

UNIVERCITY ACTION LAB

e - m a g a z i n e



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GREETINGS FROM THE UCITYLAB CONSORTIUM

The UCITYLAB Project consortium greets the autumn season with a new issue of its biannual e-zine, dedicated to highlight project outputs and further explore the university-city engagement landscape in Europe. Since our last publication in April, great progress has been made from the finalisation of the case study reports, to the development of the first draft of the UCITYLAB Challenge Teaching Toolkit. The project partners have also initiated conversations with their urban stakeholders to set up their regional networks, and ensure commitment during the time of pilot implementation of the teaching toolkit.

This issue of the UCITYLAB e-zine hosts a collection of articles developed from the good practice case study reports, featuring examples of university-city collaborations from Finland, Spain, Netherlands, Sweden, and Australia, as well as an international collaborative initiative between the Municipality of Valencia in Spain and the Western Sydney University in Australia. Our selection of articles does not only give insights into the nature of the collaborations, but also provides a sneak peek into the type of activities and impact of the efforts made so far. Our first impressions into the cases are that the

type of collaborations and stakeholder constellations are diverse depending on their targets. The types of engagement range from urban policy research, facilitation of user engagement to public service innovation, and a graduate study programme to the development and testing of technologies for smart cities.

While our selection of articles represents only a fraction of our case study collection, we trust they will give you new perspectives into understanding the current landscape of university-city collaboration.

We wish you all a pleasant reading.

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OUR GOAL

UCITYLAB project
aims to link European
universities with urban
stakeholders to address
societal challenges

OUR OBJECTIVES



TO STRENGTHEN

the links between European HEIs and their urban stakeholders



TO FOSTER

development of relevant skills among students via experiential learning



TO PROMOTE

adoption of city engagement practices among European HEIs

TURKU URBAN RESEARCH PROGRAM: PROVIDING RESEARCH-BASED POLICY ADVICE TO MUNICIPALITY

In the World Happiness Report 2019, Finland has topped the ranking as the happiest country in the world for the second time in a row. Among various reasons presented in the report, government clearly holds the key to their citizens' wellbeing. The city of Turku recognizes its responsibility, and, in its current city strategy, Turku 2029, identifies sustainable promotion of its residents' wellbeing and competitiveness as its primary goal. To achieve the goal, a joint effort of academia representatives and city officials in supporting the Turku Urban Research Program stands out as an effective mechanism to back up the city strategy. The Research Program positions itself as a knowledge brokerage partnership seeking to facilitate research-based policy advice.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The Turku Urban Research Program is a flexible network of city officials and universities, i.e. University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University, guided by a steering committee and managed by a jointly-appointed research director (a 'knowledge broker'). The Research Program was launched to tackle urban challenges, make good use of emerging opportunities as well as support the City of Turku in implementing but also constantly critically reviewing its strategy. The City of Turku believes that the city's growth should be based on an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable foundation.

The Research Program supports the City's developmental attempts in the following areas:

1. competitiveness (conditions and factors of economic success, increasing attractiveness, collaboration with other cities and institutions, etc.);
2. welfare & wellbeing (living conditions, social inclusion, integration of immigrants, etc.);
3. sustainable development (land use & planning,

housing, transport, climate change, etc.);

4. good governance (public services, local democracy enhancement, etc.).

All in all, research co-operation supports knowledge-based management of the municipality's development initiatives in all strategic fields.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY BEING DONE?

The Research Programme provides grants to research projects that meet both the city's and the universities' needs. Projects are either initiated through funding competitions or assigned directly.

In the open funding competitions, applicants have to pass two rounds. During the first round, their projects are reviewed by a panel of representatives from the universities, the city administration and other potential funders. The projects are assessed against scientific merit, applicability, originality of their contributions, etc. In the sec-

The city of Turku recognizes its responsibility, and, in its strategy Turku 2029, identifies sustainable promotion of its residents' wellbeing and competitiveness as its primary goal.



ond round, the applicants are expected to present their final research plan having incorporated the feedback received from the reviewers. For each winning project, the City of Turku nominates a steering group that gets supported by the research director with fostering information exchange.

In 2018, the programme distributed €600.000 research funding through a funding competition. The topics of the granted projects were housing choices, intergenerational social exclusion, transnational networks of Turku as a university town (1640–1828), temporary uses supporting innovation in science park setting, novel urban services enabled by 5G networks, and urban climate policy.

