ACUTE - Accessibility and Connectivity Knowledge Hub for Urban Transformation in Europe

WP1 – ENUAC Cross Research Community

D1.3 Physical or online scientific events open to practitioners

Start date: 01.11.2022
End date: 31.10.2024

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Version: Final Public

Project Partners

Organisation	Country
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna | BOKU	AUSTRIA
Université Gustav Eiffel | UEiffel	FRANCE
Centre d'études et d'expertise sur les risques, l'environment, la mobilité et l'aménagement | Cerema	FRANCE
Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies |LBTU	LATVIA
University of Latvia | LU	LATVIA
Research Institutes of Sweden | RISE	SWEDEN
University of Westminster | UoW	UNITED KINGDOM
Malmö University | MAU	SWEDEN
Grazer Energieagentur GmbH, Graz Energy Agency | GEA	AUSTRIA
VTI/Sweden's national centre for research and education on public transport | K2	SWEDEN
Power Circle | PC	SWEDEN
University of Innsbruck | UIBK	AUSTRIA

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Table of Contents

1. ACUTE/UERA seminars and workshops

Since the project began at the end of 2022, three seminars and two workshops open to scientists and practitioners were organized. The seminars attracted 131 academics and 36 practitioners from 14 countries. The main outputs consist of a comprehensive list of issues and questions in European research on the 15-minute city, in particular on the role of proximity in research, on the current trends, and on the evaluation of the 15-min City. The two workshops were organized in collaboration with Polis Network and Active Travel work group. The event attracted 20 practitioners.

Table 1: Key information about the seminars.

Place of seminars' organization	Month/year	Partners	Main outcomes
Milan (Italy)	March 2023	Politecnico de Milano	5 research questions emerged around 15-min City concept
Antwerp (Belgium)	October 2023	CEREMA, University of Antwerp	Accessibility as the key factor of the concept of 15min-city
Karlsruhe (Germany)	February 2024	Karlsruher Institute of Technology (KIT)	Inclusivity in the urban design as a pillar of the Implementation of the 15-min Cities concept

Taking inspiration of the presentations during the first seminar, the ACUTE project identified five research topics related to the concept of 15-min cities: 1/ Defining the 15-minute city, 2/ Identifying the transport modes of the 15-minute city, 3/Integration of proximity into urban planning, 4/ Supporting inclusiveness in the 15-minute city, and 5/ Evaluating the 15-minute city (L'Hostis and al. 2023).

The following seminars underlined active mobilities as transport modes in the 15-min cities. Accessibility of services appears as a key factor in the concrete implementation of the 15-min City. The Antwerp seminar was an opportunity to bring on the table the application of the concept in periurban areas and to question the accuracy of the concept outside the central urban areas. Karlsruhe seminar pushed the the rethinking of the 15-min City concept through the aspects of inclusivity in the urban designs. As in Milano, the question of enjoyability of urban spaces and accessibility of public transports emerged through the presentations.

2. Lesson learned from the seminars: Identifying the obstacles to bridge the gap between research and practice

Karlsruhe seminar was an opportunity to identify the obstacles in bridging the gap between research and practice in the topic of 15-min City.

The reason given by the practitioner who illustrated during the seminar a concrete example of implementation of the concept in the hometown was as follows : not involving the university of applied science from the very beginning of the Proximity centered project operate in the city cited in the presentation, was due to a very dynamic process design, unclear budget and very limited and unstable staff capacities which at the start of the project didn't allow for an intensive coordination of another partner.

The practitioner stated that effort needed to coordinate a cooperation and in particular with academia (including bridging the academic language and knowledge gaps) is often an impediment to planners. Furthermore, the practitioner added that for a useful cooperation the need for people on both sides that have an understanding of the others' working mode, way of thinking and constraints like legal framework and political mandate, is now becoming an essential factor.

In the overview of the presented project, the practitioner brought to our attention that the cooperation in the implementation of the project worked really well, since the involved researcher had worked in their urban planning department and they had an academic background. So they could find a common ground and see mutual benefits in this cooperation. The practitioner added that the full dedication of the research team as a service provider eased the collaboration and contributed to the success of the project.

3. ACUTE/UERA workshops: Connect with practitioners' aspirations from research

We held two workshops in partnership with Polis Network gathering european cities and regions cooperating for innovative urban and transport solutions. 20 participants attended to the two workshops and they represented 8 various European cities. The first one was in a form of a focus group with an introductive experience from a city implementing the concept of 15-min City.

The narrated experience from Aarhus (Denmark) points out the difficulty to bring services to everyone in 15-min, in particular in areas other than city centers. Aarhus counts 360.000 inhabitants of which 100.000 live in the city center. The practitioner underlined the necessity to change mobility habits and wondered about the social acceptability of policies that the implementation of 15-min city concept would bring. Among policies in the implementation of the concept, the practitioner indicates the development of multimodal hubs in order to encourage modal shifts and inclusive urban designs taking into account disabled, reduced mobility and gender perspectives. The solution shared by the practitioner would be to develop co-creative tools for the planning process.

Several questions were addressed during this workshop:
- What Research should start/stop/continue doing to contribute the concept's operationalization ?
- To whom the 15-min cities ?
- Who lives now and will live in the future in the 15-min cities
- Which problems the concept tackles?

3.1. What Research should start/stop/continue doing to contribute the concept's operationalization ?

Figure 1: What Research should start/stop/continue doing to contribute the concept's operationalization?

3.2. Research should start/continue to contributing in the storytelling of the 15min-City concept

Participants highlighted that people are still very doubtful towards the concepts. They reminded Oxford's events and the statements of the former english prime minister Rishi Sunak. The main challenge of Research is to contribute on the storytelling around the concept of 15-min cities by bring into the spotlight more positive cases. Communicating effectively and involving people in the planning process in a 15-min city is essential to this storytelling-fading-fears and to the self projections. Furthermore, 15min cities should be thought from gender, disability and reduced mobility perspectives to make them more inclusive.

3.3. Research should stop …

Participants shed light on the communication aspect of 15-minute cities: how to deconstruct the misconceptions around the concept? They expressed that research should support the communication around the concept. To this effect, participants pointed out that research should stop "replicating spatial analysis" and "turning people into standard personas and needs". We can question the perception of research. It would have been interesting to dig deeper into these statements.