

SUSTAIN IT!

Initiative for Sustainability + Climate Protection

Abstract

We employ dialogue and participative projects to engage our stakeholders across the campus. Our aim is to create inter- and transdisciplinary exchange for a more sustainable and future proof university. This inclusive approach is reflected in our team, a diverse mix of students and university employees. We also maintain a city-wide network and connect change agents from across society with our partners in academia. Together, we organize conferences, seminars, podium discussions, workshops, and hands-on activities in which everyone can participate.

Objectives

- inspire and encourage sustainable lifestyle choices
- demonstrate sustainable courses of action in research, education, and administration
- build bridges between stakeholders from inside and outside the university
- promote the inter- and transdisciplinary discourse on sustainability
- develop innovative learning, teaching, and event formats

Key Challenges

- translating the complexity of sustainability into projects appropriate for our target groups
- turning inter- and transdisciplinary theories into hands-on activities
- offering low-threshold and attractive projects
- integrating participative methods into the existing teaching framework
- member commitment and turnover subject to intense workloads, exchange programmes, graduation, or job changes

Lessons Learnt

- Think out of the box!
- Sustainability builds bridges which reduces bureaucratic barriers.
- Threshold for support and participation lowered by good causes.
- Transformations happen step by step. Persistence is rewarded.
- Projects can motivate and enable people to reflect and reconsider their habits.
- Every project generates a new network of ideas and supporters.
- The magic lies in applying the right offers at the right time and creating synergy-effects.

Success Factors

- dedicated and diverse team
- a coordinator who keeps it all together
- flat structures, inclusiveness, and spreading of responsibilities
- support and funding from the executive board and access to resources
- staff with leverage at university level
- recognition (prizes)
- diversity through maintaining an inter- and transdisciplinary network
- flexible self-conception of the initiative
- steady influx of new members and collaboration partners

One Time Projects



Multiday events with a 'market of possibilities' addressing sustainability and climate protection to foster participation through dialog, art, and activities in 2011 and 2012. 2,000 active participants from across the campus interacted with 35 regional partners.



Planting 13,500 early blooming flower bulbs on campus to raise awareness for wild bees in a hands-on activity. Over the course of two days, around 200 people participated, including students, employees, and local residents.



Seed Balls to Go was a one day activity where passers-by on campus could spend a few minutes during their lunch break to make seed balls from a mix of clay, soil, water, and wildflower seeds.

Workshops & Courses



During our Green Meetings seminar (2014 – 15), 25 students and experts from the university, local initiatives, and businesses explored the facets of sustainable event management. With input from the experts, students prepared building blocks for a green meetings guide, customized for Freie Universität Berlin, which we're planning to finalize in collaboration with the university administration.



Project course (2013 – 14): "From Knowledge to Action – the social-ecological transformation during times of multiple crises." The aim was to promote creative capacities in education. Over the course of two semesters, 22 students engaged in an inter- and transdisciplinary setting, using methods like Design Thinking and World Café, and launched five independent projects in cooperation with external stakeholders.



Public lecture series "From Knowledge to Transformation – sustainability as a challenge for university and society in 2013." Through 13 lectures and a podium discussion, we connected sustainability research and projects at the university and made them visible to 35 – 80 people per session. Participants included administrative employees, students, research employees, and interested parties from the public.

Longterm Projects



The project UniGardening was initiated in-cooperation with project workshops of Technische Universität Berlin and the Botanical Garden in 2013. The aim is to demonstrate the possibilities of sustainable agriculture and self-supply within a transdisciplinary team, as well as to create a green teaching and-meeting place.



Collaboration with the sustainability and energy unit to co-create the university's sustainability mission statement and thus contributing to alma mater's longterm sustainable development.

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