In case of a direct assignment, the knowledge broker helps practitioners to define a reasonable assignment and negotiate the details with the researchers. When an individual/team has an initiative to share, applicants are welcome to approach the research director with their proposal that gets evaluated on its fit for the needs of the city.

In addition, the Research Program holds annual competitions with 10 grants for Master theses in Urban Research, available for students studying at the University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University.

WHAT ARE THE INTERIM RESULTS?

The Research Program has been in place since 2009, and it has been renewed for the third cycle (2019–2023). The impact, generated by the Research Program, primarily concerns research and policy advice. By 2019, more than 100 research projects – all done in co-operation with the municipality – have been funded or co-funded by the Research Program. City administration applies the research results to improve their decision-making and strengthen the impact of their development initiatives. The Research Program has considerably strengthened co-operation between the city administration and universities.

The Research Program has had an effect on education as well. It has served as a trigger to create Urban Studies Minor (seminars and courses of 25–35 ECTS) offered to students at the University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University. The seminars and courses are expected to stimulate students to specialize in urban research within their majors.

Provided by Alina Meloyan, University Industry Innovation Network

Photo credit www.maxpixel.net

LIVING LABS AS INSTRUMENTS FOR OPEN INNOVATION AND APPLICATION OF RRI POLICIES: THE CASE OF THE LIBRARY LIVING LAB

The potential of Living Labs as research tools has been of interest for the UAB since 2014 when the university actively joined the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) and got further exposure to the wide variety of application and experiences initiated on a European and International level. This exposure fortified the initial faith that living labs could provide the adequate platforms for setting up local ecosystems of innovation around thematic axes and for implementing the strategic vision of the university with respect to its territorial mission and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) policies. The case of the Library Living Lab is a demonstrative example of how collaboration among different societal agents can produce initiatives rich in innovation and potential social impact.

In trying to describe what the Library Living Lab really is, it can be described essentially as a space of experiences. It is a place where one can explore how technology transforms the way we enjoy and experience culture and cultural content in general. This question is addressed within

the frame of open social innovation, where the Public Library provides the context of a meeting point for diverse users with different perspectives. In this sense, the Library Living Lab sought to transform a library space into a place in which all the stakeholders, and most-importantly the end-users, the Library users, are invited and encouraged to participate in the definition and design cycle of new services and of an innovative experience. The outcome is a laboratory where it is possible to co-design prototypes of new tools and services, but also a social innovation laboratory where active research and observation is carried out on the dynamics and processes that lead to such innovation to take place. In the specific case of the Library Living Lab, there are two fundamental pillars, namely: i) The exploration of technology as a disruptive factor that makes possible new experiences and adds transformative value to existing services. ii) An on-going research on the role of public space in contemporary society, as a stage for open innovation where all citizens are potential actors.

A NEW MODEL OF INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION WITH ALL RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

The launch of the Library Living Lab has involved the definition of its own dynamics around a permanent working group, in which several mechanisms of inter-institutional collaboration have been deployed. The aim of the working group was the alignment of all these various objectives for the definition of the master lines of work. The group was gathered during three years in bimonthly meetings and its first task, and perhaps the most important one, was the definition of a common language between all institutions, by learning to talk between all members, fixing terminology and procedures, and defining a new field of common knowledge. The Permanent Working Group (Figure 1) has been the engine of the specific definition of the project,

The articulation of a genuine innovation ecosystem helps to effectively advocate the role of public spaces (such as a Public Library) as an open meeting place for all societal stakeholders.



and it brought together representatives of the five participating institutions, each one with different roles, plans of action and objectives and interests in participating:

1. City of Sant Cugat del Vallès: The City of Sant Cugat del Vallès won a new innovative space for its residents, a meeting place and a space where cultural projects with the participation of all the social segments of the city can occur. It allows the city government to experiment and advance on the design of new models of governance with a special focus on citizen participation.

2. Provincial Council of Barcelona (Manager of the Network of Libraries): The LLL endows the Library Network of Provincial Council of Barcelona with a test-bed to locate and identify the challenges that arise on a day-to-day basis, to explore fitted solutions, to test prototype proposals and to propose answers and solutions, all by-with-and-for the users. The scalability of the solutions produced is guaranteed by transferring the validated ones obtained in the LLL to the rest of the libraries of the network.

3. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB): The LLL serves as a physical extension of the university to its adjacent territory. The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona implements through the LLL its own policy of RRI in the territory, and at the same time provides its scientific community with a space to work with citizen science.

4. Computer Vision Center (CVC-UAB): (Research

Center) The Computer Vision Centre gets a place of experimentation and validation of technologies with a high added value, and an implementation space for rapid technology transfer to society through fast prototyping.

5. Association of Neighbours of Volpelleres: Are the final recipients of services and the instigators of the initiative. The Association achieves a strong revitalization and dynamization of the neighbourhood, a collection of innovative activities, and a place to enjoy culture through the latest technological tools.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE VALUE OF THE LIVING LAB WITHIN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

The existence of the Living Lab enriches the day-to-day activity of the library. The continued presence of people with various profiles -scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, ... all of them also "new" library users- provide novel entry points of knowledge and potential opportunities for multi-disciplinary interchange among all participants, starting by the library users and finishing with the professionals who provide the services. On the other hand, there is a direct impact in terms of inclusion: the new range of experiences broadens the scope of the library users, even by attracting people who otherwise would not visit the library, and by increasing the possibility of user interaction and active participation in joint projects with diverse and qualified profiles.

At an institutional level, the articulation of a genuine innovation ecosystem helps to effectively advocate the role



of public spaces (such as a Public Library) as an open meeting place for all societal stakeholders. This fosters the attraction of small and larger companies to the public and cultural sphere and promotes their participation in public-led initiatives. On another level, the local library expands its area of action and activity and this allows multiple projects of not only local but also regional and international reach to occur within its premises. The library is thus transformed into a place where many things can happen, not as a result of abstract improvisation but because of a collaborative work and open and flexible models of organization.

One example of how the LLL experience has served as inspiration, and a catalyst at the same time, for new initiatives to emerge is the recent initiative promoted by the UAB named "ISC2: BiblioLab of social innovation and citizen participation". In this case, the UAB, the CVC-UAB

and three public libraries from towns within the campus' vicinity (Vapor Badia in Sabadell, the Cerdanyola Main Library and the Miquel Batllori Library in Sant Cugat) have come together to launch this project, with the objective of adapting public libraries to the cultural and social changes brought about digital social innovation, thus favouring the creation of collaborative and participative environments open to everyone (Labs ISC2). The project is part of the Barcelona Provincial Council's initiative BiblioLabs, which seeks to promote the role of libraries as drivers of social transformations. The pilot programme will be applied with a first initiative involving secondary school students and how to incorporate concepts of responsible research and innovation (RRI) into their research projects, a subject around which many transformation processes can be conducted through the library labs. Later, other initiatives such as encouraging a vocation of science and digital

skills in young people will also be offered with the aim of transforming libraries into spaces which foster learning, science, innovation and technology.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The Library Living Lab implementation approach has also permitted us to identify and highlight some of the most relevant near-future challenges arising in the context such innovation endeavours. These challenges serve as a starting point for a reflexion on the "Library of the Future" and they have been selected to be part of the white book for the main directives on Future Public Libraries of the Barcelona Provincial Council:

1. The Library of Living Lab was a result of citizen initiative. It will be important to implement social adequate monitoring tools to identify such kind of initiatives, and to accompany them with dynamic policy instruments. The current processes of public administrations are not

adapted to the flexibility needed and it is necessary to develop new methodologies of inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional character, with an obligatory citizen participation and this needs to be revised / updated.

2. In the medium term, the design of public spaces should be tackled as community projects: social actors must be able to participate in the design process in order to make it their own. Participation in the process of defining spaces not only guarantees a technical optimization based on a good design, but also fundamentally integrates a project space within the community.

3. New paradigms of collaboration among all actors of society necessarily imply the need for specific models of economic sustainability. Novel instruments for co-financing / patronage / sponsorship in the quadruple helix scheme must be investigated to enable quick response at the budgetary action level for innovation projects.

4. Citizen participation in innovation processes opens up many questions related to the management of intellectual property rights and the potential exploitation of emerging innovations. These issues can only be solved, given its high complexities and peculiarities, on a case-to-case base. We must therefore identify monitoring and protection mechanisms of the innovation outcomes, which must play a paramount role in the innovation processes.

