

Urban Cultural Change: Smartness, Sustainability, Inclusion

Date: 29-30 November, 2018 | University of Gdansk



Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to invite you to the **Conference "Urban Cultural Change: Smartness, Sustainability, Inclusion"**, which will take place on **29-30 November 2018** in Gdansk.

Normative visions of Smart Cities (SC) such as those promulgated by the European Union connect advances in ICT with the development of social and human capital, holding out not only the promise of more inclusive, effective and democratic local governance, but also an invigorated sense of local citizenship and identity. Critics of SC paradigms urge caution. The frequent interplay between Big Tech interests, elite place-making projects and technology-centred interpretations are one reason why SC paradigms could in fact result in more, not less, technocratic and top-down governance. Much will in fact depend on specific policy contexts, processes of institutional change and local capacities to mobilise citizen engagement.

This aim of this conference will be to discuss interpretations and concrete practices of "Smartness" within a wider conceptual context. Understood in holistic terms, urban smartness targets not only ICT solutions to planning problems but supports a wider sense of place attachment, for example through greater citizen involvement and recognition and inclusion of bottom-up initiative. Do SC strategies for example provide space for innovation in the sense of greater civil society participation and a shift away from traditional orientations based on "hard" locational factors and paternalistic governance? To what extent is "Smartness" connected to changing urban cultures and greater appreciation of public spaces?

We hope to address these and other topic-related questions through cross-cultural perspectives and comparisons. We will, for example, provide insights from Polish experience where, in a bid for greater visibility and in hopes of combining economic growth with efficiency gains, environmental improvements, and more positive images, cities as diverse as Gdańsk, Gdynia, Kraków, Poznań and Warsaw have embraced SC strategies. How can these experiences be compared and contrasted with those of other countries.

We invite thought-provoking interdisciplinary contributions to this conference that offer perspectives, among others, from ongoing research, local experiences, theoretical and critical analysis and policy debates, regarding the salience of Smart Cities as a holistic urbanist paradigm.

The conference registration form (also attached to this invitation) should be sent by 31st October 2018. You will receive a confirmation within a few days of your registration, together with travel and other practical information.

We very much look forward to seeing you this November in Gdańsk!

Kind regards,

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