Sustainability certification systems as guidelines for early-phase urban design processes -
DTU Orbit (05/12/2018)

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The German Sustainable Building Council (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Nachhaltiges Bauen or DGNB) has one of the most
comprehensive sustainability certification systems for urban districts (UD). Their explicit aim is that the system should
impact the very earliest design decisions. The Technical University of Denmark has tested the DGNB-UD system in two
experimental design projects for similar locations to find out how it can be used in the early-phase design process. This
paper describes these two independent design processes, compares them and discusses their general features.

We found that DGNB-UD addresses a broad sustainable focus and can be used as a tool for setting sustainability goals
from the very first design steps. The system tends to promote multifunctional compromise solutions that meet several
criteria at the same time. Using the DGNB-UD certification system in the early design phases therefore does have some
effect on the urban design in terms of a bias towards certain design traits.

General information
State: Published
Organisations: Department of Civil Engineering, Section for Building Design
Contributors: Jensen, L. B., Bjerre, L., Mansfelt, L.
Number of pages: 14
Pages: 81-94
Publication date: 2016
Peer-reviewed: Yes

Publication information
Journal: Journal of Green Building
ISSN (Print): 1552-6100
Ratings:
BFI (2018): BFI-level 1
Web of Science (2018): Indexed yes
BFI (2017): BFI-level 1
Scopus rating (2017): CiteScore 0.55 SJR 0.23 SNIP 0.359
Web of Science (2017): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2016): CiteScore 0.33 SJR 0.2 SNIP 0.348
Web of Science (2016): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2015): CiteScore 0.34 SJR 0.22 SNIP 0.461
Scopus rating (2014): CiteScore 0.43 SJR 0.271 SNIP 0.298
Scopus rating (2013): CiteScore 0.44 SJR 0.285 SNIP 0.467
ISI indexed (2013): ISI indexed no
Scopus rating (2012): CiteScore 0.3 SJR 0.18 SNIP 0.583
ISI indexed (2012): ISI indexed no
Scopus rating (2011): CiteScore 0.19 SJR 0.17 SNIP 0.268
ISI indexed (2011): ISI indexed no
Scopus rating (2010): SJR 0.199 SNIP 0.248
Scopus rating (2009): SJR 0.159 SNIP 0.175
Scopus rating (2008): SJR 0.146 SNIP 0.09
Scopus rating (2007): SJR 0.196 SNIP 0.009
Original language: English
Electronic versions:
Journal_of_Green_Building_with_names.pdf
DOIs:
10.3992/jgb.11.3.81.1
Source: PublicationPreSubmission
Source-ID: 119061831
Research output: Research - peer-review › Journal article – Annual report year: 2016