In short, one of the key challenges for innovation spaces such as the Library Living Lab is to facilitate an efficient way for citizens to have a direct contribution in the processes of defining and implementing new services and activities. This added value can only be achieved through the participation of all stakeholders, and through the meticulous definition of processes and effective policy-making. In the upcoming future technology will undeniably play a very strong role as an enabling and disruptive factor, so it lays upon society -and respective mechanisms of individual and inter-institutional collaboration- to face successfully the most significant societal challenges that will be emerging in the following years. Only in this way, the society will be able to obtain a positive transformative socio-economic impact from the innovative contributions arising from collaborative innovation processes such as the ones proposed by the Library Living Lab and the emerging technological paradigm.

Provided by Dr. Konstantinos and Assoc. Prof. Fernando, Autonomous University of Barcelona

Photo credit Library Living Lab, shutterstock.com

PORTO LIVING LAB: TURNING THE CITY OF PORTO INTO A LAB FOR URBAN SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR SMART CITIES

Porto has been witnessing a remarkable shift in its business profile: its innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem has been able to create innovative companies with high employability rates. Porto can now be considered an aggregator of innovation and entrepreneurship. In this ecosystem, collaborative initiatives become even more important, especially when they gather the elements of the quadruple helix. Therefore, the emergence of the Porto Living Lab was a natural outcome of this new context we are living in and a result of a long-term partnership between the Academia and the Municipality.

CONTEXT

In October 2012, the University of Porto kicked-off the Future Cities project (a European-funded project) to expand the Center of Competence for Future Cities of the University of Porto. The goals were to unlock the full potential of interdisciplinary research in urban technologies, and to strength knowledge transfer activities in close cooperation with local and global industrial partners. Hence, the Center of Competence for Future Cities serves as an agile collaboration platform for a critical mass of scientists and engineers based at various schools of the University of Porto.

In 2013 Porto Digital, the Municipality of Porto and the University of Porto joined efforts towards the creation of the Porto Living Lab. Porto Digital is a private non-profit association, aiming at promoting ICT projects within the context of the city of Porto and its metropolitan area.

Porto Living lab strongly contributed to turning the city of Porto into a smart city and to raising its national and international awareness in the smart cities' domains. This living lab has allowed urban-scale experimentation and

testing by the R&D community, has enabled a free Wi-Fi service to be provided to the public bus users in the city of Porto, engaged with end-users, and has empowered a local start-up company to scale-up to global markets: Veniam.

PROJECT GOALS

Porto Living Lab aims to turn the city of Porto into a lab for urban sciences and technologies for smarter cities, by providing different test beds with a wide range of sensors and communication infrastructures. It, indeed, comprises a network of wireless sensing and communication nodes that is interoperable with the city's optical fiber and Wi-Fi networks.

The living lab is creating the conditions for present and future research and development using advanced technologies for data collection through mobile platforms, wireless communication and large-scale information processing. It enables the development of research in areas such as sustainability, mobility, urban planning and information and communication technology.

Having city-scale digital communication infrastructures, knowledge and technologies on advanced sensing and communication technologies and political will available, Porto Living Lab performs multidisciplinary research and development, deployment of advanced sensing and communication technologies, technology and proof-of-concept testing and demonstration at a city-scale, technology transfer from academia to business, new services exploitation and end-user engagement.

IMPACTS

Porto Living Lab was instrumental in placing, not only



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the University of Porto, but also the city of Porto on the map of smart cities in Europe and worldwide. The project has proven the viability of a city-scale mesh network of connected vehicles that become part of the city infrastructure to expand wireless coverage for a wide range of smart city applications. In addition, Porto Living Lab led to the creation and growth of a university spin-off company, which is successfully translating the results of the basic and applied research into products, services, qualified jobs and export opportunities.

Provided by Catarina Reis, Porto Business School
Photo credit unsplash.com

LA MARINA LIVING LAB: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE HISTORIC HARBOUR BY LEVERAGING ITS HIDDEN POTENTIAL

La Marina Living Lab is an urban laboratory, which seeks to engage citizens in the transformation of "La Marina de Valencia": the historic harbour of the city of Valencia. The Lab is based on a user-oriented process, in which public space is adjusted to the preferences of those who work, study and play in La Marina. Furthermore, it follows a multi-stakeholder approach, counting on the support of research organisations, public administrations, civic associations as well as the private sector.

