

UNIVERCITY ACTION LAB

e - magazine



ISSUE 4

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GREETINGS FROM THE UCITYLAB CONSORTIUM

The fourth biannual issue of the UCITYLAB Project has arrived. Despite the challenges, universities and their partners continue to forge strong alliances and the UCITYLAB consortium perseveres to bring you all the latest project updates. In this Autumn 2020 issue, we will be diving into some success stories of European university-city co-operation. As always, outputs of the project can be found on our website www.ucitylab.eu - a valuable resource for universities that are looking to build networks and create educational interventions to address city challenges.

We will be showcasing some case studies of university-city collaboration from all across Europe, including the Netherlands, France, Poland, Finland, Slovenia and Belgium. The cases include a wide range of topics including, how a Dutch university is equipping students with both creative and entrepreneurial skills through a series of challenges (p.12); a new master's programme tackling Urban and Regional strategies (p.10); students and experts identifying the impact of stress (p.8); using a mobile application to help students acquire professional skills (p.14); solutions to mobility challenges in Finland (p.16); how a mining town went from black to green (p.18); and facing wicked problems in the city of Ghent (p.20).

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 and achievements of university-city collaborations.

Finally, we hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy, trying to stay home as much as possible during this notorious COVID-19 pandemic. We hope you enjoy your 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

UCITYLAB PROJECT: OUR RESOURCES

Over the duration of the UCITYLAB project, a number of valuable resources have been generated, such as our case studies and our teacher training kit. These documents can be used by anyone looking to learn more about the collaboration between universities and cities, or how to set up their own teaching programme which invites students to think along with stakeholders in finding solutions to urban challenges.

GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDIES

This report includes presentations and analyses of good practices in the area of university-city co-operation from 27 different cases. It includes input provided by all project partners, as well as an analysis on the set-up and functioning of selected university-city co-operation practices. The goal of the report is to highlight existing practices and urban collaboration models in order to inform European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who are looking to sustainably engage with their cities through research and hands-on student projects.

These case studies capture the diverse partnership arrangements of European HEIs in with their urban environment, focusing on topics including community sustainability, ICT, (e-)mobility and energy, social interaction, and spatial development. The individual case studies can be seen in the UCITYLAB Case Studies Collection.

STATUS QUO REPORT

The Status Quo Report details the current state of university-city co-operation. It describes the activities taking place, the system and environment in which they take place, and the factors affecting this collaboration for each of the four university partners. The report provides an understanding of the context in which university-city co-operation takes place, in order to provide better planning and management of the system. Existing research and literature sources are employed to describe the relationships between these two parties, whilst the reports from the four university partners provide a practical perspective on the topic.

UCITYLAB CHALLENGE TEACHING TOOLKIT

The UCITYLAB Challenge Teaching Toolkit provides guidance for university lecturers and study-programme managers to implement a relevant problem-based course module in co-operation with city stakeholders. The Toolkit is a living document that can be continuously updated with experience from practice. Among other features, the Toolkit provides a syllabus, course modules and methods to assess students of the City Challenge Programme.

The final version of the Toolkit, supplemented with this practical experience, is freely available to assist higher education institutions in developing a problem-based learning module, in partnership with external stakeholders, that focuses on urban sustainability challenges.

NETWORK ROADMAP

The Stakeholder's Network Roadmap is a collection of experiences from partner HEIs and was used to support the planning and creation of a stakeholder network. This network was used to develop urban sustainability challenge-based projects.

In general, this roadmap further aims to serve as a platform to develop closer relationships between cities and universities so they may collaborate on common challenges. They can achieve this by aligning their activities with local and regional urban development and innovation agendas, and thus solve their common challenges collaboratively.

In this context, the main objectives of the Network Roadmap are to get relevant urban stakeholders to endorse the project aims; aid these stakeholders in defining a common vision and actions to attain it; and gaining their commitment through the signing of a joint agreement.

This document is a guideline for other stakeholders interested in creating and launching similar sustainable university-city relations initiatives.

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUTS

Case Studies Report (IO1)

The report includes presentations and analyses of cases of good practices in the area of university-city cooperation.

