

Sustainable Places Projects: SUSPLACE – Place Ambassadors

SUSPLACE is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Innovative Training Network funded by the European Commission, to train Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) in innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to study sustainable place-shaping practices.

The network provides training in scientific and professional skills to enable ESRs to pursue academic or high-professional careers at various institutions such as governments, NGOs, consultancies and businesses.

SUSPLACE brings together six universities and seven non-academic partners in seven European countries: The Netherlands, United Kingdom (Wales), Latvia, Lithuania, Belgium, Finland and Portugal. The SUSPLACE approach provides insight into how to utilize the full potential of places and communities for development and help to build capacities of people to engage in place-shaping processes and thus strengthen connectivity between policy-makers, academics, businesses and civil society.

The Sustainable Places Research Institute is hosting three ESRs in Cardiff in order to support the development of research and expertise in three specific areas:

- 1. Connected Learning Spaces:** exploring the learning landscapes of higher education for sustainable development (HESD) by studying student perceptions and practices of sustainable place-shaping and students' learning experiences within the broad area of sustainability.
- 2. Sustainable City Regions:** Promoting a better understanding of the relationship between the different sustainability pillars at a regional scale.

3. Place Ambassadors

Place ambassadors are owners of local businesses who share with visitors the distinctiveness of the local wildlife, history, cultural heritage and geology. Co-hosted by Latvia University (LU), the objective is to explore the role of private sector businesses in supporting sustainable place-shaping through their enrolment in formal 'place ambassador' schemes.

The project aims to provide: New insights into creating connectivity between the public, community and private sector in sustainable place-shaping, by capitalising on local knowledge and enthusiasm for promoting meaningful experiences of place.

The programme assess the role of Place Ambassador schemes in developing sustainable-place shaping projects and initiatives which have been developed in Wales and especially in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The work will subsequently identify 'road maps' and toolkits for a more sustainable- as well as community-based development.

The work aims to assess how such schemes can be 'scaled out'. It will also contribute to the wider international literatures and research projects currently being undertaken in Canada, US, Brazil and the EU.

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