Social innovation in urban development

Chair: Soraya Zanardo, Eurocities
Key note speakers: Koos van Dijken, SEiSMiC/ Platform 31, Erna Bosschart, Arjan Biemans, Innovation factory/SEiSMiC
Organizer/Rapporteur: Paul Erian, AIT

In recent years social innovation has been placed prominently on the agendas of policy makers, urban practitioners, social entrepreneurs and researchers. The hype around social innovation is partly due to a reaction on a retreating welfare provisioning and a need for alternative forms to provide these services. Social innovations and innovators are also seen as important catalysts to accelerate urban transformations and to find new ways of tackling urban challenges by experimental approaches and co-creative working models. The session aims at (1) exploring how social innovation actions and processes can be better integrated in JPI Urban Europe future activities (2) identifying framework conditions that can support and foster social innovative ideas and innovative actors to play a role in urban transitions (3) to explore the idea of SEiSMiC being an "incubator" for JPI Urban Europe.

Agenda

Soraya Zanardo explains the aim and the format of the session
Koos van Dijken introduces SEiSMiC, its objectives and ambitions
Erna Bosschart & Arjan Biemans – Key note on Social Innovation Acceleration in Cities

Participants

Overall there were 29 people attending the Session. 2 out of them were representatives of the European Union. One person was a representative of a city administration of a mid-sized city. 2 attendees represented Non-Governmental Organizations. Last but not least 24 attendees were researchers of affiliated with research.

SEiSMiC

Koos van Dijken presented the project SEiSMiC. SEiSMiC (Societal Engagement in Science, Mutual learning in Cities) is a FP 7 funded project dealing with social innovation within an urban context. The objective of the project is to build up a network of urban stakeholders who share knowledge and mutually learn from each other in the field of social innovation. These stakeholders include researchers, practitioners and city administrations as well as NGOs, grassroots movements and locals. The platform, which is being build up parallel in 10 partnering countries (AT, TUR, BEL, HUN, CZ, GER, SWE, UK, NL, IT) regularly meets in workshops on national, transnational and international level and provides recommendations for research and policy. Since SEiSMiC is strongly linked to the Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe (JPI UE), these recommendations are directly integrated into JPI UE´s Research Agenda. He further stressed that not every citizen is able to clearly voice policy needs. Thus SEiSMiC plays a role in translating discussions with locals into clear policy needs.

SIAC

SIAC, Social Innovation Acceleration in Cities, is a 'joint venture' of 16 people from six countries. With background in practice, research and accelerators to establish new kinds of social innovation accelerators and to build a transnational learning network, to connect research to practice.

SIACs mission is to boost social innovations by offering the innovators the support they need to thrive by building local networks that will grow to be sustainable and self-enabling. The SIAC network aims to found such Social Innovation Accelerators in different European regions and cities. In contrary to many other accelerator programs we are open to all ideas and concepts, no matter if it's about founding a social business or tackle a problem through an civic initiative. A transnational learning network is the basis for a mutual learning process on how to boost social innovations most effectively. Different backgrounds bring different solutions. In cooperation with universities, accompanying research and joint efforts with other European programs like TRANSIT. This stimulates the exchange between researchers and practitioners and contributes to an often claimed intensified exchange between theory and practice. Together we can make change really happen.

Conclusions
Following a brief discussion with the panel the following conclusions could be drawn:
- New forms of professional relations are needed: i.e. people act together differently in order to find solutions for social problems
- Cross sectoral solutions are needed for today´s challenges. These solutions can be found through interconnected approaches.
- In order to boost social innovation and help to make it become mainstream "accelerators" are needed

Social innovations are often way cheaper than (technological) innovation