La Marina is managed by Consorcio València 2007 (CV07) which is a public institution, formed as an alliance between the Government of Spain, the Regional Government of Valencia and Valencia City Council.

La Marina Living Lab does not have its own physical building or laboratory. It is rather an initiative of co-creation and co-design in which CV07 commits to letting the entire urban space of Valencia's harbour be used as a testbed for trying out new innovative projects. La Marina Living Lab is a vast and ambitious project fuelled by the conviction that bringing all relevant stakeholders on board is the only way public spaces can be designed in a way that truly work for everybody.

A HUGE EXAMPLE OF UNIVERSITY-CITY COLLABORATION

La Marina was born in collaboration with Western Sydney University (WSU), which had an important role in the formulation of its theoretical backbone. The Polytechnic University of Valencia also helped in the development of the sustainability strategy. Several other educational insti-

tutions have also collaborated with La Marina. Rice School of Architecture developed a workshop in which 9 students designed solutions to activate old buildings from the south area of La Marina. Escuela de Empresarios launched "Marina Challenge" to develop a strategy for La Marina focused on 3 areas: nautical; leisure, culture and tourism; innovation, technology and entrepreneurship. The faculty of biological sciences of Valencia University also established a project in which students developed ideas to improve the accessibility and use of the space. Polytechnic of Valencia hosted a workshop in which La Marina has been involved, discussing with 3 foreign students the possible and sustainable use for the Base Alinghi de la America's Cup. This University has also contributed to the ideas' exchange between La Marina and universities from Vietnam.

Besides, La Marina has recently realized collaborations with the Scientific Park of the University of Valencia and the Faculty of Geography and History of Valencia University.

LA MARINA HAS A NEW VISION FOR THE FUTURE WHEREBY BOTH TRADITION AND INVENTIVENESS DRIVE THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ECONOMY

The main goals of the Living Lab can be described as converting La Marina into the city's engine for economic development through innovation, promote economic activation of the space, creating a sustainable, inclusive and dynamic public space, and foster citizen appropriation.

The activities performed include events, brainstorming activities, training sessions, leisure activities, workshops and projects, often with the collaboration of universities



from the city and beyond.

THE PROJECT ATTEMPTS TO RESPOND TO VARIOUS CHALLENGES

First of all, at the urban level, La Marina aspires to reactivate economically an abandoned public space with a big potential for social use. It is recognized that such impact will not be limited to La Marina itself but will be expanded to the seaside area and its adjacent neighbourhoods, which were largely overlooked in past decades.

Secondly, La Marina aspires to create a "new story" and re-brand a "new and modern Valencia" as a differentiation to the previous vision defined by short-sighted construction projects, economic overspend and international events. So, this new vision will be oriented towards people, innovation and creativity.

Thirdly, La Marina seeks non-speculative development. Instead of the model dominated by large-scale investment of capital and infrastructure, the new model proposed is based on values – inclusivity, open public space, and activities or initiatives for all citizens. Hence, the project aims to strengthen the connection between neighbourhood associations, and the cultural and artistic vibe, as well as other social entities, in a participative and open way.

La Marina Living Lab is a vast and ambitious project fuelled by the conviction that bringing all relevant stakeholders on board is the only way public spaces can be designed in a way that truly work for everybody.

Provided by Catarina Reis, Porto Business School
Image credit La Marina living Lab

INVESTIGATING THE FUTURE OF URBAN LIVING: THE EXCHANGE AT KNOWLEDGE MARKET

The Exchange at Knowledge Market was an interdisciplinary living lab and a research partnership between RMIT University in Melbourne and Lendlease, an international property and infrastructure group. For a period of 18 months, a team of designers, social scientists and students were embedded at Victoria Harbour in the Docklands, a major urban regeneration project at the edge of Melbourne's central district, leading a series of design studios, research projects and public engagement activities. The area presented specific challenges: Melbourne's Docklands had long suffered a poor reputation as a place to visit, especially in the evenings and on the weekends, when it was perceived as lacking liveliness and character. Lendlease had been running the Knowledge Market as a dedicated learning hub for Melbourne's growing knowledge sector, connecting the precinct's residents, workers and visitors with ideas and experiences.