27
case studies

25
European

2
International

16
countries

Case studies
per country

Challenge Teaching Toolkit (IO3)

Provides guidance for university lecturers and study programme managers to implement a hands-on, real-life, and problem-based course module in cooperation with city stakeholders.

Pilot Implementation (IO4)

Our partner universities have been taking different pathways to implement the pilot-test of the project.



Network Roadmap (IO2)

Intended to support the planning and creation of a network of stakeholders for the development of urban sustainability challenge-based projects. It's used as a:

- A.** Description and explanation of concepts and ideas
- B.** Guidance step by step
- C.** Resources for Replication

Learning Platform (IO5)

A course for the educators to learn how to help develop social and environmental responsibility, innovative mindset and social entrepreneurship skills among their students. Currently under development.

GENERATING IDEAS WITH 20CREATHON

CREATE SURPRISING SOLUTIONS FOR SOCIAL ISSUES

20Creathon is managed by the University of Twente, and offers students the opportunity to combine the skills gained in their course with the expertise provided by representatives of academia, industry and government bodies. This creative exchange is created around the social implications of digital technology, encouraging students to become responsible innovators and embrace the principles of sustainability and social justice.

As well as an economic prize for the winning team, 20Creathon offers the opportunity for the most robust ideas to be integrated in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The combination of lectures, creative workshops and collaborative activities creates an experience that aims to maximise students' ingenuity, and to introduce experts from industry and governance to fresh ideas to resolve current urban challenges.

20Creathon focuses on how the digitalisation of society, innovation in IT services and the development of data collection and management solutions can help public authorities deliver sustainable growth. The organisation highlights the social component of the creative process, encouraging students and other stakeholders to reflect on the impact that their creations can have not only on the municipality but on the society that they represent.

The project is structured around weekend challenges celebrated at the university premises. Prior to the event, members of 20Creathon propose a series of questions to representatives of 'Challenge providers' i.e. local or regional authorities and/or businesses. These initial ideas are discussed based on existing priorities for public bodies, and potential impact that might arise from the

event. A variety of groups from different universities attend the weekend event. With the assistance of researchers, representatives of the municipality and the business community, the proposal of digital solutions is shaped on the basis of potential applicability and societal benefit.

The main objective is to explore the application of open data and digitalisation to modern issues, and the potential to establish clear collaboration and enhance synergy between business, education and government.

IMPACTS

The concept of 20Creathon is a reflection of the commitment of UTwente to the delivery of programmes that encourage entrepreneurial and creative skills within its community. It aims to redefine the role of students within the educational community, engaging in collaborative events designed around the application of digital solutions for existing societal challenges.

Some of these project impacts are:

- Develop the entrepreneurial spirit of participants
- Expose students and young professionals to the benefits of knowledge transfer, creating opportunities for future cooperation
- High level of engagement by students, exposing them to high pressure environments and allowing them to create solutions that can be further developed
- Students improve their group working and communication skills
- Bridging the gap between technology and governance
- Public servants understand the potential of digital

solutions to achieve inclusive growth, improving performance and reach within their daily activities

- Businesses and academics identify specific needs of the public sector, and enhance the potential applicability of their solutions by government agencies and policy-makers

The structure, consistency, and multi-stakeholder collaboration demonstrated through the 20Creathon programme allows for its success and transferability.

Provided by: Farley Sawyer

MAIN PARTNERS

Novel  **T**
innovate & accelerate

**UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE.**

provincie  **Overijssel**



PROJET COLLECTIF & MASTER'S OF URBAN AND REGIONAL STRATEGY

TRAINING FOR URBAN GOVERNANCE IN FRANCE AND EUROPE

The Master's of Regional and Urban Strategy (Stratégies territoriales et urbaines, STU) prepares students for professional practice in the field of urban policy and governance. A key component of year 1 is the module 'Projet collectif', in which students are exposed to real life scenarios. The module runs from October until June and provides an opportunity for students to engage with a variety of stakeholders in order to develop suitable proposals. Topics focus on the implementation of sustainability principles, public participation and social cohesion, in order to complement the theoretical content of the Master's programme.

