



UNIVERCITY  
ACTION LAB

The Netherlands

## Good Practice Case Study

AMSTELhuis Living Lab

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## PROJECT PARTNERS



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## GENERAL INFORMATION

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<b>Title of the case</b>	AMSTELhuis living lab		
<b>Sales pitch</b>	Cooperation between a university of applied science and a residential community for improving the experience of the senior citizens in Amsterdam.		
<b>Organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amstelhuis</li> <li>• Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences</li> </ul>		
<b>Country</b>	The Netherlands		
<b>Authors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alina Meloyan</li> <li>• Hacer Tercanli</li> </ul>		
<b>Nature of interaction</b>	Residential community and university tackling a city challenge		
<b>Level of mechanism</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Government policy (e.g. law, funding framework) <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational strategy (e.g. university/business/agency) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structural element (e.g. centre, lab, office) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Operational level (e.g. activity or programme)		
<b>Length of programme</b>	Not specified	Formality	Formal
<b>Curricula-bound, co or extra-curricular?</b>	Curricula-bound	Level of initiative	Cross-disciplinary

## Summary

The AMSTELhuis living lab (further AMSTELhuis) is run under the umbrella of the Urban Vitality research programme at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (further AUAS). It unites several university faculties that carry out research and various projects on senior citizens' wellbeing. The AMSTELhuis also provides ample opportunities for students to apply the knowledge received at the university during their traineeships while helping elderly people feel welcome in their new home and improving their experience of living in the community of people of advanced age.



## CASE STUDY PROFILE

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### BACKGROUND

The AMSTELhuis in Amsterdam, founded in 2015, functions both as a residential facility for senior citizens aged 70 and over, and as a profuse practical research environment for the AUAS.

AMSTELhuis senior citizens live in a community where community members would like to stay around the people of their age and needs, and, at the same time, enjoy a relatively independent life. The AMSTELhuis has many social facilities to offer, e.g. a residents' club, a bar, a restaurant, a library, a room for supervised fitness, and physiotherapy practice. The residents' club provides meeting space for both the AMSTELhuis residents and elderly people living in the neighbourhood. By organising an opportune social and living environment, the AMSTELhuis addresses an increasing need of elderly people for company and support.

AUAS students, lecturers and researchers coming from the faculties of Health, Applied Social Sciences and Law, Sports and Nutrition, as well as Digital Media and Creative Industries collaborate in interdisciplinary teams working on various projects under the overarching research programme called Urban Vitality.

- AUAS and the AMSTELhuis are engaged in a 5-year collaboration on a contractual basis. The first year of collaboration was spent conducting extensive testing of what could be an actual common working ground for the AMSTELhuis and the university. Upon the end of the testing period, three major topics for collaboration emerged, namely social inclusion, movement and nutrition.

### CONTEXT

In Amsterdam, the need for housing like the AMSTELhuis is justified with two reasons. First, the Amsterdam municipality is striving to make such a vibrant and dynamic city, with a vast number

of immigrants and expats, an age-friendly place to live as well [1]. Second, the Amsterdam municipality also recognises the ever-increasing issue of loneliness, especially among senior citizens [2].

The age-friendly city concept was introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2002 [3]. Since 2006, a WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities has been active, and accounts for 760 communities and cities across 33 countries as of September 2018 [4]. Amsterdam became a part of this network in 2015. Researchers from AUAS are also involved in the process of making Amsterdam an age-friendly city through a number of programs.

Loneliness is getting recognized as a public health threat as well. The city invests 1 million euros per year for tackling the issue of loneliness among its citizens [2]. Urban Vitality programme and the AMSTELhuis have been working together since 2015, and made the topic of social inclusion of senior citizens, along with their activity and nutrition, a cornerstone of their cooperative efforts. The emphasis is put on the residents' own strength and self-management as they are believed to be important to give seniors as much independence in their life as possible while involving them into socially benefitting activities.

