

STUDIO 1



City & organisation	Helsinki, Aalto University
Urban challenge(s) addressed	Housing, mobility, sustainability, well-being, ecology & economy
Name/title of learning practice	Urban Challenge Studio 1
Type of case study	Curricular
Programme level learning practice/ case study	Local/regional

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Years of establishment: 5 years from 2021

Motivation behind intervention: N/A

General content of intervention

Common urban challenge studios integrate multiple expert areas to study and address contemporary urban phenomena from different perspectives. The challenge-driven educational model of the studio crosses disciplines and specializations, prioritizing design thinking, learning-by-doing experimentation, transdisciplinarity and solving societal challenges. During the course urban challenge themes are addressed theoretically from different perspectives and studied practically within specific cases, sites or initiatives. The teachers represent key disciplines and professions, and the studies will be conducted in cooperation with partners in research and municipalities.

Target group: Master's students in fields of urban studies, planning and architecture.

Length of the course: 12 weeks.

Average number of students attending: 40

URBAN CHALLENGES ADDRESSED AND THE CONTEXT

Which urban challenge: Housing, mobility, sustainability, well-being, ecology & economy

Why was it addressed: N/A

How is it addressed

The studio provides an introduction to challenge-driven and researchbased practice in urban planning and design. The aim is to establish abroad understanding of the complexities of urban development and practical training in analysing, visualizing and responding practically to urban development challenges. The course alternates between scales –from macro to micro perspectives as well as in present-day situations complemented with historical and future perspectives. The studio conducts training in research and planning through project work within the studio theme. Project work is guided through a series of practical tasks, supported by lectures, seminars, reading and writing, workshops and tutorials. Students will be tutored both in inter-disciplinary groups and by tutors specialized in their professional skills. Studio work takes place within a dedicated space for one-two days a week.

Additionally, site visits and field trips will be organized by teachers and initiated by students.

ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN

Stakeholders involved

Cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. Private partners as quest-lecturers and sparrers. Academic partners domestic and abroad.

Resources required (human, capital, physical): N/A

LEARNING DESIGN

ECTS: 10

Learning objectives

Upon completion of the course, participants should be able to:

- Analyse the urban challenge theme and a particular urban situation in relation to relevant issues and theories drawn from across multiple disciplines;
- Demonstrate understanding of urban issues and dynamics across spatial and temporal scales, including local, regional, national and global impacts;
- Search, identify and critically review literature, theories and methods of USP, and reflect on professional ethics and responsibility;
- Apply research and planning skills to address a particular urban situation, proposing sufficient and relevant responses to the development challenge.
- Demonstrate learning throughout the practical development of project work, justify intentions, choices and outcomes;
- Comprehend and communicate across several competencies and disciplines, as well as develop own competencies within collaborative work;
- Communicate analysis, understandings, competencies, learning and project process and outcomes verbally, textually, and visually, so that it can be understood by teachers and external audiences.

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As a resource for assigned tasks and students' ongoing studies, the course has a social agenda to create peer networks across study lines, departments and universities.

Training methodologies

The studio is an experiential and collaborative learning environment, in which there are two main pedagogical aims:

(1) Research-based practice. The studio applies theories taught in USP classes practically within urban cases. Students are guided through a series of research and planning tasks, involving individual and group work within practical projects. The objective is to stimulate students as they enter into dialogue with local actors, stakeholders, and peers; engage in reflection and to sharpen critical thinking and inquiry into the conceptual nature of urban development practice. This stimulates students to enter into dialogue with peers, local actors, interest groups and organizations – to engage in reflective practice and to sharpen both critical thinking and practical inquiry.

(2) Interdisciplinary collaboration. The studio trains students in developing and positioning their own competences as well as in highly collaborative and interdisciplinary practice. The studio encourages participants to formulate their own positions and perspectives. Students explore, study, map, analyse, program, elaborate, propose and present their work within their group and within the overall theme of the studio. They will experience different learning styles (e.g., 'studio' modalities from architecture, planning and design, 'field' modalities from social sciences and geography, 'lab' from technical and natural sciences). In this way, students learn to balance specialized professional knowledge with general and transdisciplinary competencies.

Format

Active participation in the different tasks specified during the course, such as lectures and discussions, group work, field trips, presentations and final reports and learning portfolios.

Student support systems: N/A

Assessment methods: N/A

Integration into curricula (if applicable) : N/A

HINDERS

In relation to urban challenges

Especially in groups of widely multidisciplinary nature, there are differences in understandings. Organizers need to make it as clear as possible what they expect the students to do. Lack of shared understanding on what they are doing and how creates stress and lack of motivation in the students.

In relation to delivery of intervention: N/A

ENABLERS

In relation to urban challenges

Creating a safe and encouraging environment for student groups is important. Clear directions. Interesting topic complimented by expert lecturers and coaches.

In relation to delivery of intervention: N/A

REFLECTION

Success factors: N/A

Outputs, outcomes and impact: N/A

Lessons learned and recommendations

Students are capable of excellent work if their group succeeds in flattening out the wrinkles caused by different outlooks and values of students that are linked to their varying backgrounds.

Other

Urban challenge studios have enhanced the students capability for interdisciplinary team-work and their understanding of urban development as a collaborative effort. Results of the course can only become visible in the long-term, when the students have become the professionals in the field, hopefully nurturing close relationship with each other.

Note: The information contained on this description was extracted from the "Case Study report" (published by the Urban GoodCamp consortium in March 2022), available at: https://www.urbangoodcamp.eu/uploads/1/6/2/1/16214540/ucamp_-_case_study_report_1.pdf

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