The STU Master's programme is a combination of theoretical background and exposure to professional practice. The group project module exemplifies that plurality of inputs, and challenges students to complete a research project that fulfils not only the academic requirements of their course, but also the expectations of professional practitioners.

The programme puts students into groups of four based on their interests and diverse backgrounds from their undergraduate studies. The topics of interest are submitted by the local stakeholders and are then chosen after an internal evaluation. A mentor is chosen to overview each of the projects. This individual can be a representative of the university, industry or municipality, and the selection is based on their area of expertise and the proposed methodologies. An example of topics treated during the 2018-2019 year were:

- Use of numerical data for the optimisation of

urban regeneration projects

- Change of dynamics for municipalities and regions within the renewable energy markets through the use of urban policy
- State of public participation in medium-to-large sized settlements

Students must attend scheduled sessions while also developing their line of investigation, collecting and analysing data, and defining proposals. Students must also allocate extra time in order to complete their in-depth research. This includes the arrangement of interviews with specialist practitioners, communication with stakeholders, field trips for data collection and observation, and assessment sessions with members of the municipality. At the end of their second semester, students must submit an extensive report that summarises their findings, research methodology and proposals, as well as make a public presentation of their concept.

DEVELOPED SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

This interdisciplinary approach gives students an opportunity to gain first-hand experience, build a network, receive expert feedback, expand their research skills, and pursue a Master's degree. The design of the programme combines the traditional research structure with guidance and methodology suggested by representatives of the municipality and other practitioners. There were several noted impacts from this programme, which varied based on the stakeholder engaged.

For the Urban School and Sciences Po University:

- A more robust connection between the theoretical background explained during the course and the



reality of professional practice

For the students:

- A set of soft skills that will facilitate their transition into the professional career
- Increased technical capabilities in the use of professional software such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and statistical analysis
- Potential employment opportunities for postgraduates

For the local community:

- A good quality document that can inform future lines of investigation for municipalities
- A new dimension for the municipality, with up-to-date information and relevant use of the available data
- Potential recruitment considerations to strengthen the capabilities of the department
- Innovative ideas and research paths instigating a conversation within the government agencies to implement change within their structure
- Consideration of the allocation of resources to pursue solutions that were explored by student groups

The structure of the group project for their urban studies courses are already being replicated by other universities. The basic framework is easy to transfer

to other contexts. However, the success of the project requires the accumulation of an extensive network of practitioners and collaborators. This one year module built into a larger Master's programme can be a valuable reference point for similar initiatives in the future.

Provided by: Farley Sawyer

MAIN PARTNERS

SciencesPo
URBAN SCHOOL

SciencesPo

FRANCE
URBAINE
MÉTROPOLES, AGGLOS ET GRANDES VILLES

UTRECHT CO-CHALLENGES & CO-CREATES

The collaborative efforts of the scientific world and the society have taken place in various areas of human life. This collaboration has proven to be more sustainable when happens at the interface of different scientific fields and includes different stakeholders. The Utrecht Co-challenge course recognises the importance of all-inclusiveness, and offers opportune ground for students, governmental bodies and the corporate world to tackle issues and see to the demands of today's society. Launched in 2014 by Prof. dr. Harold van Rijen and ing. Michele Gerbrands, the Utrecht Co-challenge is an elective course for talented youth of the University of Utrecht and Utrecht University of Applied Sciences (HU). It allows the participants to engage in fast-paced, information-rich, and collaborative forms of learning, and the application of skills to deliver solutions for the client organization.

WHAT'S IN THE PLAN?

The goal of the course is to personally and professionally prepare participants for the world of work, with its emphasis on the development of relevant skills, including pitching, networking, intercultural communication, creativity, giving and receiving feedback, and business modelling. With this goal in mind, the organisation team, speakers and coaches of the program create a safe and inspiring learning environment where the participants learn to work in an interdisciplinary team and solve a real-world problem in collaboration with professionals from the educational and corporate world. Furthermore, the learners also get a chance to extend their professional network and brand themselves.

