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These recommendations are based on the Synthesis Essay reflecting on and outlining the findings of four research projects funded through the Nordic initiative on Sustainable Urban Development and Smart Cities.

- Explore the Synthesis Essay for deeper insights and understanding of the policy recommendations.
- Visit the Sustainable Urban Development and Smart Cities webpage to learn more about the projects funded by this initiative.



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Technologies of Humility

Policy Recommendations for Sustainable and Smart City Planning

Sustainability
Equity
Co-production
Participation
Democracy

Policy recommendations for Smart City Planning

Adopt a Holistic Approach to Smart Cities

Adopt a holistic approach to smart city development that integrates social, ecological, and technological aspects. This approach ensures that urban planning is more responsive to the needs of citizens and the different facets of sustainability – ultimately promoting healthier living environments and public contentment. Enhance transparency, accountability, and inclusion in smart city projects by involving the public in both framing problems and shaping solutions.

Cultivate Collective Learning through 'Technologies of Humility'

Foster a culture of governance that promotes collective learning and more equal relations between decision-makers, experts, and inhabitants. This can be achieved by improving participation practices and perceiving citizens as active and imaginative agents who can contribute to the solving of problems with their own skills and knowledge. Incorporating local and experiential knowledge that inhabitants possess into formal planning is crucial for legitimacy and democracy.

Harness Digital Tools to Reach Diverse Groups

Use digital participatory tools such as Public Participation GIS (PPGIS) and interactive innovation platforms to include inhabitants in decision-making processes. Carefully chosen digital tools enable different social and age groups to be engaged and community voices to be registered, along with the meanings and values that people attach to specific places. That said, it is equally important to address the potential risks and limitations of digital tools.

Contextualise and Adapt Participatory Methods

Recognise the importance of context in urban planning and research. Adapt methods and tools to local conditions and clearly communicate the objectives, timeframes, and limitations of public participation to manage expectations and improve engagement. Tailor participatory methods to different target groups and their specific characteristics to ensure inclusive and meaningful participation. The identification of common goals seems to be the key to a more satisfactory stakeholder engagement.

Seek to Understand Diverse Standpoints

Cities concentrate and intensify inequalities, producing persistent patterns of exclusion and injustice along racial, ethnic, gender, cultural, age, and disability lines, as well as in the use of smart city technologies. These inequalities generate societal problems and threaten socially sustainable urban futures.

To take one example, although urban green infrastructures as health-promoting facilities have implications for equality and justice, it is important to understand that they are perceived and experienced differently by different social and demographic groups. Therefore, it is as important to understand the implications of green infrastructures for different groups as it is to emphasise their positive contributions to urban life and ecosystems.

A Nordic Platform for Public Participation?

Establishing a platform for public participation in urban planning could be a possible step forwards in furthering dialogue among researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders, as well as in advancing sustainable urban futures. Such a platform could provide a forum for exchange, a repertoire of best practices and lessons learned, a stage for increasing the visibility and legitimacy of digital participatory methods, and a laboratory for practicing technologies of humility in the search for more sustainable and democratic urban futures.