UNICA STUDENT CONFERENCE

1. Science in the City

UNICA Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe

NOVA UNIVERSITY LISBON

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Science in the City

Topic 1

- The presence of Universities in their cities impacts:
- **economic dynamics**,
- **demographical renewal,**
- **transition to carbon neutrality,**
- **communal relationships**.

Privileged pit stops in the route of knowledge and innovation fluxes.

COVID 19:

- **interconnectedness between people and territory** can be weakened by mainstreaming the de-materialization of interpersonal relationships in general,

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COVID 19:

- **interconnectedness between people and territory** can be weakened by mainstreaming the de-materialization of interpersonal relationships in general,

Advantages:

- Less commuting,
- Less re-locating;
- Less expenses;
- Carbon print

HOWEVER:

Disadvantages:

- Less fluid communication and natural / non-planed interactions;
- Weakening academic spirit,
- Increasing "***bubble effect***" (people stay where they already are with the conditions, influences and stimuli they are lucky or unlucky to have); GLOBALIZATION DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN COSMOPOLITISM – need to actively "break this algorithm";
- Unequal University and learning experiences;
- Technology carbon-print; homes require adaptations; more importantly: consumption habits.

Said relationship remains essential and can be improved in many ways.

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- States' central and local government and Universities as ***stakeholding partners.***
- Universities to **serve the city**.
- Interaction between local population and students' - **science as intermediary**;
- Learning from each other and solving problems together:

Citizens with critical tools:

+ self-sufficient;

+ resilience

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Science in the City

Topic 1

- The COVID pandemic showed how the **interconnectedness between people and territory** can be weakened by mainstreaming the de-materialization of interpersonal relationships in general, but it also highlighted the ways in which said relationship remains **essential** and can be improved.
  - Full academic experience;
  - Social integration;
  - Interpersonal dynamics;
  - Soft-skills;
  - More stimuli;
  - Easier communication;
  - Fluid knowledge and cultural exchanges

CONCLUSIONS

1. LIFE-LONG LEARNING OPTIONS
2. CITIZENS' SCIENCE
3. LEARNING CITIES
4. DIGITAL CHALENGES
5. HYBRID LEARNING SYSTEMS
6. THE IMPORTANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE.

1. LIFE-LONG LEARNING OPTIONS

- Closing the gap between “real life” and academic explorations and discourse means that these interactions should offer **varied life-long learning options** that citizens can accommodate at different stages of their lives.

2. CITIZENS SCIENCE

Citizens' science should be fostered as a way to include citizens in the science-making process, getting them **familiar with scientific jargon and methods** and **empowering citizens with tools to critically gather and analyze information**.

Better equipped to

- avoid fake-news;
- use science (up dated and validated knowledge) to benefit community

2. CITIZENS SCIENCE

Research projects should turn outwards and look for **opportunities to involve local populations in academic work.**

- Citizens' proximity with objects of study;
- symbiotic social and ecological relationships,
- knowledge on local realities

= *opportunities for dialogue* and *mutually-beneficial learning*.

2. CITIZENS SCIENCE

Teaching the **language of science.**

- Partnerships with local schools
- academic research projects would be presented on simple terms to children
- simple, but related, problem solving exercises.

The same could be adapted and directed towards elderly homes, for example.

2. CITIZENS SCIENCE

Teaching the **language of science.**

Advertising is important to make citizens and students aware of initiatives = + participation;

Promoting scientific achievements before *non-academic community* should be taken as part of the process and included in the subjects' program and curricula.

3. LEARNING CITIES

- Universities can play a crucial role in the development and adaptation of UNESCO **learning cities** to digital and energy transition, globalization and post-COVID pressures, by listening to and including **citizens of all ages and backgrounds** in the design and development of their RTD initiatives.

4. DIGITAL CHALLENGES

Hybrid systems of education also expose *inequalities* and *fragilities* and universities need to find ways to avoid widening a digital divide.

- Online learning requires professors to actively check on students and provide them with frequent **feed-back**.
- Alternative **opportunities to connect** with peers need to be fostered.
  - **Hackathons** as events where students and/or citizens are gathered and pitched problems they have to solve as a collective should be mainstreamed in digital formats and organized by Universities in cooperation with local/municipal governments/administration. Themes may vary and is a way to foster cooperative collective exchange and leveling of knowledge in any domain.

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4. DIGITAL CHALLENGES

Technical support

- **Computer lending programs,**
- **digital training**

should also be offered not just at the University but at the city-level

Universities may contribute with human resources for example **pairing students with citizens to provide technical assistance or even digital training**.

4. DIGITAL CHALLENGES

Technical support

Universities may contribute with human resources for example **pairing students with citizens to provide technical assistance or even digital training**.

Universities with technological courses are especially well-positioned to help citizens improve and update digital skills that are more and more required no just as a substitute for in-person socialization, but also for citizens to relate with central administration and general state services.

5. HYBRID LEARNING

Digital learning cannot provide the same level of **student's integration in the academic community**.

- Hybrid learning to include
- no financial discrimination

Students willing to learn in-person must also be given that chance, and even supported whenever they cannot afford it.

6. THE IMPORTANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE

- Universities should be able to offer **affordable housing for students** and scholars, as well as **family-friendly services** in campus or by partnering with local government, as it attracts prestigious lecturers and scientists to on-site teaching.

- Auditoriums, libraries and sport facilities may be shared between the city and the university as spaces shared by both students and regular citizens (either children in school years or working or retired adults) to foster community-building and should even be seen as places **for public deliberation**.

6. THE IMPORTANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE

- Libraries with updated press, digital equipment, wi-fi, and places for late-hours study need to serve the students' body but also local communities.

- Book presentations, doctoral defenses and local associations meetings should be held in public spaces to trigger dialogue between citizens and academics.