## OBJECTIVES AND MOTIVATIONS

The AMSTELhuis and AUAS share a common ambition to organize the space for elderly citizens so that they can live an independent life that is meaningful and enriched with a variety of informal social activities. The management of the AMSTELhuis and AUAS take on the role of a facilitator, leaving the citizens fairly autonomous in their choice of social activities and mode of life in general.

## STAKEHOLDERS

The primary stakeholders are the **residents of the AMSTELhuis** who are the ultimate recipients of the programme benefits. They directly participate in the research projects when interacting with students. The other group of stakeholders that share similar benefits with the senior residents is the **people from the neighbouring community**.

The stakeholders coming from the university side are twofold. **Students** support the residents of the AMSTELhuis and help them organise social activities. While providing a helping hand, students collect data for their research projects. **Researchers**, taking the role of supervisors, collaborate with their students in interdisciplinary teams and work on various projects carried out in the Urban Vitality research programme.

**The AMSTELhuis management** team participate in supporting daily functions of the residency, as well as collaboration with outer stakeholders.

**Welfare organisation of the neighbourhood** organises social and supporting activities, e.g. family meals, informal caretaking, inviting people from the neighbourhood, etc.

### INPUT

#### Human resources

The AMSTELhuis – Urban Vitality research programme involves 103 people, most of whom are researchers, doctoral candidates, teachers and supporting staff.

Manager-director Cocon Vastgoed Management BV<sup>7</sup>, manager-secretary and employees of bar and restaurant

#### Financial resources

AUAS and Urban Vitality Programme participate in co-financing. Others are subsidies from ZonMW and SIA Raak Public subsidies.

#### Physical resources

The Urban Vitality research program has two primary locations. It starts at the AUAS, that united the faculties of Health, Applied Social Sciences and Law, Sports and Nutrition, as well as Digital Media and Creative Industries for working on the projects affiliated to the program. AUAS is a 20-minute walk away from the AMSTELhuis. The AMSTELhuis is a multi-storied building located in Amsterdam City on the Amstel riverbank.

### ACTIVITIES

The activities carried out in the AMSTELhuis, within the Urban Vitality research programme, are majorly framed into the projects. The ongoing projects are centered around three main themes: fall prevention, healthy nutrition and social inclusion.

Exercise Therapy students give weekly lessons in fall prevention, and a study about fall prediction has been performed. The purpose of the training and the study is to prevent and predict falls, to allow for quicker action in the future and to make elderly people feel more confident in terms of their postural stability. In addition to training, Exercise Therapy students study physical activity among the elderly.

Healthy nutrition for the seniors is a frequent subject in research, information and advice. As part of the AUAS Food Lab, Nutrition & Dietetics students do research on the same subject as well. Together with the residents' club of the AMSTELhuis, the Food Lab organises tasting events where residents can taste sustainable and vegetarian food. Furthermore, the Food Lab does research on marketing the AMSTELhuis restaurant and making it more attractive for elderly people living in the neighbourhood.

For supporting residents' well-being, it is important they have a social network of co-residents, family and friends. Research by Occupational Therapy students shows that some of the new residents find it difficult to connect with other residents when moving into the AMSTELhuis.

Students investigate what assistance is needed to help strengthen the social network of new residents upon their arrival and further on.

Within the last three years, three projects were completed in the AMSTELhuis. These three include the assessment of fall risk, development of the acceptance procedure to the residential facility and a study of a home exercise programme for the elderly to improve their daily physical functioning.



## OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

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### OUTPUTS

#### Research

The research results of the Urban Vitality programme lead to practical solutions (manuals, instruments, healthcare programs, etc.) for the residents and patients. The results also find their way in publications (see the publication section) and lectures at AUAS.

#### Education

The research carried out at the AMSTELhuis has led to the launch of two new master programs, i.e. Topzorg-Topsport and Critical Care. Also, students have an opportunity to get some hands-on experience during their traineeships in the AMSTELhuis.