ACTIVATING VICTORIA HARBOUR

The Exchange at Knowledge Market project (henceforth: The Exchange) began in 2017 with the goal to activate Victoria Harbour. Industry partner Lendlease wanted to draw people to the area, give them a reason to visit and explore: they wanted to enliven the precinct in ways that extended beyond the existing retail and restaurant outlets. Victoria Harbour is furthermore characterised by its distinctive built form which houses corporate headquarters and high-rise apartment complexes. These forms of contemporary architecture are defined by the creation of complete interior environments that provide a range of amenities within the building itself. This sets up a clearly defined barrier between the activities of the occupants within the buildings and their engagement with the surrounding street life.

The team from RMIT University saw a valuable oppor-

tunity to offer a unique, real-world learning experience for their students. It also wanted to bring design and ethnographic research about this area of Melbourne directly into design studio teaching that responded to the Victoria Harbour precinct. Located in an 80m² shopfront facing a local park, The Exchange was envisioned as an attempt to draw people to Victoria Harbour by creating more activity at different times of day and night. It took a unique approach to activating the urban area, combining design ethnographic research with talks, public events, and design studios focusing on designing urban futures that were based in the everyday lived experiences of people occupying the area.

DESIGN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH INFORMING LIVING LAB ACTIVITIES

A series of linked design ethnographic research projects focused on the view and aspirations of the local community, with particular attention to how they made use of and understood their relationship with its buildings and places. In this way, the team were able to consider propositions for intervention or change that worked with what people were already doing or what they valued, rather than trying to impose completely new ways of behaving or unfamiliar understandings of the city. Ethnographic research then informed the design of all activities delivered at The Exchange, which were thus based in the concrete lived experiences of people in Victoria Harbour.

The activities included a full year of RMIT student design studios that investigated and designed for urban futures, using Victoria Harbour as a living lab for their work: this meant taking the learning and teaching process outside of the University lecture halls. Public workshops, forums and other events engaged directly with the community, and that brought a range of experts to speak on some of the



challenges facing cities today. Through the public lecture series, prominent design practitioners shared their insights with an audience made up of students, residents and professional practitioners, while the exhibition program, associated with various Melbourne festivals, attracted diverse crowds to The Exchange and brought their unique outlook to ideas concerning the development of the city.

COLLABORATING ACROSS SECTORS AND DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES

As it developed, The Exchange took shape as an adaptable venue that could cater for a multitude of events: the program of activities clearly demonstrated what is possible when the activation of an urban area grows from the specific conditions of a place without overly strict constraints. To allow for an organic, bottom-up development and growth of the living lab, the project team developed an embedded and site-specific model, where the research, teaching, and design studios were taken outside of academia and students and researchers were able to immerse themselves in the precinct and understand it as "insiders". The project also took an inherently interdisciplinary approach, relying on close collaboration amongst project leaders with disciplinary strengths in design, creative practice and social science, which led to a creative and innovation-oriented working culture. The Exchange

also differed from more conventional ways of conducting 'commissioned' research, which often includes outcomes determined from the beginning of a contractual relationship. Because the project's suite of outcomes were not all entirely predictable, the university and industry partners had to rely on the development of trust and a strong spirit of collaboration.

The concluding event at the Exchange took place in June 2019, with the launch of the project's book *The Exchange at Knowledge Market: An Urban Living Lab* (Ross McLeod, Shanti Sumartojo, Charles Anderson, Natasha Sutula, Sean Hogan, 2019) and short film *The Exchange at Knowledge Market* (Sirap Motion Lab) in June 2019. These outputs explain the project's living lab model for others to adopt and take forward.

Provided by Sara Arko, University of Ljubljana
Photo credit Tobias Titz

MPA MASTERS AT VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

Master Program in Management, Policy Analysis and Entrepreneurship in Health & Life Sciences (further MPA) is a two-year interdisciplinary program taught at the VU University, Amsterdam. Like many other Master programs, it requires students to undertake internships, and submit a Master thesis upon the program completion. MPA seeks to instil multi perspective thinking into a new generation of researchers, policy makers and entrepreneurs who are willing to pursue their careers in the field of health and life sciences. The programme hosts around 110 students every year, and the courses are taught in English.

