. After building individual models the participants created their shared models for the fields of operations, education, research, and governance and presented the shared models to the other groups.

Video and background information

Watch the video of the LSP workshop and read more background information about the event:
http://uhh.de/knu-hsds-lego
**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE**

Lead question: Which element do you consider as important for a university in 2030?

How would a model of a “Sustainable University look like”

Field of action: TEACHING

- Colourful curriculum
- The old curriculum (in the past); not forgotten and still valued, but overcome
- Each one is carrying a bundle of sustainability-related skills
- New technology (fuelled by renewable energy)
- Agile / mobile structures
- Students treated and seen as equal
- Strong framework element
- Awareness in the center of all teaching
Field of action: TEACHING

Main elements:

- Mobility / agility
- Colorful / diverse education
"THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE"

Lead question: Which element do you consider as important for a university in 2030?

How would a model of a "Sustainable University look like”

Field of action: GOVERNANCE

- Connection to society and other people and professions
- Inclusion of the voice of rightsholder who cannot speak for themselves (animals, future generations etc.)
- All stakeholders in the university working / deciding together
- Sustainability as connecting tissue between stakeholders
- Wise leadership (through a person (e.g. president), council or other institution)
- Agreeable atmosphere
- Different faculties: building the foundation, but connected
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Field of action: GOVERNANCE

Main element: connection
- Between stakeholders
- Between faculties
- In decision making processes
Lead question: Which element do you consider as important for a university in 2030?

How would a model of a “Sustainable University look like”

Field of action: OPERATIONS

- Using renewable energy sources
- Transparency of processes
- Turtle: Conscious “slowing down” and mindfulness within the system towards processes
- „Upcycling“ of the streams of wares, resources and waste
- People are connected to each other and the environment
Field of action: **OPERATIONS**

Main element: processes, visualized as streams

- Idea of upcycling resource-flows ("bringing life to the water")
- Conscious slowing down of processes (symbolized by the turtle)
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Lead question: Which element do you consider as important for a university in 2030?

How would a model of a “Sustainable University look like”

Field of action: RESEARCH

- (bio) diversity as a treasure
- Working together to reach a higher goal of understanding
- Funding for all research sectors
- Bridging the gap to other sectors of society
- Different sectors of research (engineering, eco-systems, renewable energy etc.)
- Happiness
Lego Serious Play Workshop at 1st Hamburg Sustainable Development Summit 2017

Field of action: RESEARCH

Main element:
Diversity of research projects and topics
- Working together
- Funding of all sectors
„THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE“ – SYNOPSIS

Lead question: Which elements do you consider to be important for a university in 2030? How would a model of a “Sustainable University” look like?

The results of the individual models from the various fields of action were clustered according to recurring common elements. All of the referred models share at least the following elements:

**Transfer:**
Bridges to society and especially stakeholders

**Interchange:**
Teamwork and participation for interconnectivity and equality

**Surroundings:**
Colorful feel-good atmosphere, happiness

**Campus:**
High-tech but at the same time nature-oriented infrastructure and technology