### IMPACTS

The impact that is made by the Urban vitality programme can hardly be underestimated. The overall aim that the AMSTELhuis and the AUAS are trying to reach is noble at its inception. The basic idea of the AMSTELhuis is to enable its residents to live independently as long as possible in a pleasant environment where they can meet other seniors and take part in social activities. The AUAS, in turn, provides the research-based solutions which are tailored in accordance with the needs of the AMSTELhuis residents for improving their living environment.

## SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT & SYSTEM

### SUPPORTING MECHANISMS

The enabling policy environment of the Amsterdam municipality and the AUAS for tackling aging as a societal challenge, as well as operational units and projects in place are contributing to the success of the programme.

The program goes through an annual internal evaluation. There is a quantitative and qualitative evaluation in the impact dashboard, monitoring contribution of students, researchers and

lecturers, and the outcome of research, advice and new products for the residents or management. We also monitor communication with national and international partners and the impact on (social) media and platforms.

Furthermore, there are continuing projects on the methods of fall prevention, which have built on the outcome of the previous projects.

## **BARRIERS AND DRIVERS**

### Barriers

- Insufficient funding for research
- Collaboration gaps between students and supervisors from the university
- Interviews being used as the main method of data collection by students. Alternative methods of research are welcome as the excess of interviews may tire the AMSTELhuis residents in their advanced age

### Drivers

- Personal interest and commitment of the stakeholders, staff, and the project manager involved support further development of the initiative



## **LESSONS LEARNED**

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### **CHALLENGES**

- Since the AMSTELhuis provides the research opportunities as a testing ground where people of advanced age live, it is important to make sure that students and researchers know about the limitations of working with people of such an age and for whom the residence is a home, not a lab.
- Students need additional supervision and attention to be able to respond to unexpected situations and deal with uncertainty. Supervisors need to exceed the usual level of provided supervision.
- Changes in behaviour of the AMSTELhuis management team.
- Reaching a mutual understanding of a shared vision and ambition, as well as the processes of learning.

### **KEY SUCCESS FACTORS**

- Vision and ambition shared and supported by the management, employees of the AMSTELhuis, researchers and students from the AUAS
- Interdisciplinary collaboration between the AMSTELhuis and AUAS, which concerns residents, employees, researchers and students from the Faculties of Health and Sports and Nutrition, ICT professionals (care technology) and designers

- Understanding that the AMSTELhuis residents, their comfort and safety are of primary concern
- Effective communication of students & researchers with the AMSTELhuis residents, their ability to listen and respond appropriately to the resident's needs
- Willingness and confidence to learn together and speak to one another, respecting each other's views
- Clear leadership and steering mechanisms, a flat organisational structure
- Active involvement of family and carers both in the Society and when providing information on the developments of projects and studies
- Applicability of research results that bring in the change and the development of new behaviour
- Willingness to practice new behaviour by all involved stakeholders, i.e. residents, family and carers, employees, researchers, students and volunteers
- Peer review and thematic meetings that allow people to reflect and discuss with one another activities and projects they would like to be involved in



## FURTHER INFORMATION

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### AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

NA

### TRANSFERABILITY

The same residency model type for elderly people is about to be replicated in Amsterdam for people coming from Turkey and Morocco, as well as from the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname.

### PUBLICATIONS

Van Den Berg, F. (2016). Zorginstelling-nieuwe-stijl. TvV Tijdschrift Voor Verzorgenden, 48(5), 14–19: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41183-016-0059-1>

Rathenau Institute Living Labs in Nederland: <https://www.rathenau.nl/nl/vitale-kennisecosystemen/living-labs-nederland>

S. Majoor e.a. Laboratorium Amsterdam: <http://www.hva.nl/kc-techniek/gedeelde-content/publicaties/publicaties-algemeen/laboratorium-amsterdam.html>

## LINKS

AMSTELhuis official website: <http://hetAMSTELhuis.nl/>

AMSTELhuis - Urban Vitality programme page: <http://www.hva.nl/urban-vitality/living-labs/AMSTELhuis--living-lab/het-AMSTELhuis.html>

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