

Infrastructures for Innovation

ENHANCING INNOVATION ACTIVITY THROUGH URBAN PLANNING IN BALTIC METROPOLISES

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- The task of the study “**Infrastructures for Innovation**” was to
 1. Examine how the city strategies tackle the development of innovation infrastructure, as well as innovative and creative environments by the means of urban planning
 2. Examine **24 concrete cases** how **Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Malmö, Oslo, Riga, Stockholm, Tallinn and Vilnius** are developing infrastructures for innovation and creative environments
 3. Propose further project ideas to transnational cooperation in the field

Today

- Discuss the linkage between urban planning and innovations
- Present **three approaches to plan for innovation** as well as conclude how the 24 analysed cases fit in – and where the cities have room for development



The increased interest on the linkage is related to broadly agreed notion that in the competition the success of cities or city regions is guaranteed by creativity – turned into product or service innovations.

LINKAGE BETWEEN URBAN PLANNING AND INNOVATIONS

- In this context, 'innovation' refers to multiple processes of inventing and re-inventing, which are recognized as a source of growth in the informational economy.
- As to the link with urban planning, the focus is on 'innovation activity', which takes place in spatial, functional and sometimes organisational 'environment' that urban planning can address and support.
- In other words, the physical city planning is considered as a means to support the realisation of the inventive potential of the city regions.

- Broadly, contemporary urban planning is influenced by two interpretations of the role of urban space in fostering creativity and innovation.
 - ‘**Innovative milieu**’ addresses regional economic systems and well-defined innovation networks.
 - ‘**Creative city**’ can be seen to provide a basis for inventions in the ‘fuzzy’ realm of human encounters and in the mixes of cultural flows that urban centrality facilitates.
 - A third, place-based and embedded approach is emerging.
 - **New sites of cultural production** are an issue.
 - In centrally located obsolete industrial premises in particular the appreciation of the un-designed and indeterminate coincidences with the wish to develop something new - just there.
 - Place or the concrete situatedness is the key. Not only the location; the experience and appropriation of the place counts too.



Urban planning can be understood as any systematic work that aims to control and influence urban process and settlement form.

We identify three approaches to plan for innovation, and see how the 24 cases analysed in the BaltMet study fit in.

PLANNING FOR INNOVATION

1. Innovation activity as a target

- Direct efforts to plan for innovation include projects to provide for the spatial requirements of science parks and create other physical infrastructures (roads, public transport, ICT systems) that are assumed to be **necessary hard elements of an innovative milieu**.
- These elements cater for the recognised protagonists of innovation activity, such as universities, research institutes and established companies.
- Planning style is often a quite traditional mix of distributive economic planning and physical blueprint planning, but it can take the form of strategic development planning.

- Innovation activity (e.g. a science park) is seen as a “programme” (like leisure, housing or anything else), and the complexities of innovative milieu are superficially understood.
- The target of planning effort is nevertheless to increase innovation activity.
- Top-down projects to create cultural clusters or centres for creative industries (CI) belong also to these direct planning efforts.
- Furthermore, regional promotion, combined with infrastructural initiatives, can be regarded in this planning category.

Among the cases

- A half (12/24) of the cases represented the approach “innovation activity as a target”.
 - Science or technology parks or one involved in a central role.
 - Few cases emphasising creative industries, including also business incubation and alike support services for entrepreneurship, borrowing from a science park model.
- The planning approach “innovation activity as a target” is a mainstream today.
 - This is a solid practice, but it needs complementary measures.

2. Innovation activity as a resource

- Enabling practices that understand innovation activity rather as a resource of planning than a target in itself.
 - The idea is that innovative practices, people and products are the resources to be nurtured to create a thriving place.
- An enabling, low-key approach to support ‘found’ places of innovation includes a wide variety of planning measures and examples.
 - Cultural planning, utilisation of temporary uses in planning, policies to harness local cultural actors to start alternative cultural breeding places, Creative Industries business support systems (e.g. CIDS), as well as economic and regulatory tools to slow down real estate speculation and provide cheap space for innovative start-ups etc.

- Enabling planning can be conceived as “curating” the contents of urban space
 - An organic and processual approach to built from the existing
- Often connected to urban regeneration; changing uses of former industrial areas or equivalent
 - To maintain the rent low is a typical problem, since clusters of creative industries tend to attract also developers, which causes price pressure
- Refined policies of “actively letting it be” are needed
 - Combined with accessibility by public transport

Among the cases

- Only two cases in the study represented the planning approach “innovation activity as a resource”
 - In Hvide Kødby, Copenhagen’s Meat Packing District, creative industries are combined with food industries. It is a city-led project where the transformation is driven by a quest to find new locations to let for creative industries, with sustainable prices, as well as an attempt to create an interesting urban spot.
 - Tallinn’s Kultuurikatel (“Culture Cauldron”) is a well-located old thermal power station in transformation into a multipurpose cultural centre from art projects to incubation activities. The building has a great potential, but it also needs big investments. The project is lead by an inventive NGO.

- The fact that only two cases chosen to this study (by the BaltMet partners) represent the category does not mean that these kinds of projects would not exist.
 - Characteristic for such projects is that they begin as fairly informal processes, and are not necessarily quickly recognised, taken seriously or supported among the policy makers – before they mature enough.
- A wide variety of planning measures would exist to support these kinds of developments, but these are yet less used by cities.
 - Here is room for development in the cities of Baltic Sea Region!

3. Innovation activity as a by-product

- Other planning agendas, for example pedestrianisation, beautification of public spaces, ecological sensitivity, heritage preservation, equality access to services, or development of social housing may indirectly provide for innovation.
- **Creating culturally attractive and socially central urban places and neighbourhoods is the key to success.** Lively urban settings are self-organising. They continuously attract new, creative people, sustaining the metropolitan social mix and codes of behaviour which are crucial for strangers to adapt and act positively.

- Generally, high quality of urban life (NB not only physical or visual environment) should not be underestimated as an element of innovation policy.
- We call this approach ‘soft planning’ for innovation. Innovation activity is by-product of other planning efforts.
- The main issue is that planners are aware of innovative actors and their needs, so that they do not inadvertently harm the innovation potential of a site or area.

Among the cases

- Nearly half of the analysed cases (11/24) represented a situation where innovation activity may – or may not – occur as a “by-product”.
- The category comprises mostly large urban development projects.
 - This reflects cities’ will to develop large areas as mixed-used environments.
 - Some part of the mixture may include elements supporting innovation activity or attracting right kind of people or businesses to attain the goal at a city or regional level.
- Instead of relying on possible by-products, **cities should draw more attention to creating culturally attractive and socially central urban places and neighbourhoods within the areas.** That is the key to success.

The analysis concentrated on

- the aim and features of the projects
- their relation to the on-going urban change
- the leading agent and important partners
- the time span of the projects



STUDY RESULTS IN ONE SLIDE



Thank you for your attention

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