

Monitoring Impact, Defining References

Handout 2 Synergy Workshop 7

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BMBF funding priority

» Sustainable Development of Urban Regions« (SURE)

Implementing research for sustainability and resilience – that is the core task of the SURE funding priority. Within the framework of the BMBF the SURE funding priority, ten collaborative projects (SURE projects) develop locally implementable solution strategies for the sustainable use of resources and an improved quality of life in urban regions in China and Southeast Asia. The development and testing of concepts for a sustainable transformation of fast-growing urban regions are thereby in the focus.

The concepts lead both to the strengthening of ecological factors and to greater resilience in face of natural disasters and other consequences of climate change. The permanent implementation of solutions on site and their transferability to other urban regions in Southeast Asia and China are particularly important concerns of the SURE projects.

SURE Synergy Workshop 7

The SURE Synergy Workshop 7 was held with the goal to introduce, explore and reflect on the SURE Reference Picture and to prepare for project-specific discussion in Peer To Peer meetings. To get to know more about the state of the art in impact monitoring and evaluation a presentation by Dr. Oskar Marg from the SynVer*Z project was part of the program.

The SURE funding priority strives to be transdisciplinary and action-oriented, thereby preparing and initiating change through implementation. The SURE projects consist of transdisciplinary consortia and all follow specific research questions. Using a questionnaire the SURE projects have been asked before the workshop to reflect on their own intended impact and define references while achieving progress towards impact. The synthesis of the responses led to a preliminary Reference Picture for the SURE funding priority.



1 Knowledge & Background: How to observe progress towards impact?

1.1 The Complexity & Approach

The SURE funding priority and the ten collaborative projects (SURE projects) are exemplary for a genuinely actor-oriented and transdisciplinary research approach. Here, not only researchers from different (scientific) disciplines, but also additional practitioners work jointly in the research process, either as a member of the project team or as external stakeholders, which is an essential characteristic in the differentiation from transdisciplinary to interdisciplinary research¹ (see figure 1) (Defila and De Giulio 2018a: 10–11).

Following Eckhart et al., in transdisciplinary research contexts, one task of accompanying research – as it is the *SURE Facilitation & Synthesis Research Project* – lies in providing a framework of reference in order to secure and to verify findings (Eckhart et al. 2018: 118f).

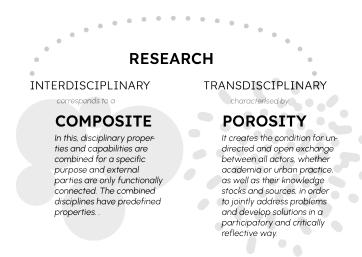


Figure 1: Inter- and transdisciplinary research

Facing the complexity not only of transdisciplinary research but also of a diverse environment of topics in the context of the SURE funding priority and the complex issue of sustainable development of urban regions, the importance of establishing such a framework, which allows the observation of progress towards impact, becomes evident.

Due to this complexity, an assessment in the sense of evaluation, executed by external advisors that carry out an independent examination of the impact, can't be and is not a task and subject of the SURE synthesis research. Especially, in the context of transdisciplinary research, the

Sustainable Development of Urban Regions

¹ Specifications on issues of trans- and interdisciplinarity, including in the context of the SURE funding priority, are provided in the article pnd rethinking planning, link can be found in the Further Reading section of this handout.



approach must rather be about an *impact-oriented monitoring*, which pursues the goal of constantly qualifying the interventions, becoming aware of changes, analysing their causes, and initiating internal as well as ongoing reflection and learning processes, in order to strengthen intended impacts and be able to react to unexpected impacts on short notice (Döring and Bortz 2016: 979; UN-Habitat 2018: 4; VENRO 2010: 5–6; VENRO 2002: 34, 40–45, 50–55). The overarching goal of this impact-oriented monitoring is to show the impact achieved in the planning as well as implementation process of the different funding phases within the SURE funding priority and to open up the possibility of intervening at an early stage to lead to process quality.

1.2 The SURE Framework

Following this approach, the goal of the SURE synthesis research is to make the impact of the individual SURE projects and of the SURE funding priority visible. The SURE Framework therefore supports the individual projects in monitoring, identifying and optimizing their self-set impact goals (references) and enables reflection on the impact process. At the same time, the SURE Framework creates the preconditions for highlighting the holistic impact of the SURE funding priority.

