

UNICA Conference

Sarajevo, 25-26 april 2023

Preparing universities of the future: (Re)building inclusive and sustainable campuses

Session 2 - Stakeholders' and university community's expectations from the campus

"A future-proof university: a generational perspective".

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The City science initiative

We are young members of the **City Science Initiative (CSI)**, a network of European cities, experts and several departments of the European Commission, established under the aegis of the JRC of the European Commission.

CSI aims to strengthen the ways in which **science and research can help address the urban challenges** and to develop a structured approach to evidence-informed policy-making at cities' level, by.:

- Bringing together professionals from different EU cities working on the interface between city-policies and research ('City Science Officers', CSO's)
- Exploring how research, science and technology can help cities to address the challenges at the local level.
- Promoting discussion on ways through which science could help in addressing challenges faced by cities.
- Showcase the potential of the European Commission services and existing networks in supporting the efforts to strengthen the science and policy interface in cities.
- Promote and facilitate a European Network of City Science Officers.
- Explore the needs and priorities of cities in terms of evidence-based policy making.
- Facilitate linkages with other related initiatives.



A future-proof university: a generational perspective. The workshops

A future-proof university: a generational perspective. The workshops (Amsterdam & Thessaloniki)

We organized two workshops, one in Amsterdam and one in Thessaloniki, as part of the project “**Universities as Catalyst for Change**”. The goal of the workshops was to dive into the ideas and desires of the researchers of the future .

What do they need to contribute to our changing urban environment and what will enable them to positively impact the many crises we will face in the future?

In Amsterdam, in the first part of the workshop the students divided in groups were asked to write a **fairytale about their research landscape**. This exercise allowed them to use their imagination and to think creatively outside current boundaries. In the second part, they were asked to **link those stories to the real world**, guided by three questions. As output they wrote a list of requirements and demands for future research(ers).



A future-proof university: a generational perspective. The fairy tale exercise (Amsterdam)

After analyzing the fairy tales created by our student participants, we observed that they harbor a significant amount of **anxiety about the current state of the world**, particularly in relation to the **climate crisis** and the **uncertainty of their own futures**.

Interestingly, the stories they wrote suggest a **solution to the crisis** that involves both **digital avatars and the support of all the natural environment** - including animals, insects, and plants.

This highlights that young people if **may feel overwhelmed by the world's challenges**, they are also capable of envisioning creative **solutions** that embrace both **technology development** and **nature defense**.



A future-proof university: a generational perspective. Researchers of the future: Requirements/Demands (Amsterdam)

In the second part of the workshop we discussed three questions:

1. How do you want to live as a researcher in the next decade?
2. How do you want to work with the City of Amsterdam?
3. What do you need as a researcher to solve the crises?

Hereby a synthesis of the outcomes:

- Collaboration and interdisciplinary teams, **linking research to the real world**, making a long-term impact;
- **Accessibility** of public spaces and data, **opening up universities** physically and hierarchically;
- **Affordability**: housing, education, transport, public space;
- **Inclusion**: everyone is taken into account, also nature;
- **Work-life balance**: flexibility.



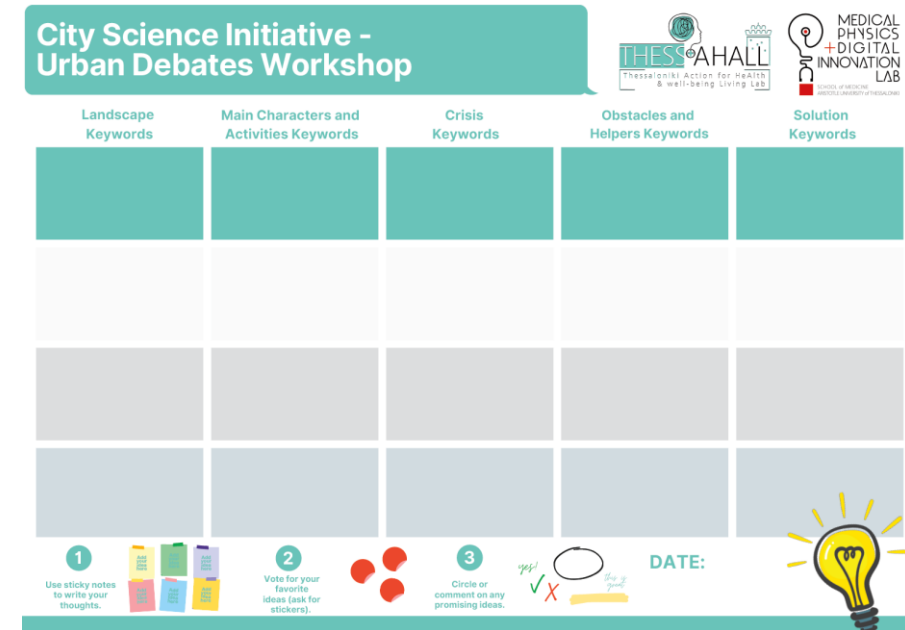
A future-proof university: a generational perspective. (Thessaloniki)

Replication of the City of Amsterdam **workshop methodology**, with some slight adjustments to the local context.

Workshop Details: a 2-hour session with a small group of postgraduate students, participating in the **MSc BME programme**, as part of the “**Global Environmental Challenges**” course.

Students were introduced to the principles of the Citizen Science and the **vision for “re-building” the universities of the futures WITH students and FOR students.**

An **interactive discussion**, using **printing materials and post-its** to engage students were deployed. Short rounds of ideation and follow-up group discussion (10-mins each) were exploited.



A future-proof university: a generational perspective. Researchers of the future: Requirements/Demands (Thessaloniki)

We explored the following questions:

1. How do you perceive yourselves as researchers/ members of the scientific community?
2. What do you think about the collaboration between the AUTH & the City of Thessaloniki?
3. What do you need as a researcher to solve the crises?

Hereby a synthesis of the outcomes:

- Not a clear perception of “researchers” identity & role (lack of awareness, not of motivation though)
- **Interactive learning, open access** in infrastructures, resources and data (**open universities to embrace their needs & society’s needs**)
- **Participation & inclusion in decision-making:** especially regarding the collaboration with the City & **cultivation of common culture / language between the City & University** (joint workshops, more small-scale research initiatives, PhD/Master’s thesis in collaboration)



A future-proof university: a generational perspective. The Findings (Amsterdam & Thessaloniki)

Students in both countries envision the future university as a/an:

- **Open Innovation/Open Science**
- **Inclusive**
- **Affordable**
- **Interactive**
- **Collaborative**

Setting/environment (not only in physical terms) that will trigger and motivate students/early researchers to open their mindset, be creative, share knowledge & experiences within & outside the university premises, apply R&I WITH & FOR the society, feeling active members of research and policymaking initiatives from the early-stages.

A future-proof university: a generational perspective. Next Steps (Amsterdam & Thessaloniki)

What comes next?

This is just the beginning!!!

The 3rd report of the CSI by the EC JRC, focuses on “Universities as Catalysts” for societal problem-solving and the crucial role of Cities and their collaboration with Universities towards this direction.

The workshop series is in progress in Thessaloniki, Reggio Emilia, while other cities are about to start.

Will you join us?

Thank you

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