Maximising the social value of constructed assets: public-private-innovation at work

The paper presents a new industrial innovation arena in line with present Danish and international efforts towards public-private partnerships with generic rules for cooperation and integration of research in innovation processes. The method supports the more traditional way of innovation through a broad-spectrum approach based on utilization of for instance research, users and operation experiences.

Basis is three perspectives: the business system, a cross-disciplinary understanding and an integrative experimental building programme. Research is an important actor in the efforts to create constructed assets which meet social goals. However, it is important to recognize the contextual settings for building research if sector developments in practise are to be achieved. The effect of research depends on other actors in the business system. Clients, regulatory bodies, professional associations and building trade organizations constitute one level in the systemic framework; another is firms – architects, consulting engineers, contractors and suppliers – operating on the individual project level. The interplay between these actors can be seen as an innovation process as proposed by Winch (2010) where the initiative to new processes or products may originate from one, or several, or from a network of actors. Integrators are actors who undertake a brokering role and promote comprehensive solutions to be used in specific building processes. There is a crucial need for a shift in research and knowledge to a more interdisciplinary focus on practice. This development can be facilitated by integrators such as networks which can cross traditional boarders within technical disciplines, and between technical and social disciplines with a starting point in user needs, and between the construction phase and subsequent operating phase.

In Denmark 30 years use of experimental building projects supported by networks of participating companies as integrators across disciplines and life cycle phases has provided valuable knowledge about this approach to innovation (Bonke & Olsen, 2010).

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