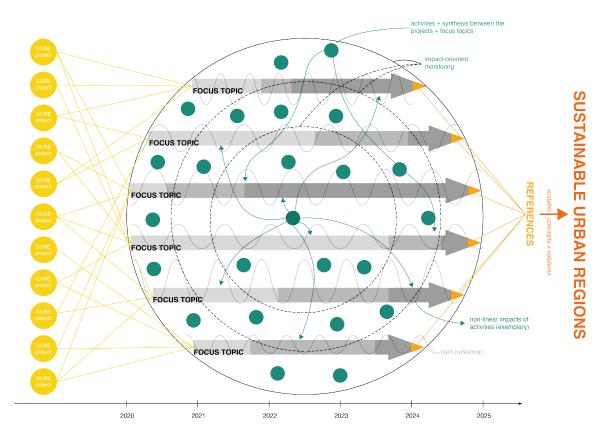


Figure 2: SURE Framework

The SURE projects work visibly trough outputs on the six focus topics (*Ecosystem Services and Natural Solutions; Risk Management and Risk Reduction; Resource Efficiency and Mitigation; Sustainable Behaviour and Practices; Urban-Rural Nexus; Integrated Planning and*



Development) contributing to the achievement of the self-set references. The impact of the individual focus topics increases over the course of the funding period and will be strengthened by exchange and cooperation between the SURE projects and by content synergies (see figure 2).

The impact-oriented monitoring, which is part of the SURE Framework requires both criteria (references) and a culture (reflection). In the context of impact-oriented monitoring, the aim is to highlight the actual references and to initiate a reflection on one's own interventions and actions in order to archive the references in the best possible way (see figure 3).

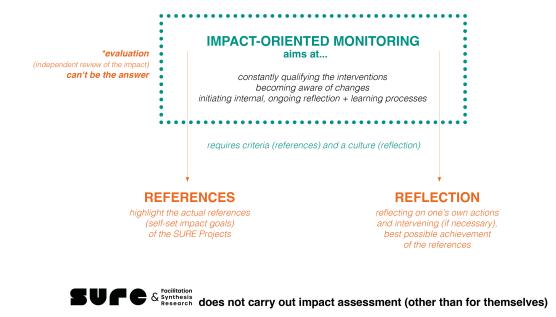


Figure 3: Impact-oriented monitoring, references & reflection

Report: SURE Synergy Workshop 7

2.1 Intentions and Process

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The intentions of *SURE Synergy Workshop 7 – Monitoring Impact, Defining References,* held on 27 October 2022 were to elaborate on impact-oriented monitoring, to introduce the *SURE Reference Picture* of the funding priority and to start a collaborative process.

The SURE Synergy Workshop 7 was related to work package 3 of the SURE Facilitation & Synthesis Research Project. A key objective of this work package is to ensure the impact beyond the projects and to support reflection and self-reflection to observe progress of projects and the SURE funding priority towards impact.



The first part of the SURE Synergy Workshop 7 consisted of a keynote with the title: Social effects of transdisciplinary urban research. Findings from the accompanying research project Syn-Ver*Z held by Dr. Oskar Marg, Institute for Social-Ecological Research, Germany. In the second part of the workshop Anika Slawski from the SURE Facilitation & Synthesis Research Team introduced the approach of the preliminary SURE Reference Picture being part of the impact-oriented monitoring bringing the architecture of the SURE Framework into action. The different steps towards the preliminary SURE Reference Picture have been explained before the participants explored the SURE Reference Picture on a Miro board and afterwards discussed it in break-out sessions.

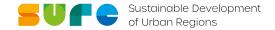
2.2 Contribution

2.2.1 Dr. Oskar Marg, Social effects of transdisciplinary urban research. Findings from the accompanying research project SynVer*Z

SynVer*Z arranges networking and information sharing between projects in the BMBF's flagship initiative City of the Future (Zukunftsstadt) and its Sustainable Transformation of Urban Areas funding programme. Networking and knowledge sharing provide the basis for synthesizing the approaches being outlined in these projects (SynVer*Z (Ebs.)).

