

Urban Living Labs

As arenas for co-creation in urban areas





SubUrbanLab

Across Europe, some 200 million people live in suburbs in great need of modernization and social uplifting.

The SubUrbanLab project (2014-2016) examined how these suburbs can be modernized and socially uplifted together with the residents and other stakeholders. The goal was to turn the suburbs into more attractive, sustainable and economically viable urban areas.

The project developed and set up six Urban Living Labs (ULLs): three in Alby, Sweden and three in Peltosaari, Finland. These ULLs were arenas for co-creation of innovative urban solutions and a means to develop new forms of experiences on involving the residents and stakeholders into development in an urban context.

This booklet presents the main results and learnings of the SubUrbanLab-project. The aim is to support further use of Urban Living Lab -approaches among municipalities and other stakeholders working for sustainable development of residential areas.

Urban Living Lab

is a forum for innovation, applied to the development of new products, systems, services, and processes in an urban area; employing working methods to integrate people into the entire development process as users and co-creators to explore, examine, experiment, test and evaluate new ideas, scenarios, processes, systems, concepts and creative solutions in complex and everyday contexts.

[Transition towards sustainable and liveable urban futures – The strategic research agenda of JPI Urban Europe 2015]

The project was funded by VINNOVA and Tekes through Joint Programming Initiative – Urban Europe.



Alby

Urban Living Lab

"SHAPE YOUR WORLD"

"Shape your world" provided children and young adults and youth leaders with the opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding of sustainable development through urban gardening while participating in renewing their urban environment. As a result, social sustainability was increased through increased interest in urban gardening and increased choice of meaningful after-school leisure activities, creating opportunities for children and youth to cultivate their creativity and stimulating interpersonal encounters.



Peltosaari

Urban Living Lab

"TOGETHER MORE"

"Together more" provided residents with easy possibilities to participate in the planning and development of their environment and arranging local activities.

The goal was to improve the appreciation of the area and to increase the communal feeling among the residents.

Several types of activities were piloted and residents were engaged in discussions about the plans concerning the area.

The piloted new kinds of events managed to reach also young people in the area and enhanced collaboration between various groups. The area gained a lot of positive press coverage.

Alby

Urban Living Lab

"NEW LIGHT ON ALBY HILL"

"New light on Alby Hill" focused on how to transform a walkway more attractive and safe. Ambient lighting and light installations along the walkway were planned, designed and implemented together with researchers, public organizations, companies, non-governmental organizations and residents, who also suggested images for the light installations under the theme "Our Alby". The winning images were chosen through open voting.

Contributions to social and environmental sustainability were increasing the sense of security, laying the foundation for continued participation among residents and decreasing the energy use of the street lightning.

Peltosaari

Urban Living Lab

"ENERGETIC CO-OPERATION"

"Energetic co-operation" focused on enhancing collaboration between residents, energy-saving solution developers and the municipal housing company to explore ways to decrease energy use in rental apartment buildings.

Discussion events with residents and other stakeholders were arranged to find out energy saving ideas and best ways to share information about energy efficient living.

"Energetic co-operation" supported introduction of new practices and technical solutions in the buildings governed by municipality. A procedure for improving energy efficiency in the buildings was co-developed.

Vote for your favorite image!

Nytt ljus på Albyberget

During the autumn we asked for images to be used for lightening up stonewalls along a walkway on Albyberget. 20 images were submitted and we have chosen six to be part of the final voting. The two winning images will light up one stonewall each.

Vote for YOUR favorite image now!

You can vote by using the QR-code or via the website www.nyttljus.eu

You can vote until the 8th of March.

1. Peace – Brandy Contreras Sanchez and Oulaymatou Jallow
2. Alby i mitt hjärta – Jannika Ojeda Meftah
3. Nej till rasism – Jasmine Icke
4. Höghus – Lema Murad
5. Vi är lika – Tamona
6. Vårt Alby – Mirac Yavuz och Rami Khalil

SubUrbanLab, MITT ALBY, BOTKYRKA KOMMUN, URBAN-EUROPE, IVL Svenska Miljöinstitutet

Ett samarbete
 "Nytt ljus på Albyberget" är ett samarbete mellan Botkyrka kommun, Mitt Alby AB, Konstfack och IVL Svenska Miljöinstitutet. "Nytt ljus på Albyberget" är en del av projektet SubUrbanLab (suburbanlab.eu), och arbetet utförs med bidrag från Vinova inom ramen för IP Urban Europe, och är del av det andra av Urban Living Lab (ULL) som kommer att genomföras i Alby.

Word cloud on suggestions and final suggestion for the area.



Innova-house as a primary target for the ULL activities.

The *Urban Living Lab* approach

Main principles of *Urban Living Labs*

Urban Living Labs are development environments integrating residents and other stakeholders to co-develop and test new services or solutions in their daily life.

Users of the new services or solutions are active partners in the whole development process, which happens in the real urban context.

Urban Living Labs utilize various co-design methods for understanding the needs, generating and presenting ideas and evaluating the solutions in practice.



Key success factors for *Urban Living Labs* based on SubUrbanLab

- *Early involvement of the people*
- *Well-defined goals, context and expectations*
- *Continuous and clear communication*
- *Methods adapted to goals and participants*
- *Participants are active partners from planning and design to developing, implementing and evaluating*

AT ITS BEST, PEOPLE CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE URBAN LIVING LAB ACTIVITIES AS A PART OF THEIR OTHER ACTIVITIES AND SEE THE EFFECTS OF THEIR PARTICIPATION SHORTLY AFTERWARDS.