To provide context, the MPA is taught at the Athena

Institute, Faculty of Science, VU University Amsterdam, Athena's research focuses on the interface between science and technology (in the field of health and life sciences) and society. Athena's mission is to realise excellence in transdisciplinary research on innovation and communication in the health and life sciences, with a specific focus on processes of social inclusion and diversity. The reason behind the development of MPA is in the complexity of societal problems that also require complex solutions with an application of rigorous scientific principles. Such solutions have to be based on the integrated knowledge from numerous scientific disciplines and cooperation between a wide variety of stakeholders in society – starting from the government, industry and societal organizations to ultimate consumers.

The Master programme comprises the compulsory courses, electives (linked to specialization), science courses, and two internships. In total, students are expected to complete 120 ECTS within 2 years. Students can choose among the five specializations: Health & Life Sciences-based Management and Entrepreneurship; Health & Life Sciences-based Policy; Health & Life Sciences-based Policy; International Public Health; and Community-based Health Technologies. The purpose of the two internships is to get students exposed to work experiences in multi-stakeholder organisations and they learn to apply the core elements of the programme in a real-world setting.

The programme is successful in broadening the outlook of students and facilitating their development into multi-stakeholder problem-solvers in order to address complex societal issues. After the programme students have the knowledge, attitudes and skills to analyse complex societal issues, formulate and implement strategies to deal with them and to effectively cooperate and communicate both with societal actors and with researchers from different disciplines. Another important element for success is the structure of the MPA program that combines classroom learning with two practical experiences via intern-

The programme is successful in broadening the outlook of students and facilitating their development into multi-stakeholder problem-solvers in order to address complex societal issues.



ships that allow plenty of opportunities for the students for growth, and integration into the professional network. In addition, the enabling nature of the local policies, fostering collaborative innovation, and consideration of the innovation in health sciences as a priority, coupled with the institutional culture that fosters interdisciplinary research can be considered as two major supporting mechanisms for the successful implementation of the programme. The programme thus has a strong impact on the employability of its students, which also contributes to the fostering of innovation in the regional health sector. According to the MPA programme representatives, the 95% of the students find employment within the first year of graduation. The professional field strongly appreciates with the quality of MPA students and graduates. Students find their way to the job market, and of the last two cohorts of students (n=189) only six alumni do not have a formal position.

Over the years MPA established itself as a robust and mature programme. It has a sustainable number of stu-

dents, it fulfils the expectations and learning requirements, the teaching team is well established, highly motivated and the prospect for graduates is very promising.

Provided by Hacer Tercanli, University Industry Innovation Network

Photo credit Athena Institute, VU University

CHALLENGE LAB - WHERE LEARNERS LEAD AND LEARN

An initiative by the Chalmers University of Technology, Challenge Lab is a collaborative project that aims to reinforce students and the university as active part within local and regional ecosystems. It exists around the facilitation of direct conversation amongst stakeholders that, led by the students' initiative, intend to identify contemporary issues and potential points of leverage for future action. This multidisciplinary cooperation tries to introduce systemic change in the university structure, bridging the gap between education and utilization.

Linked to their Master Thesis, participating in the Lab does not entail extra credits for its participants. Instead, it offers students the opportunity to develop their understanding of the complexity of societal challenges, applying their own vision for a sustainable future and engaging with industry, academics and municipalities to navigate the intricacies of their topic, and strengthen the accuracy of their line of questioning. Priority is given to the adequate definition of the issue, over the potential delivery of specific solutions.

A PROGRAMME BUILT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Challenge Lab appeared in 2013 as a response to the resistance of societal actors to deeply engage in the conversation to solve modern urban issues. Inspired by a water management project completed in Barcelona, Prof. John Holmberg proposed the creation of an independent body within the university to promote the development of concepts in pursuit of sustainable development. This autonomy from the traditional university structure aims to combine expertise from a variety of disciplines in order to tackle complex issues such as urban mobility, waste production, housing or clean energy.

One of the unique characteristics of Challenge Lab is the introduction of students as neutral, unthreatening intermediaries to drive the conversation, with the hope that business, industry, researchers and municipalities would play a more active role without the need to protect their own financial or intellectual stake. Innovation is enhanced by strict criteria of multidisciplinary research, where pairs of students allocated to specific topics are always from different academic backgrounds. This diversity aims to reflect the complexity of urban challenges, encouraging students to develop a collaborative mindset.

HOW IS THE MASTER'S THESIS COMPONENT STRUCTURED?

