

Urban Commons a Common UIREKA programme?!

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ABSTRACT

Cities around the world are currently at the center of attention as innovation hubs, transition grounds and democratic renewal spaces. The challenges cities are facing are complex and persistent: how do we keep our cities and neighborhoods livable in a situation of growing fragmentation and how do we create a transition towards a truly sustainable economy, are two major questions for example (Majoor, et al., 2017). Behind these challenges lies a governance question: what kinds of arrangements are needed to guide these transitions? In many cities around the world there is a growing interest in (and practice of) forms of governance that aim to work on innovations based on the principle of common ownership. A shared community garden, a local car-sharing program, a program of local neighborhood assistance, a local currency etc. An important perspective is how these initiatives are connected to, or interfere with existing government and market regulations. In this, the theme also connects to the necessary innovation of local governments. Their traditional way of initiating, ruling, paying and maintaining needs to innovate. Local governments have to facilitate initiatives, support local developments and co-create with many different (new) stakeholders. This shift in roles and responsibilities is caused by another position of (local) authorities as well as a civic movement. The increase of bottom up initiatives from citizens and social entrepreneurs is seen in several European cities. From small projects in their neighborhood to large-scale initiatives, which were before realized by the (semi-)governmental institutes. The playing field is changing. But underneath this urban transition is the danger of dichotomy. After all, not everybody is able to profit from internationalization, digitalization, innovation hubs and bottom up initiatives. How can cities stay or become pleasant, inclusive places for everybody? How can these new initiatives contribute to this goal and to what extent are they endangering this? How can the local government transform to a ?partner city? (Bauwens & Onzia, 2017)? In the above mentioned developments ownership is a key word. Ownership of the direct habitat, of resources, of decision making processes, of the implementation of decisions and of the maintenance of initiatives. Collective ownership of public spaces, goods and services, might be the third way between public and private ownership. The master program is grounded in the work of

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economist Elinor Ostrom on the theory of commoning: the struggle of stakeholders in making and keeping arrangements to maintain and develop common pool resources. This historic concept that has been researched mostly in rural areas has recently been increasingly popular in urban contexts, particularly due to market and government failures and an increasing attention for community ownership and initiatives. How should a square as a common good be used and maintained when all the players (citizens, government, corporation, shop keepers) feel ownership of the space? What kind of values will be added to the place when a more collaborative governance is introduced? Can commoning be scaled up to influence the workings of a city? In other words, can the city be reimagined as commons (Iaoiné & Foster, 2016; Bauwens & Onzia, 2017)? U!reka partner institutes could play -through this joint programme- an important role in the above mentioned transition and in facilitating urban commoning through research on urban commoning; teaching students and existing professionals about the transition and urban commoning; initiating, leading, monitoring or facilitating experiments on urban commoning; comparing urban commons cases at European level; being one of the main players in this societal transition.

Aim of the paper and urban challenge it addresses:

Introduction to the joint U!reka (master) programme in the making. Commoning is the third way to manage resources; not (only) by the market and/or the public authorities, but through shared ownership with everyone who is using the resource. In our cities it will mean that we have to reorganise and manage our resources (parks, housing, air, information) in a new way to make it possible that more people have access to and profit from these common resources.

WORKSHOP

Workshop V: Research and Innovation and the Urban Eco-System