Although the programme is officially launched at the University Medical Center Utrecht (UMCU), in order to achieve an interdisciplinary approach to team building and knowledge generation, it is also open for students of all backgrounds from Utrecht University and Utrecht

University of Applied Sciences. The problems that students need to solve are not in the biomedical domain, but there is an opportunity for them to prepare themselves, personally and professionally, for working world. Such inclusion allows participants to work with peers from various backgrounds.

WHAT'S THE CO-CHALLENGE ABOUT?

On average, 20-25 students attend the Co-challenge course each year, working in groups of five. The program is run over two weeks and are filled with a wide range of activities.

In the first week, the Co-challenge starts with a plenary workshop where participants get acquainted with their peers and form teams. After a series of inspirational sessions and workshops, the teams analyse the identified problem and prepare an interview with the client. During the analysis process, students are supported by mentors, e.g. in case of the mental pressure problem, a student-psychologist shares his knowledge on the issue, a researcher gives insights from an academic perspective, and an entrepreneur tells more on how to cope with mental pressure. The workshops prepare students to practice certain skills needed to develop a concept, such as techniques to investigate the problem and create several creative solutions. Mid-week, teams pitch their concept at a networking event and receive feedback. The first week is wrapped up with student teams peer-reviewing each other.

The agenda of the second week is filled with workshops on intercultural communication and business modelling. The teams finish shaping their working concept and create a team/individual elevator pitch that is video recorded for the client. The activity is supervised by a coach who guides teams in preparing and delivering their pitch. Then they present the final concept to the client and a jury. The jury includes companies' CEOs, municipality representatives, students who have started their own businesses,

professors, and the clients of the projects. In the end, the teams draw up an advisory report for the client, who can then choose to use one or multiple projects.

A NEW CHALLENGE IS ON THE HORIZON?

Yes, it is! The challenge is to identify interventions preventing the impact of mental pressures experienced by students who study in Utrecht, as the city is one of the major student hubs in the Netherlands. Nationally, several studies about performance pressure and stress experienced among students have been published and revealed unfavourable results that require a call to action. Thus, the goal of this Co-challenge is to understand and relieve some of the pressure before it leads to mental and physical problems. Provisionally, the stress levels can be tuned down by creating awareness, shaping a safe study environment, educating teachers and counsellors, and improving the types of targeted outreach. Hopefully, the Co-challenge will show more ways on how to tackle the problem.

Image credits: Co-Challenge

Provided by: Alina Meloyan



CREATIVE DESIGN SEMESTER AND UNISTARTAPP

CREATIVE DESIGN SEMESTER AND UNISTARTAPP GIVE STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUIRE THE ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED BY EMPLOYERS OF TODAY

The Warsaw Design Factory, located at the Warsaw University of Technology, aims to build an innovative university in order to develop the skills of their students. With this initiative, the university aims to develop professional skills that are missing in formal university curricula; improve the interdisciplinarity achieved through multifaceted teams with students from different areas; and improve the competences of their academic staff.

The Creative Design Semester is an additional semester targeted at 1st and 2nd degree students from various faculties of the Warsaw University of Technology to prepare them for the business world. One of the most important projects implemented jointly with the authorities of several cities in Poland was UniStartApp. This project made use of academic education, giving their participants ETCS points for this project, while remaining consistent with the start-up creation methodology.

The UniStartApp was run through defined stages and the milestones assigned to each one of the stages: from the application idea, through competitor analysis, identification of user requirements, creation of the final product vision and supporting business model, requirement specification, summary of business-system analysis and final programming workshop. This project began in the early 2016 and was concluded in November of the same year, with the gala event at Warsaw University of Technology, attended by all the project partners as well the representatives from the Ministries of Development and of Digitization, the Office of Electronic Communications, venture capital organisations, tech companies and the Polish Agency for Entrepreneurship Development

DEVELOPED SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

Interdisciplinary teams, composed of students from the faculties of management, finance and IT worked on the concept and prototype of an application in line with the idea of a smart city. Qualified experts have supervised the groups' activities, leading to the creation of applications aimed at helping job seeking activities, organizing events and improving urban infrastructure, among others.