Questions to consider when planning to set up an Urban Living Lab

- *What is the problem or challenge that you aim to solve in ULL? For whom will the solution be significant and who are affected by the work?(check that you work with a topic that is meaningful for someone)*
- *Who are the key stakeholder(s)? (the ones that have the ability to implement, make decisions and potentially also to continue permanent operation)? Identify the “owner” of the living lab case.*
- *Are the key stakeholders involved and committed to the goals and the approach?*
- *What are the topics where inputs from users are needed and where it can (will) have an influence?*
- *Are the relevant participants willing to make changes, based on the results of the participatory activities? (even the unexpected results)*

Boundary conditions for a successful Urban Living Lab



1. Goals and vision

- *To understand the context of the urban area in focus for the Urban Living Lab is a pre-condition for a successful Urban Living Lab.*
- *“To stand next to each other and look at a common goal” - it is important to have clear common expectations and goals for the project among all participants. Be very open with what the involved residents and other stakeholders can influence and what can be done within the time, budget and scope of the project.*



2. People and motivation



- *Spend sufficient time to identify and find relevant residents and other stakeholders important for the project - focusing particularly on traditionally passive groups highly affected by the project.*
- *Listen carefully and be open to the opinions of all participants. Take the viewpoints of different stakeholders into account. It is also important to understand the needs and motivations of participants.*
- *Feedback, transparency as well as a clear and open communication is often very important to keep motivation of participants and to ensure a successful Urban Living Lab. Participants should see concrete results that they have been able to influence.*

3. Management process and decision making

- *Involve the residents and other stakeholders as early as possible in the process. A key feature of a successful Urban Living Lab is that the participants are active partners during the whole process – from planning and designing to developing, implementing and evaluating.*
- *Transparent power structures are significant – clarify the roles of all participating residents and other stakeholders as well as procedures for decision-making.*



4. Interaction process and methods



- *Choose and adapt the specific methods for interaction and channels for communication based on the different participants, the area and ULL goals.*
- *It is important to consider which methods create a possibility and atmosphere for all relevant residents and other stakeholders to participate and express their opinion.*
- *Adapt the level of information, language, and vocabulary to the different involved participants and their expected comprehension of the issue.*

Purpose	Method	Face-to-face	Online
Understanding people and issues	Interviews	x	x
	Observation	x	
	Questionnaires	x	x
	Focus groups	x	x
	Diaries	x	x
	Cultural probes	x	x
Generating ideas	Workshops	x	x
	Walkshop	x	
	Brainstorming	x	x
	Idea competition		x
Presenting and evaluating solutions	Scenarios	x	x
	Storyboards	x	x
	Films	x	x
	Mock-ups	x	
	Field test	x	
Participating in decision making	Dialogue meetings / forum	x	x
	Citizen panel	x	x
	Chat		x
	Voting	x	x
Taking action	Citizen parliament	x	
	Mini pilots	x	
	Change agents	x	

Urban Living Lab as an approach for sustainable cities

- *Urban Living Labs should focus on increasing all dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social and economic*
- *To enhance success, the objectives of Urban Living Lab should preferably be linked to existing local sustainability goals of the target area*
- *The main focus of sustainability efforts in areas with limited economic resources is usually on social sustainability, such as*
 - *reducing unemployment*
 - *improving living conditions for children*
 - *modernizing area identity and increasing citizen participation*
- *Increasing social sustainability usually increases, at least indirectly, also environmental and economic sustainability of the area*



Experiences from the project

Main experiences from the six *Urban Living Labs*

- *Each Urban Living Lab was shaped and changed along the process as a consequence of the context where it was set, unexpected events and the impact from different stakeholders.*
- *Examples of the barriers, that shaped the process of the Urban Living Labs, are: delayed access to technology, differences in priorities, terminology and procedures among the key stakeholders, difficulties in long-term commitment from residents.*
- *The processes were not linear - they took unexpected turns as researchers, decision-makers and public organizations, residents and companies took part in co-creation of each Urban Living Lab.*
- *Communication takes a lot of time but it is essential for the success of an ULL.*
- *Primary focus of the urban living labs that are aimed to influence sustainability comprehensively should be in the collective goals of the society, as expressed through municipalities and users.*

Lessons learnt in SubUrbanLab-project

- *Encourage user engagement by addressing particularly noticeable sustainability challenges in the suburb. Allow people to express themselves on issues that already engage and interest them.*
- *Encourage municipality engagement by taking into consideration the institutional and cultural preconditions: challenges of communication, collaboration, and coordination between departments may be more evident in public organizations compared to the private sector.*
- *Confirm that the key stakeholders are familiar with the Urban Living Lab approach and are committed to its principles.*
- *User-driven urban living labs primarily run by the residents may further strengthen residents' feelings of inclusion and participation in the local society.*
- *An enabler-driven urban living lab, run by the municipality, may increase the chances of sufficient resources but here the working methods of living labs need to be fully embraced and integrated into existing organizational routines.*

More information available in our publications:

Reports:

Boundary conditions for successful Urban Living Labs

Selection of Urban Living Labs in Alby and Peltosaari

Establishment and implementation of Urban Living Labs in Alby and Peltosaari

Evaluation of the Urban Living Labs in Alby and Peltosaari

Assessment of the suitability of different Urban Living Labs methods for modernisation and social upgrading actions

Scientific articles:

Urban Living Labs for Sustainability in Suburbs in Need of Modernization and Social Uplift

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