SynVer*Z also promotes the exchange of information between individual BMBF funding programmes and seeks to establish contact with comparable research activities taking place in Europe and beyond. Within the Synergy Workshop 7, Dr. Oskar Marg outlined in his presentation the impact research, which SynVer*Z conducted for the 50 research projects in Germany. He concluded his speech with key findings for important aspects for the generation of impact in transdisciplinary projects as well as remarks on why a quantitative measurement of impact is difficult in this context. He stated that one strength of the transdisciplinary real-world-laboratory approaches of Zukunftsstadt projects is that they take up topics and dynamics locally and in a participatory way. That leads to a strong local and temporal embedment what strengthens the impact potential of the projects. But the challenge is that quantitative measurements of societal impacts created by the projects or the entire funding initiatives are difficult to observe. One reason is that the topics of the Zukunftsstadt projects are diverse and the possibilities for comparison based on core indicators are thus limited. At the same time, the projects want to achieve impact in the real world – however the capturing of temporally and spatially delayed effects and the associated causality assumptions are difficult as well. In addition, the projects aim to achieve impacts where they are socially relevant, but many of these impacts are difficult to measure.

Therefore, SynVer*Z conducts a qualitative impact analysis that focuses on approaches to foster impact potentials and on the development of impact analysis. Dr. Oskar Marg stated, that the ultimate goal of SynVer*Z is not a classification of projects (good or not good). Therefore, the term evaluation can be misleading because the task is rather to support the projects.



2.3 The SURE Reference Picture

The SURE Reference Picture aims at presenting an all-acompassing picture of all the references of the funding priority, thereby the references are an integral part of the SURE Framework (see figure 4). Every SURE focus topic includes references, which are targeted or in other words, references are the impact goals, which were set for every focus topic and by the SURE projects themselves. One example of a reference is achieving greater urban resilience. Reaching the references of every focus topic contributes to reaching the overarching impact goal of the SURE funding priority: the development of sustainable urban regions.

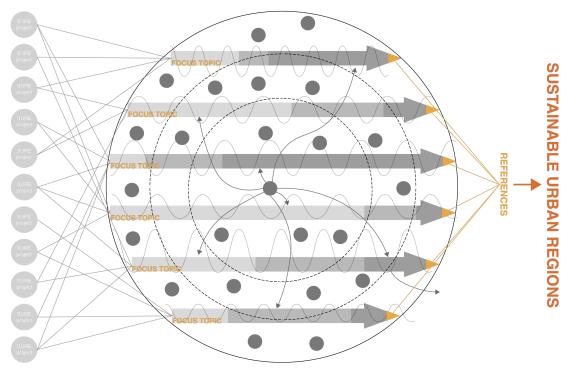


Figure 4: SURE Framework, focus references



2.3.1 Methods and Development

The development process of the Reference Picture includes 5 steps: Questioning (Step 1), Coding (Step 2), Clustering (Step 3), Organizing (Step 4), Condensing (Step 5)

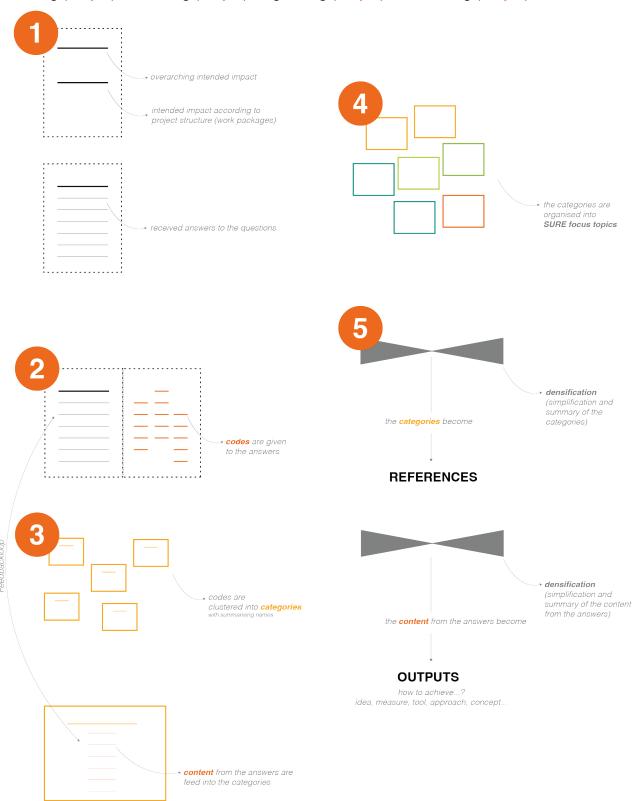


Figure 5: Development process of the SURE Reference Picture



The development of the references follows the scheme: ...in order to achieve a positive change within the focus topic, the following references are targeted (see figure 5).