The UniStartApp project was a unique and innovative initiative preparing students to be the entrepreneurs of the future. Some of these competencies were:

- Interdisciplinary communication within teams (particularly between programmers and non-tech participants)
- Learning how to work virtually with teams, improving co-operation capacity in a virtual environment – competencies highly expected in a digitalized business environment
- Widening horizons
- T-shape people, which means that each student learned skills outside their training area
- Entrepreneurship education

Traditional university structures are not yet ready for the interdisciplinary and interorganizational co-operation that are at the core of future start-up leaders' formation process. Ecosystems like the one tested within UniStartApp project, can be a valuable reference point for similar initiatives in the future.

Provided by: Catarina Reis



MAIN PARTNERS



MIASTO
STOŁECZNE
WARSZAWA

**Warsaw University
of Technology**

WdF



ITS FACTORY

SEEKING SOLUTIONS FOR MOBILITY CHALLENGES THROUGH PUBLIC-PRIVATE CO-OPERATION

ITS Factory is a public-private collaborative platform that aims to maximise synergies to develop innovative solutions in the field of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). Reflecting the complexity of modern urban challenges, the ecosystem facilitates communication between the public sector, academia and businesses.

The development of solutions through the ITS structure creates a two-way exchange, from which developers and researchers gain access to the available data from public sources, and the region benefits from the production of the latest concepts in urban mobility. For the student community, this collaborative environment creates an opportunity to gain exposure to the iterative process that informs technological creativity, and to become more aware of the social component that is attached to the development of solutions for the modern urban environment.

Modern mobility solutions, and the application of technology, relies heavily in the collection, storage and distribution of data. There is an increasing awareness of the potential for open data to unlock unlimited solutions to deliver the promise of smart communities and sustainable urban ecosystems. The main objective of the initiative is to generate a collaborative community specialised in the delivery of intelligent transport solutions. By attracting as many stakeholders as possible, ITS Factory aims to make Tampere an international pole in the field of mobility innovation.

COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

Together with the constantly expanding network of private actors, there are several institutions within public governance and education that participate in a more permanent role to provide infrastructure, data, and financial support. The different partners are allowed to develop their own ideas and execute specific projects within the realm

of ITS. Some of the core activities include:

- ITS Factory development
- Commercialisation and marketing activities
- Facilitation for developers
- Testing facilities
- Interaction with end-user

The integration of ITS Factory within the Business Tampere structure allowed for a more streamlined co-creation process, resulting in the following impacts from this collaboration:

- Commercialisation of products and services
- Creation of new research and development opportunities
- Development of industry standards for the creation, exchange and management of data
- Access to innovative transport solutions for the City of Tampere, the Tampere Region, and the citizenship
- Associated societal impacts, including a more efficient transport network, reduction in emissions, optimisation of costs, road safety, accessibility and public health

In order to reach the highest levels of innovation and co-production, ITS Factory aimed to create an ecosystem in which all stakeholders felt free to engage in research, collaboration and development of concepts. The flexibility of the creative model allows for extensive adaptability to the needs of developers and researchers. Due to the wide range of projects that can be integrated in the ITS ecosystem, the structure offers the possibility to benefit from the platform, including access to public data and real-life testing, to any type of venture. This perspective on stakeholder engagement, as well as the model developed, can be a valuable reference point for similar initiatives in the future.

Provided by: Farley Sawyer



MAIN PARTNERS

**BUSINESS
TAMPERE**



TAMPERE



PIRKANMAA
COUNCIL OF TAMPERE REGION

Tampere University

REMINING-LOWEX: REDEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN MINING AREAS INTO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Remining-Lowex was a research, development and demonstration project, co-funded by the European Union's 6th Framework Programme (FP6) CONCERTO II. It intended to use locally available, low-temperature geothermal energy from abandoned mines as an energy source for heating and cooling buildings. The project ran between June 2007 and June 2014, and involved two participating communities and demonstration sites: Heerlen (the Netherlands) and Zagorje ob Savi (Slovenia); and two associated communities with observer status, Czeladz (Poland) and Bourgas (Bulgaria).

