

Urban Mill Innovation Platform: Public-Private-People partnership (PPPP) Case in the City of Espoo's application for Intelligent Community of the Year (ICY) 2018

http://www.intelligentcommunity.org/ic_of_year

DATE

4.1.2018

PROJECT NAME

Urban Mill

YEAR STARTED

2013

PARTNERS

Main partners: Järvelin Design Oy, City of Espoo, Aalto University, SRV Oyj, TEK ry; and almost 100 other partner and member organisations

FUNDING SOURCES

City, Regional Council, National Government, Private Sector, School, Public-private partnership, NGO

DESCRIPTION

Situated at the heart of the Espoo Innovation Garden at Aalto University campus, Urban Mill is a public-private-people partnership run by a private company, Järvelin Design Ltd, and the City of Espoo as one of the main partners. It defines itself as a 'Co-working and Co-creation Platform Prototype for Urban Innovations'. It brings together different research, innovation, business, and community actors involved in ICT-enabled urban services development. The concept was piloted close collaboration with Aalto Design Factory and the Startup Sauna within the EUE Programme in 2013 and in 2015 Urban Mill became fully independently operational.

Urban Mill acts at the same time as a community, platform, ecosystem node as well as a global hub. Urban Mill offers physical and digital spaces ideal for promoting, testing, developing and exhibiting new solutions supporting urban life. It also connects to a spectrum of global networks, thus being able to bring complementary thematic expertise to several ecosystems. Urban Mill community is supported by a cultural and digital memory, and by an orchestration service which actively networks with other thematic hubs and platforms. The community includes change makers from public and private sector, researchers, entrepreneurs, students as well as local residents and other users of urban environments.

Urban Mill is a responsive platform with myriad activity sensors, spatial memory elements, mobile apps, virtual working spaces, 3D theatre, and smart screens, thus it can provide activity analytics

and serve its customers before, during and after events regardless of the global time and place of the people.

The operating model being the most important aspect of Urban Mill is built upon the physical premises. Co-creation activity is the second, operational, layer that is aided with a number of digital tools, and importantly, with the experience of the staff who will gladly join any session, upon the discretion of the event organiser. From innovation point of view, the third and the most impactful layer is the purpose, namely that of solving together wicked urban problems interlaced into the four layers in focus:

1. Continuous change of urban life (transformations)
2. New services required to reflect those changes (experiences)
3. Enabling digital tools and solutions (services)
4. Physical environments (commodities and goods)

Urban Mill aims to help in co-creating inclusive user-driven, sustainable concepts that are applicable to both existing and new areas e.g., integrating mobility and energy usage solutions into urban planning. Also, joint ventures promoting well-being services, food ecosystems, organic food production, and smart networked spaces come into being. People from different fields are connected to the activities through multi-disciplinary learning events and multi-stakeholder RDI initiatives. Activities run in the Urban Mill respect open collaboration, cherishment of serendipity and open-doors philosophy and thus support a shared co-learning process.

According to the knowledge creation principles of professors Nonaka and Takeuchi, a methodical, systemic and cultural Ba is being pursued in all enabling and supporting activities of a small staff, furniture, digital services, physical prototyping possibilities, flexible spaces - and indeed a kitchen. The physical platform is configured in such a manner that it practically forces tenants and visitors to run into each other in the course of the day (or night for that matter).

Urban Mill promotes and facilitates collaboration between quadruple helix actors to create, prototype, validate and test new products and services in real-life conditions. When thinking of citizen engagement in innovation it is worth reminding that 'lightweight low threshold' open innovation services and platforms like Urban Mill are important when creating inclusive prosperity, tackling social and governance challenges and enriching quality of life. Networks of connected platforms can be physical, social or virtual, or a combination; they can even be city-wide, like Espoo Innovation Garden is. The City of Espoo supports Innovation Garden activities by stimulating collaboration and co-creation between and within local communities and platforms through utilization of their services and establishment of long-term partnerships.

Entrepreneurial spirit and participation of all (including citizens, academics, business and public actors) is a characteristic feature of the Urban Mill. This entrepreneurial mind-set is understood as something that encourages people to take responsibility and exercise agency in the execution of tasks and projects. The Urban Mill experience shows the importance of focusing on a common theme to generate a bottom-up/open/participatory innovation process that delivers new capabilities, operational models and sustainable solutions to urban challenges

<https://urbanmill.org/>

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RESULTS TO DATE

During its first five years Urban Mill has found its role as a globally recognized innovation hub. It attracts people, events, teams, experiments, pioneering customers and actors from diverse ecosystems, both from Finland and abroad. Urban Mill acts as an urban innovation beacon in Espoo Innovation Garden, but also connects to a spectrum of global networks, thus being able to exchange complementary thematic expertise between several ecosystems. Over 100,000 participants and over 10,000 visitors and 1000 pioneers have engaged in more than 3,000 Urban Mill events. Urban Mill has also hosted over 500 organizations and projects as platform users, 200 prototypes are developed by the community, 100 teams are hosted and 50 start-ups supported by the platform. Cities from several different countries have shown their interest to use the Urban Mill model in order to engage citizens and other stakeholders more inclusively to their own innovation activities.

Urban Mill has developed a privately operated Public-Private-People-Partnership (PPPP) Model which produces public goods affordably, efficiently, and effectively. Urban Mill works for the benefit of the whole Espoo Innovation Garden and its collaborative networks and ecosystems, e.g. it has co-produced Startup and Innovation Ecosystem Policy reports for the Prime Minister's Office, demonstrated digitally supported creative space concepts for the Committee for the Future of the Parliament of Finland, and facilitated co-creation with European Space Agency (ESA) for Business Incubation Center (BIC) in Arctic Space context.

The model can generate sustainable impacts through outcomes which are meaningful for the people and are produced agile and frugally with minimal input resources. A good example of this is the UUSAIKA project, produced and orchestrated by Urban Mill.

This UUSAIKA project which ended in spring 2017, was implementing a part of the Helsinki-Uusimaa Region's RIS3 strategy (Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation) and financed by the City of Espoo and the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. It applied and tailored the Urban Mill model for the Helsinki-Uusimaa Region in order to activate and connect the innovation actors and activities of the whole region focusing on the RIS3 spearhead theme Welfare City.

During 18 months UUSAIKA project contributed to 200 thematic events which brought together 12,000 participants from 1,000 organisations and which provided communal activities, inclusive for all people from children to seniors and from public servants to entrepreneurs. The project mapped and visited a network of 80 co-working spaces from the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and supported the work of over 50 startup or development teams. The Co-working spaces were openly published on the Google Map and the teams promoted through Urban Mill's social and digital channels.

After the UUSAIKA project the City of Espoo started the OSKIVI project (Framework for Managing Inclusive and Encouraging Innovation Processes), financed by the 6Aika strategy programme, which is translating the Urban Mill model to be applied in several administrative city sectors and service ecosystems. In the pilot Urban Mill supported the School-as-a-Service high schools in Otaniemi. In the European context Espoo Innovation Garden ecosystem has joined the Creative Ring cities network through Urban Mill. Espoo aims to share and scale the model with all other Finnish 6Aika cities (Helsinki, Vantaa, Turku, Tampere, Oulu).