

Introducing RTG 2725 Urban future-making



Julia Sievert

Born and raised in Seattle, WA (USA), Julia Sievert moved eastward to study Environmental Studies (B.A.) at Knox College in Galesburg, IL (USA) while engaging in environmental education and conservation work across the United States and in Germany. Shifting her focus away from forests and prairie toward urban areas, she completed her master's degree in Resource Efficiency in Architecture and Planning (M.Sc.) at the HafenCity University Hamburg (HCU). For her thesis, she investigated the urban-scale material impacts of residential rooftop additions to apartment buildings in Hamburg, Germany. In 2018, she joined the Grasbrook CityScope project (City Science Lab/Digital City Science at the HCU) as a researcher, working together with software developers, multimedia designers, and urban planners to develop new digital tools for neighborhood scale urban development. From a sustainable systems lens, the tools merge the tangible and the virtual to enable urban planners to interact with a neighborhood-scale design in an iterative design process and run simulations of traffic noise, stormwater, microclimate, and pedestrian flows.

Taking Hamburg apartment buildings and low-carbon, active mobility as a point of departure, her doctoral research focuses on a specific construction type — residential bike parking — in a bottom-up investigation of how key stakeholders decide what, where, and how to build in dense urban neighborhoods. As more cities around the world declare themselves bike-friendly cities, they grapple with the issue of transforming all aspects of their mobility systems, from extending and improving the quality of the network of cycling paths (fast, secure routes), to developing digital platforms to support multi-modality and new mobility (improving usability), to transforming urban space at origins and destinations (e.g. bike parking). Some spaces (e.g. new construction and public space) can be easier to activate than others (e.g. already built-up private property), requiring the application of a diverse set of policy instruments and creative approaches to collaboration. Paired with this are the seemingly ever evolving ideas about what parking infrastructure will be needed in the future — thinking beyond bicycles for adult commuters.

With her research, she hopes to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about on-the-ground transformation processes involved in the adaptation of existing urban areas more broadly, while bringing attention to the rich planning practices at play in Hamburg, Germany through the example of a diverse set of stakeholders engaging in the mindful adaptation of their existing urban fabric to support a low-carbon mobility future.