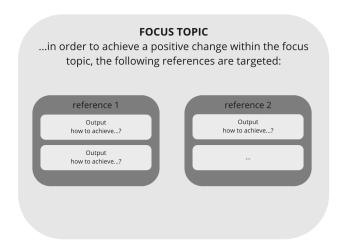


Figure 6: Scheme: Focus Topics, References & Outputs

Outputs are illustrated in the SURE Reference Picture as well - they *help* to reach the respective reference. Because of different types of outputs, a gradient of the outputs, which means a classification of the different outputs from *intention to action* was added (see figure 7).

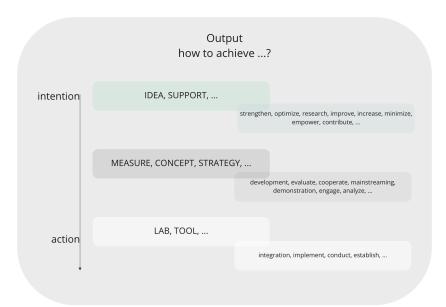


Figure 7: Output-gradient from intention to action



2.3.2 Focus Topics, References and Outputs

Following the outlined scheme, the Reference Picture of the SURE funding priority then emerges; it includes the six SURE Focus Topics with the references and the three output levels.

Example: Within the focus topic *Integrated Planning & Development* an increased *Urban Resilience* is targeted as a reference (see figure 8).

This is to be achieved through the following outputs:

- strengthening the resilience of the city to environmental changes (intention level)
- the development of recommendations and measures for climate change adaptation (inbetween level)
- the integration of climate change concerns into the existing legislative and policy frameworks (action level)

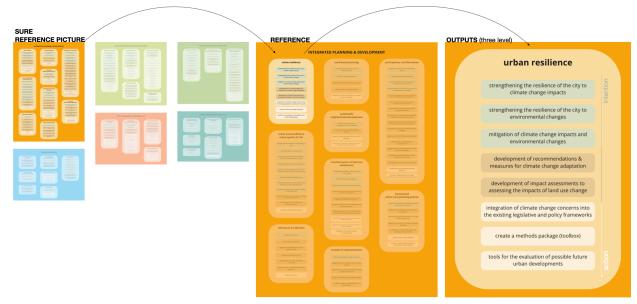


Figure 8: Example Reference Picture

The detailed Reference Picture can be explored in detail in the appendix or on a Miro Board: https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVPM74wlM=/?share_link_id=915613684635

However, it should be highlighted that this Reference Picture is not the final version. In the next step, Peer To Peer meetings will take place in which the SURE Reference Picture will be discussed and then modified.

2.3.3 Discussion and Suggestions

The discussion as well as suggestions after the keynote and after exploring the SURE Reference Picture in the breakout sessions can be summarized in context dependency, windows of opportunity (time) and legitimacy. They will be used to develop the approach of drafting a more precise Reference Picture of the SURE funding priority.



Context dependency: All projects are happening in their specific contexts which are different from each other, but also different than the German academic context of the researchers. Following this fact two questions need to be raised from time to time: Which activities bring progress towards impact? How can different contexts be considered in monitoring impact factors?

Windows of opportunity: The SURE Reference Picture offers the opportunity to exchange on topics and impact goals, which don't have clear answers yet. Certain questions arise upon progressing time. One idea mentioned is to include the time-dimension of goals and impacts, which could also help to recognize cross-links with other projects and topics.

Legitimacy: The BMBF is interested in highlighting the impact of the SURE funding priority. Thus, it's in the SURE projects interest to illustrate how the approaches of doing transdisciplinary research for urban transformation has relevance and impact.

