

JPI Urban Europe Conference 2017: “Engaging for Impact – the next step in Urban Transition”

Day 1: 29 May 2017; 14.00-15.30

Session: Sound strategic urban planning

Chair of the session: Arjan van Binsbergen

Co-chair and rapporteur: Göran Cars

Key messages

In the Breakout session Sound strategic urban planning contributions to the EU Urban Agenda were made. Three significant remarks were the following:

1. In ambitions to build the sustainable city, not seldom desirable objectives are conflicting, e.g., social objectives to provide affordable housing conflict with ambitions to provide top-notch environmental and energy efficiency in new construction of housing. One of the papers presented had environmental concerns as its starting-point. In a case study conducted in the project was shown that creative thinking and innovative approaches made it possible to achieve the environmental objectives set up, and at the same time the project contributed to social improvements. A conclusion is that we must realize that the conflict or tension between objectives often can be overcome if we address the problems and systematically apply holistic approaches.
2. Lots of research, not least sponsored by the EU, have focused on citizen participation in urban planning and methods for dialogue. In the Breakout session the need for planning based in citizens' interests and needs was stressed as significantly important. However, at the same time was argued that new ways to capture residents' needs are called for. In one of the presentations was shown how radical changes of citizens' values and preference regarding environmental change, have had a direct impact on politicians and policy-making. The point made was the following. Not always are dialogues and active participation the most effective way to safeguard public interest. Studies of how values and preferences develop and change can often provide valuable input into to the planning process and subsequent policy-making.
3. During the Breakout session the distinction between 'why-based' and 'how-based' research in urban planning. The 'why-based' research is by its character often 'basic research' e.g. about driving forces or probabilities. Here results can seldom be used straight off in practice. However, for the 'how-based' research expectations are that results should be relevant and possible to apply in practice. In the Breakout session is noted that this often is not the case. The recommendation is that the EU agenda for urban research must be clearer and that 'how-based' research must provide output that is both relevant and possible to apply in practice.