Remining-Lowex aimed to link new developments to degraded industry areas by using abandoned mines as a renewable energy source and revitalizing the community – also by embracing their heritage. An innovative communication strategy demonstrated that it is possible to consider community emotions (including past, forgotten hardships and other socio-economic issues of the mine-workers' communities) to envisage an increased quality of life and social welfare. Here, we focus in more detail on the Slovenian case study of the otherwise large-scale project.

ZAGORJE OB SAVI – CREATING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUTURES

Zagorje ob Savi is a town in the Central Sava Valley in central Slovenia and the seat of the municipality of the same name. Today, the Zagorje ob Savi municipality is home to about 17.000 residents, while its recent history, as well as everyday life and culture, were shaped by what was once the deepest brown coal mine in Europe (262 meters below sea level). The deposits of coal were discovered in 1755, boosting the region's economic development

and main economic activity the remaining areas until 1995, when the last mines were closed. A renewed vision of Zagorje ob Savi's future was needed to transform it from a former industrial mining city into a liveable and sustainable European city. Among other actions, this included switching to alternative and environmentally-friendlier energy sources.

The Remining-Lowex project was part of that change. The three key clusters of project activities included construction and energy refurbishment of public and private buildings, training, and demonstration of advanced technical solutions in practice. Within the project, a number of public buildings were renovated, including the local kindergarten, municipal headquarters, and the cultural centre. In addition, over 50 percent of multi-apartment buildings in the town of Zagorje were refurbished and the community energy systems were expanded and modernised. Training with the aim of expanding the understanding of RES, rational use of energy, and low exergy technologies was carried out. The project team also designed a mobile research unit, OLEA; a low-energy self-sufficient mobile unit for demonstration of new concepts. The unit serves to carry out regular events related to renewable energy and energy efficiency, and as a demonstration and training facility. The presented technological innovations are associated with the culture of mining, at the same time transcending it to show and promote sustainable energy systems. The interiors as well as the envelope of the unit mimic a mining shaft, thereby integrating the local mining heritage into its concept and design. OLEA also demonstrates the transition between a black, carbon-based history and a green sustainable



future in the municipality and wider region.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER AND MULTI-DISCIPLINARY R&D

A number of key stakeholders were directly engaged in the project activities, including the students and academic staff of the University of Ljubljana (Faculty of mechanical engineering, Laboratory for sustainable buildings and environmental technologies), the district heating utility, housing company, municipality council, industry representatives, NGOs, and of course the municipality residents.

Each contributed with their specific expertise and context. Local council and public services had access to local inhabitants and knowledge of specific local challenges regarding, for instance, the environment, energy, or the existing building fund. The council is also the local policymaker with a level of authority, which proved crucial in ensuring smooth project delivery and impact creation. Academic partners contributed with research, studies, and proposed solutions to the identified challenges that were in the focus of the project. The University of Ljubljana students were also involved in research and development activities: they participated in all phases of the project, from planning, research, measurements,

design of solutions, to acquiring offers from technology providers. The students carried out field research as part of their lab assignments and were regularly present at the demonstration site. Industry partners had the capacity to implement the developed solutions in practice as innovative demonstration cases.

The key result of the REMINING project is the demonstration of retrofitting buildings and building new urban areas within old mining communities, while climatising these buildings with locally available, low-valued energy resources. This was achieved by using an integrated design approach, based on low energy principles. Specific results are the improvement of spatial planning, environmental effects, and economic performance of the area, by providing affordable sustainable energy supply to the new development and integral approach of (urban) development, through attractive design and low energy costs as magnets for new businesses, and to keep existing and attract new residents to the area.

Image credits: EU Smart Cities Information System

Provided by: Sara Arko

THE URBAN ACADEMY: A 'COLLABORATORIUM' IN THE FACE OF WICKED SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN GHENT

The Ghent Urban Academy of the Ghent University (Belgium) has been working to unite all urban stakeholders including academics, researchers, and students as knowledge generators; along with non-academic actors to support the development of an ecologically sustainable and socially just city of Ghent. This noble cause is underpinned with a solid purpose to create a collective learning platform for various stakeholders to tackle wicked sustainability issues.

