

The Concepts of Urban Sustainable Development and Smart Cities: In the Understanding of Academia and the European Union

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Abstract : When considering the future city one repeatedly comes across two sometimes sparsely differentiated terms: Sustainable and smart. 'A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth', this is how the European Commission named its current growth strategy. Thus, Europe should become smarter and more sustainable. Both, the smart and the sustainable city represent a positive vision of urban development as well as a subject area for contemporary and future urban policies. However, more clarity on what is actually behind these terminologies is required. The paper analyses how the terms are defined academically and how this academic understanding is represented in the funding mechanisms of European urban policies. The theoretical framework is mainly based on sources such as journal articles and policy reports. It became clear that despite some similarities, such as the broad field of work or the tendency to operationalize the terms by defining sub-categories, both ideas are distinctly different in terms of the development history, the main driving forces behind and the theoretical scope. Moreover, the significantly more comprehensively defined term sustainability has found its way into the centre of European regional funding policies. On the contrary, the smart city vision still lacks terminological and content-related clarity and as a consequence, the corresponding European funding landscape is more small-scaled and less customized.

Keywords : European spatial policy, European union, smart city, urban sustainable development

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