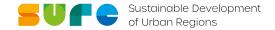
Reflecting References: Conclusion & Recommendations

3.1 Conclusion

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It can be concluded, that there is no blueprint for an impact-oriented monitoring in the context of urban and spatial research for the sustainable development of urban regions. The approach of the SURE synthesis research to emphasize effective interventions and methods is a procedural one, in which references are sharpened, progress is continuously reflected and for this purpose, tools are adapted and provided. Although the complexity of the framework makes a uniform solution difficult, urban, and spatial research must set out and prove that their interventions and strategies work, make them transferable and, above all, bring them into practical applications. Here, the necessity of self-reflection becomes evident and for the purpose of this reflection a portfolio of tools and methods to allow dynamism, flexibility, and adaption to the various thematic and local contexts of each SURE projects is going to be developed.

As a first approach to foster self-reflection, the following questions can support the process of sharpening references and the reflection on their achievement.



3.2 It is recommended ...

In order to achieve impact as a transdisciplinary research project, it is recommended to regularly reflect on one's own impact and the impact achieved so far. For this purpose, the SURE Facilitation and Synthesis Research Project develops methods and tools as an offer to support this self-reflection. For a first approach to reflection, a catalogue of questions is provided below, which is based on the *Questionnaire on Intended Impact* (distributed to the projects in June 2022).

This catalogue of questions is not only addressed to the project coordinators, but can be answered jointly with the entire consortium or individually and then jointly reflected upon.

Catalogue of questions for reflection: Achieving the references

In the *Questionnaire on Intended Impact* (June 2022) the SURE projects have highlighted which references (self-set impact goals) they are aiming at. The following questions provide a possibility to reflect on the achievement of these very references:

A. Intended Impact

- Which of the originally intended impacts are still relevant and feasible?

B. Modifications

- Which previously intended impacts have to be modified?
- To what extent do the intended impacts need to be modified?
- Which new intended impacts can be added?

C. Additional and unexpected Impacts

- What unexpected impacts have been achieved so far?
- Are these negative or positive ones?

D. Maximizing Impact

- What measures would make it more likely that the intended impact will be achieved?
- What external conditions support(ed) the achievement of the intended impact?
- What external conditions hinder(ed) the achievement of the intended impact?
- What internal conditions support(ed) the achievement of the intended impact?
- What internal conditions hinder(ed) the achievement of the intended impact?



Further Reading

[GER] SynVer*Z, Werkstattbericht. Wirkungen transdisziplinärer Stadtforschung in den Projekten der Förderlinien "Leitinitiative Zukunftsstadt" und "Nachhaltige Transformation urbaner Räume"

Link: https://www.nachhaltige-zukunftsstadt.de/downloads/SynVerZ 2019 Werkstattbericht Wirkungen transdisziplinarer Stadtforschung.pdf

[GER] Reflexionsrahmen für Forschen in gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung. BMBF-Projekt "LeNa – Nachhaltigkeitsmanagement in außeruniversitären Forschungsorganisationen"

Link: https://nachhaltig-forschen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Reflexionsrahmen_DRUCK_2016_09_26_FINAL.pdf

[ENG] UN-HABITAT Evaluation Manual

Link: https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2018/07/UN-Habitat-Evaluation-Manual-April-2018.pdf

[ENG] pnd rethinking planning, Transdisciplinary Synthesis Research – Challenges and Approaches of Impact-Oriented Urban and Spatial Research

Link: https://www.pnd-what-next.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/WhatNext-Article-Slawskiet-al.pdf

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- 7. **VENRO** (Verband Entwicklungspolitik deutscher Nichtregierungsorganisationen e.V.) (Eds.) (2002): prüfen und lernen. Praxisorientierte Handreichung zur Wirkungsbeobachtung und Evaluation. https://venro.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Dateien/Daten/Publikationen/Handbuch/ 2002 Handbuch Wirkungsbeobachtung.pdf, accessed 01.12.21.
- 8. Graphic 1-8: Illustration by SURE Facilitation and Synthesis Research Project



