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Innovation and Urban sustainability

Identifying problems and coming up with solutions are at the basis of human success. Crisis and innovation are thus closely interlinked.

The feeding ground for innovation is most fertile in state of crisis. "The bigger the problem, the bigger the need for new, viable ideas and thus the likelier the success of innovation." (Mart Grisel)

Innovation is one of the main keys to speed up the recovery process and it is to a large extent concentrated in cities, in metropolitan regions, in clusters, both national and transnational.

Innovation is a key driver for growth. Therefore, how innovation can be stimulated?

Liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation have given rise to a **new urban economy** based on innovative services and advanced knowledge. Supported by highly qualified workforce, the growth of the new economy is closely linked to the **information systems and networks** connecting the services the city offers to the citizens. The new urban economy has in turn required new infrastructures such as teleports, science parks, greater mobility, growth poles and knowledge corridors amidst which cities now struggle to remain **competitive**.

However, the city becomes of a 'city of bits' with the growth of increasing mobility, breaking down spaces, separating work from home, employment and recreation. The growth of the new urban economy is now **less based on hierarchical structures and more on networks**, flows and processes.

The **urban connectedness** has now become a critical issue of new networks, use of new information flows, the link between physical and mobility assets, the break between market and place, the changing physical structure of cities. Innovation is the result of the open-minded combination of the

competences of all actors and assets involved (R&D organizations, public and private sectors).

The new urban economy offers possibilities for greater participation in local decision-making and forms of deliberative democracy. This in turn raises the question of **governance** and the strategic alliance of all local actors needed to regulate or channel such developments.

The Triple Helix model structured cooperation between university, industry and government.

For a sustainable future, the main shift has to be instead of searching for new customer, for new inventions, new solutions are sought increasingly for customers.

In Finland, consumers & customers now participate actively in the innovation process.

Also to help innovators to identify yet unknown needs.

Customers, or the civil society, add a 4th dimension to the Triple Helix. Furthermore, the public sector itself is also a customer and a very powerful one.

Conclusion

10 recommendations can be outlined for an innovative sustainable urban development:

1. Promote collaboration and knowledge exchange
2. Create innovative communities
3. Build on local strengths
4. Invest in skills and capacity building
5. Provide support to entrepreneurship
6. Create clusters of innovation
7. Create more efficient policies
8. Stimulate innovation in policy
9. Build alliances with higher tier governments
10. Promote good governance and show leadership.

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