HOW DID IT ALL START?

The Ghent Urban Academy has had several triggers to launch itself as we know it, over the past years. The first trigger has appeared in form of a think tank, called Transition UGent that was launched in 2012 to ideate and articulate the concept of a sustainable university. The other trigger closely followed and revealed itself as the Platform for The Sustainable City of Ghent that allowed academics to do interdisciplinary research on the topic. This platform failed because a consultancy logic became dominant and we were not able to address sustainability issues as complex or wicked problems. The Ghent Urban Academy was launched in 2017 to explore and address sustainability issues of the city and the university (as a living lab), attracting students and educators to participate its main activities.

WHAT DOES THE ACADEMY OFFER?

The Urban Academy activities are multi-faced. It provides 'urban academy sessions' in the form of open seminars and workshops that gather urban civil servants

and society actors as well as external knowledge partners. These sessions are primarily held to identify burning issues of the city/university that can later be translated into viable research questions for students to deal with.

The Urban Academy also offers a 2-semester elective course Sustainable Cities to students studying at Ghent University. The core themes of the course are redefined on a yearly basis. For example, the intake of 2018-19 was exploring the urban food issues to later develop an urban food policy brief.

Naturally, the Urban Academy offers 'master thesis workshops' on complex sustainability issues. Via these workshops, the Urban Academy is trying to promote the idea of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity by inviting academic staff from different faculties together with non-academic stakeholders to diversify the vector of the research at hand.

CUI BONO?

Undoubtedly, students are the immediate beneficiaries of what the Urban Academy offers, especially in terms of educational services and research. For Ghent University at large, the Urban Academy serves as a sustainability vision and initiative generator that works on breaking down the university vision into actionable steps of strategy implementation. Ghent University educators, who are facing pedagogical challenges in the light of daunting sustainability issues, get support with the implementation and conceptualization of the sustainability education



in their work. Naturally, the city of Ghent is an ultimate beneficiary of all the endeavours taken by the Urban Academy to advance the wellbeing of the city of Ghent residents.

This article has been produced as part of the Ghent Urban Academy Case Study Report of the UCITYLAB Project Case Study Collection.

Image Credits: PC armennano via pixabay.com

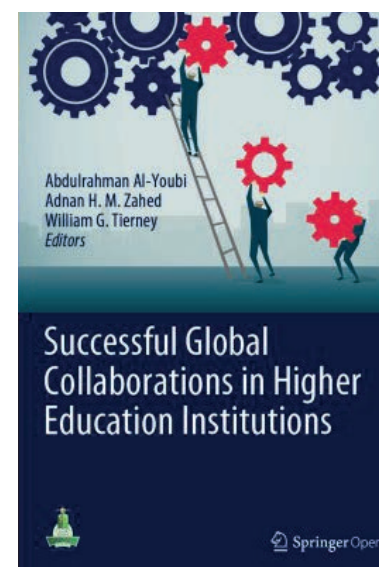
Provided by: Alina Meloyan

SELECTED BOOKS & REPORTS



An introduction to understanding the past and the future of smart cities, while addressing both the pros and cons of using smart cities as a solution to urban problems.

[Access the book](#)



Case studies of global HEI collaboration efforts with different stakeholders. This report looks at the implementation of international partnerships and success stories of co-operation and the transferral of knowledge.

[Access the book](#)

Urban Living Labs on Food, Water and Energy Evaluative Scheme & Manual



A manual for Urban Living Lab participants and how they can efficiently collaborate to solve challenges related to the food, water and energy nexus.

[Access the report](#)



This report analyses the factors which influence the success of HEIs in their contributions to innovation and regional development in the EU.

[Access the report](#)

A large background image showing an aerial view of a city skyline at night, with many skyscrapers illuminated. A semi-transparent white box with a red border is overlaid on the image, containing the website URL and contact information.

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