Appendix: SURE Reference Picture

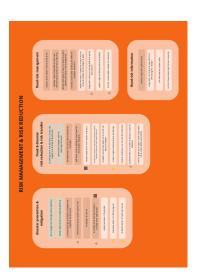
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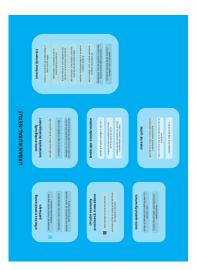




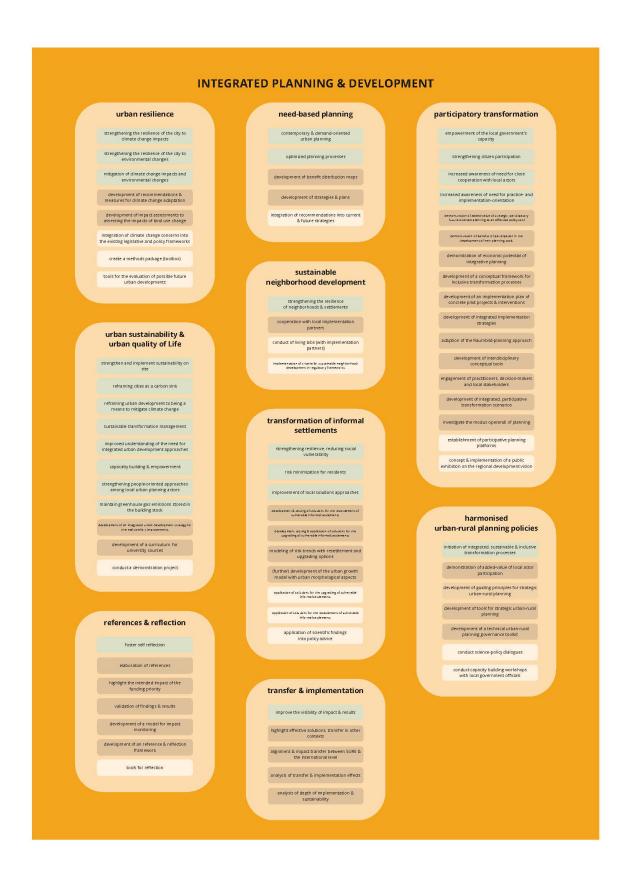




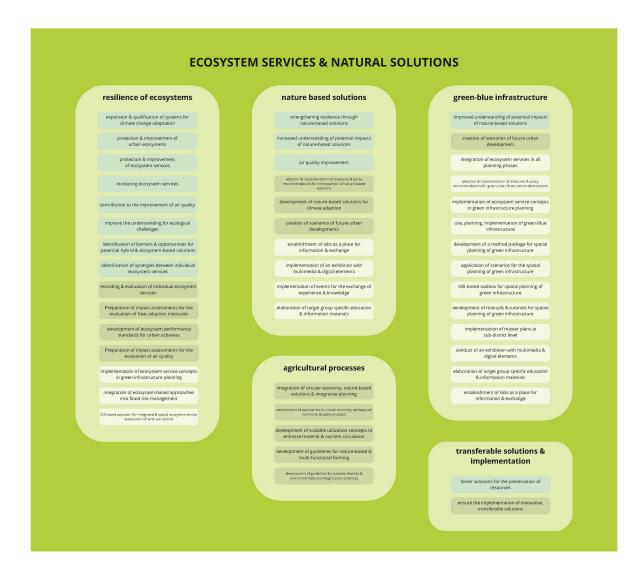




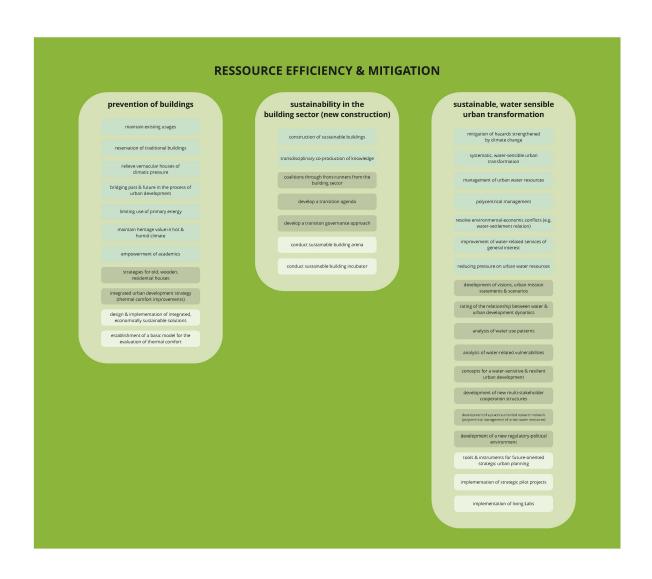




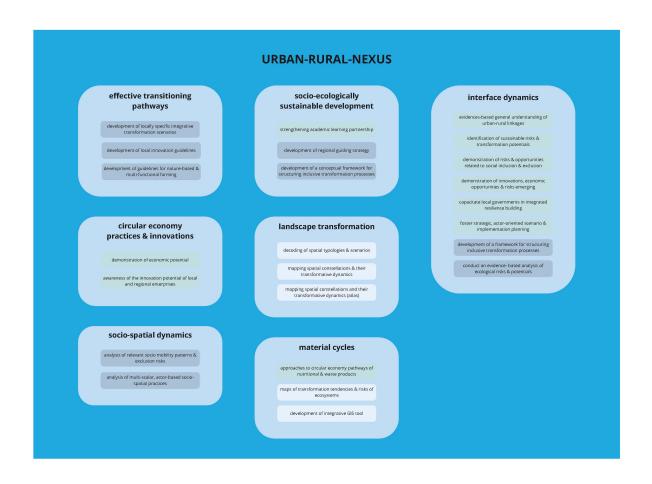




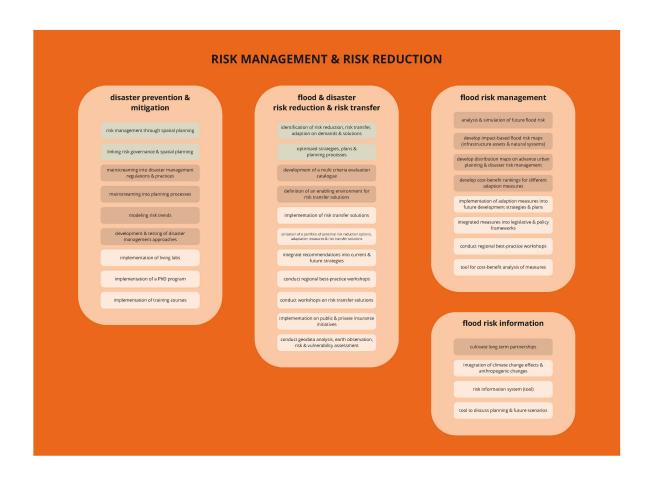




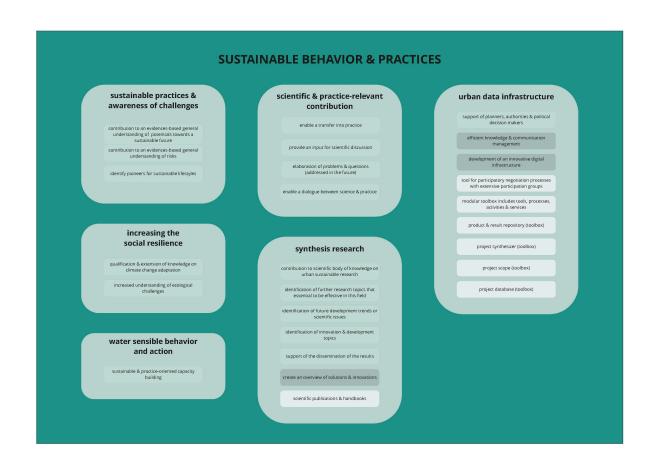














BASIC SCIENTIFIC OUTPUT

Definition:

how to achive...? not dedicated to a particular reference. Rather being essential components of urban and regional research for all mentioned references.

transfer of methods

contribution to the debate on strategic, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary & spatially integrated planning

identification of the current state of research

capacity development, building & knowledge exchange

mainstreaming scientific knowledge into capacity building

communication of scientific innovation outputs (scientific dissemination)

transfer of knowledge & methods into planning practice

stakeholder cooperation

education & capacity building measures

conduct of events for the exchange of experience & knowledge