

Happiness

Hamburg is one of the richest cities in Germany. The level of welfare of its inhabitants tops that of those living in other European cities such as Paris, Milan, Barcelona and Amsterdam. Hamburg has always done well. In medieval times it was part of the Hanse merchant guild and therefore the citizens got their share of wealth through privileged trade in grains, cloth and timber. Nowadays Hamburgers work for publishing companies, media businesses, Information Technology and insurance companies. Research shows that the people living in Hamburg are significantly happier than those of other German cities.

The city is undergoing heavy development. A political programme, "Hamburg" the growing city™, is being carried out by the Metropolitan Region of Hamburg, which consists of Hamburg and fourteen surrounding districts. The programme is being made possible through the assistance of a state enterprise, Geoinformation and Surveying Hamburg (LGV) (see Geo-Service Provision in Hamburg by Hagen Graeff, Winfried Hawerk and Rolf-Werner Welzel on page 15 of this issue of GIM International). LGV has created a geo-portal, is guarding and upholding a 3D-model and carrying out cadastral and municipal survey. The city attracts, as does any other prosperous urban centre in the world, a lot of new people and business every day. Shipping in the port of Hamburg is growing along the lines of the economic growth of the city, Germany itself, and the enlargement of the European Union with neighbours Poland, Czech and Slovakia. Four hundred people working each day for the LGV are enabling the planning, restructuring and building in Hamburg.

It is a little far-fetched, but nevertheless a very nice thought: a very well organised and up-to-date Spatial Data Infrastructure or other model collating geo-data such that it can provide an overview, brought to city, county or provincial government attention to support the best possible political and economic decision-making for the place as a significant factor in the sense of happiness of people living there.

Of course, cities prosper and their citizens are wealthy thanks too to the simple fact of their being geographically located in areas that have been economic hubs for centuries, where climate conditions aren't harsh and the terrain surrounding the centre has natural features such as rivers and sea.

But still, the idea is not at all far-fetched if you turn it the other way around. Well thought-out planning on the basis of good and up-to-date geo-data provided by some well-organised venture maintains circumstances at an optimum for entrepreneurs and is therefore a major factor in providing for the best possible economic growth. This planning that provides for good infrastructure, nice green lungs, a lot of freshwater ponds and lakes, an optimal mixture of residential, commercial and leisure areas throughout the city and its neighbourhoods enhances quality of life in cities - and therefore a feeling of happiness in its citizens.