The Master Thesis Lab complements the standard Master Thesis module, and offers a co-creative environment for students to deliver a research project with real life impact. Each thesis is completed in pairs, accepted by the departments of Architecture and Civil Engineering; Engineering for Sustainable Development; Mechanical, Automation, Naval and Industrial Design Engineering; and Technology and Learning. It is also accepted by the Gothenburg School of Business, Economics and Law. This joint research method is considered to increase the quality of



the thesis.

The semester prior to the beginning of the programme, students are introduced to fundamental sustainability principles, encouraging their own understanding of the topic and exposing them to concepts that will inform their thesis. This course, called 'Leadership for sustainability transitions', is part of the department of Space, Earth and Environment, and its completion increases the probability for students to be accepted to the Master Thesis Lab.

Access to the programme is via open application in September-October, including a motivation statement. After screening and a series of interviews, acceptance of candidates aims for a diverse range of students, with different background and with a flexible approach to modern urban issues.

HIGH IMPACT AND RECOGNITION OF THE PROGRAMME

The development of the Master Thesis Lab allows students to tackle modern issues while considering a wider range of perspectives. Thanks to the implementation of multidisciplinary approaches, and the focus on systems innovation, students develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of social challenges allowing for more inclusive and comprehensive research. This holistic model, and the iterative process with academics and practitioners help students deliver research that is relevant and with high level of applicability. Despite the focus of Chal-

lenge Lab being centred around the conversation between stakeholders, the consistent engagement of businesses and municipality creates an opportunity for the outcome of research projects to be developed and implemented.

With regards to the dialogue between researchers, industry and municipality, the more casual debate led by students facilitates an increase in the engagement by external stakeholders. Not being subject to the formal requirements of institutionalized exchange, representatives of businesses and governing bodies perceive the Lab as a place to discuss modern issues, support the student community and access an innovative source of ideas.

Challenge Lab received the Green Gown Award 2016, in the category of Student Engagement for Europe. These awards are organized by the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES), and supported by United Nations Environment Programme and the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC).

Provided by Fernando Fernandez, IMTBS
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The Challenge Lab offers students an opportunity to develop their understanding of societal challenges, applying their own vision for a sustainable future.

UPCOMING EVENTS



2nd International Urban Mobility Dialogue

UMD is an important intellectual gathering of cities and leading experts in the field of mobility as well as a special opportunity for your successful professional advancement.

Location: Berlin, Germany
Date: 13.11.2019 - 16.11.2019
[visit the event website](#)

Smart City Challenge

Smart City Challenge is a competition where you develop solutions to specific issues, that contributes to a better future in Frederiksberg. Everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee.

Location: Frederiksberg, Denmark
Date: annual
[visit the event website](#)

Urban Future global Conference

The URBAN FUTURE Global Conference gathers CityChangers from all over the world – passionate people who drive change towards more sustainable cities..

Location: Lisbon, Portugal
Date: 1.04.2020 - 3.04.2020
[visit the event website](#)

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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS



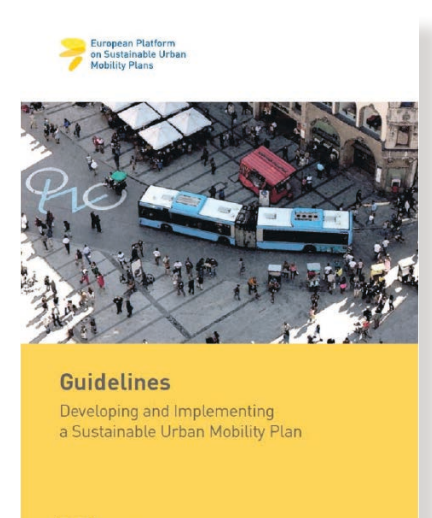
A Research Agenda for New Urbanism is a forward-looking book composed of chapters by leading scholars of New Urbanism. Authors focus on multiple topics, including affordability, transportation, social life and retail to highlight the areas of research that are most important for the future of the field.

[Access the book](#)



The Sustainable Development Goals provide a common international framework for concrete action. The publication provides a reader with an outlook of how and where universities have become a key player in achieving SDGs.

[Access the publication](#)



Urban mobility planning is a challenging and complex task. These guidelines are intended for urban transport and mobility practitioners and other stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan.

[Access the guidelines](#)



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