



Photo: Smart Urban Intermediaries

SMART URBAN INTERMEDIARIES

SMART URBAN INTERMEDIARIES – TRANS-EUROPEAN RESEARCH, LEARNING & ACTION

In smart cities technology and data is considered central to improve urban systems. However, projects like Smart Urban Intermediaries (SmartUrbI) argue that you cannot have smart growth without a human touch. The project ran urban living labs (ULL) in Birmingham, Copenhagen, Glasgow and Amsterdam to advance knowledge of how intermediaries innovate and generate smart urban development and innovation, and create opportunities for dialogue and learning.

STUDYING SMART URBAN INTERMEDIARIES (SUI) ACROSS EUROPE TO ENABLE POSITIVE URBAN CHANGE

The Smart Urban Intermediaries project has investigated the different ways in which certain individuals use their skills, energy and contacts to make a difference for neighbourhoods- the so called Smart Urban Intermediaries (SUI). SUI tend to have social skills, an understanding for multiple urban issues, and knowledge of their neighbourhood. The project SmartUrbI made observation studies, rough SUI together from different areas, and conducted over one hundred interviews with forty SUI in four cities, looking for what SUI require to be a source of positive change for urban areas. In other words, the project studied not urban problems or challenges per say, but the people that try to fix them.

ALLOWING THE RISKS OF UNCERTAINTY TO SUPPORT DRIVEN COMMUNITY- AND PLACEMAKERS

Results circle around two key findings in particular: 1) SUI does community making and placemaking and 2) SUI builds networks and grow and flourish from being part of networks. SUI tend to work very resources efficient and their work is place oriented to bring about change. Their work in turns creates networks, and when SUI were invited to transnational labs to meet SUI from other countries, they reported a steep learning curve from the exchange. SUI are very driven community makers and from studying this, SmartUrbal developed recommendations to help SUI also take care of themselves in this hard and committed work.

The project has put forward recommendations for how organisations and local governments, as well as R&I programs, can create the conditions that enable intermediaries to become even more effective and resilient- and how not to build structures that tend to favour tech innovation only. On this note, the project encourages trust between decision makers and SUI and to “allow the risks around uncertainty”- considering that SUI operate and bring about value and change outside more formalised initiatives.

Partners involved in the SmartUrbI project argues that intervention, prevention and investing in this piece of work will not only add value but may save money. The vision of a socially smart city creates the opportunity to develop, amplify and deepen their impact long into the future.

PROJECT FACTS

Duration: 2017-2019

Involved Cities: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Birmingham, Glasgow
Partners: Tilburg University, Roskilde University, The University of Edinburgh, University of Birmingham, Danish Town Planning Institute
Budget: 1.119.000 EUR

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