

URB@Exp – Towards new forms of urban governance and city development: learning from urban experiments with living labs & city

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Website <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/research/institutes/icis/research-output/urban-lab-kit>

Summary of results

The URB@Exp project looked at urban labs and new forms of urban governance and city development. Urban labs appear to be a particularly promising, innovative form of governance to address complex urban challenges and create public value. However, policymakers and other urban actors struggle with the implementation of urban labs and seek guidance for their further development. Evidence-based guidelines and design principles are still lacking concerning types of issues for which urban labs are most suited, how urban labs can best be organized in terms of structure, process, and participation, and how urban labs can best be combined and integrated with formal local government structures. The overarching aim of the URB@EXP project was to develop such guidelines, in order to enhance the successful uptake of this new form of urban governance and contribute to improved governance of urban complexity, creating more sustainable, inclusive, attractive, and economically viable cities.

The URB@Exp consortium strategically merged a transdisciplinary set of partners including four universities, five cities and one SME. These partners contributed a wealth of scientific, professional and experiential knowledge to the collaboration. Under the lead of Prof. René Kemp at ICIS (Maastricht University's scientific institute for sustainable development), the consortium consisted of eight further partners: the universities of Graz, Malmö and Lund, the cities of Antwerp, Graz, Leoben, Maastricht and Malmö, and the foresight and design company Pantopicon. University and city partners were jointly involved in the design and implementation of the urban lab experiments in the five cities under study, in joint reflexive learning during the experiments, and in evaluating and drawing lessons from the experiments. It is important to note that this concerns all urban stakeholders involved in these urban lab experiments and not the only policymakers of the partner cities. The URB@Exp team applied a transdisciplinary approach cutting across various disciplines and domains, similar to what many urban labs do. As such, URB@Exp was a kind of 'lab' as well. The innovation component of the project primarily concerned the implementation of urban labs as new forms of urban governance.



The city partners from Antwerp, Graz, Leoben, Maastricht and Malmö, as end-users of the guidelines on urban labs, played a major role in defining the research questions to be addressed. Their experiences were essential input for the examination of previous urban lab experiments.

The guidelines URB@Exp developed are intended for team members and managers of urban labs and, more generally, for civil servants and facilitators in cities working with experimental urban governance processes to tackle complex challenges. They aim to support the everyday practice of collaboratively experimenting and learning how to create more sustainable and inclusive cities. These guidelines do not provide a single definitive answer on ways to organize and run an urban lab or its experimental activities, but rather they offer, through frameworks and examples, guidance for ways to act in relation to, and reflect on, key issues. They can be downloaded on: www.urbanexp.eu/guidelines.

The LAB-kit URB@Exp developed (including a printed version of the book with guidelines) is aimed at municipalities or other stakeholders in a city who are toying with the idea to set up an urban lab. Through guidelines and materials, the kit supports, inspires and helps to structure multi-stakeholder discussions in a three-phased workshop setting to lay the groundwork for an urban lab for sustainable development in cities (more info: www.urbanexp.eu).

Video on the research question

- <https://youtu.be/e6XIShpsfjQ>

Read more

- <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/research/institutes/icis/research-output/urban-lab-kit>

Verbinden van Duurzame Steden

