Thank you!

By strengthening and diversifying the field of research and teaching in urban studies, the University of Helsinki is contributing to solving challenges associated with sustainable urbanisation and wellbeing.

The inaugural year of operations of Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies Urbaria, the first Finnish institution in the field, is now behind us. Decades of effort, dreams, investments from numerous individuals and the opening of several doors have resulted in a significant societal initiative – a multidisciplinary institute for urban studies. Rector Kari Raivio’s proposal (1998), according to which “a new interdisciplinary institute of urban studies may be established in the future”, has come to pass.

Interest in and enthusiasm for conducting multidisciplinary urban research and establishing a research community is a cause of joy. No fewer than 130 researchers from the University of Helsinki joined Urbaria in its first year. Thanks to profile-building activities, the University now also has a number of new professorships in the field of urban research. We have succeeded in initiating international and national discussions, as well as elevating the role of research in handling current issues.

The mayors of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area have supported the operations of Urbaria by awarding €2.7 million for recruiting postdoctoral researchers specialised in urban studies, with the goal of increasing cooperation between the University and the cities. Furthermore, several discussions involving the government focused on the promotion of urban studies have been instigated in a number of forums.

In fact, our society needs precisely the kind of problem-based and multidisciplinary research on urban areas which, through its results, helps solve current societal challenges. By strengthening and diversifying the field of research and teaching in urban studies, the University of Helsinki is contributing to solving challenges associated with sustainable urbanisation and wellbeing.

I wish to thank a large group of individuals who have for decades striven to further the establishment of the Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies.

This is a good place from which to continue our work!
Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies

URBARIA

Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies (Urbaria) is the first academic multi-disciplinary urban research unit in Finland. As a majority of the world’s population lives in cities, a major part of all social phenomena, problems and amenities will take on an urban form and challenge the existing regional structures. The institute tackles these complex problems of urban and regional development by research and education.

The institute combines long-standing academic excellence of research in the University of Helsinki with emerging transdisciplinary collaborations with cities and other actors.

The research focuses on three interlinking fields: places, people and politics in an international setting.

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FACULTIES

FACULTY OF SCIENCE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
FACULTY OF ARTS
FACULTY OF BIOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

MEMBERS

130

GEOGRAPHY
HISTORY
ECOLOGY
SOSIOLOGY
DEMOGRAPHY
SOCIAL POLICY
SOCIAL WORK
CULTURAL STUDIES
EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
CONSUMER STUDIES

METEOROLOGY
COMMUNICATION STUDIES
ETHNOLOGY
THEOLOGY
POLITICAL STUDIES
SEISMOLOGY
AND MANY OTHER!

Steering group

Faculty of Science
Dean Kai Nordlund (Vice Dean Marja-Liisa Riekkola)
Professor Sami Moisio (Professor Annakaisa Korja).

Faculty of Social Sciences
Vice Dean Juri Mykkänen (Vice Dean Petri Ylikoski)
Professor of Practice Pekka Sauri

Faculty of Biological and Environmental Studies
Vice Dean Atte Korhola (Professor Sirkku Juhola)
Professor Heikki Setälä (University Lecturer Johan Kotze).

Faculty of Arts
Vice Dean Jussi Pakkasvirta (Vice Dean Ulla Tuomarla)
Professor Laura Kolbe (University Lecturer Terhi Ainiala).
RESEARCH

The Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies (Urbaria) brings together and develops urban studies conducted in a range of disciplines at the University of Helsinki.
A total of six professorships in urban studies have been established at the University of Helsinki in the fields of sociology, geography, history, social and public policy, economics, and ecology. “A new interdisciplinary institute of urban studies may be established in the future,” said Rector Kari Raivio.

Collaboration programme between urban studies and Kaupunkitutkimuksen ja metropolipoltiikan yhteistyöohjelma 2010-2019.

A collaboration platform for research-based urban development by Aalto University, the University of Helsinki as well as the Cities of Espoo, Helsinki and Vantaa. It promotes interaction between urban studies and urban development while supporting multidisciplinary collaboration. In 2019 the strategic management group was composed of the rectors of the universities and the mayors of the cities coordinating the operations.

Finnish Academy funding for sustainable urban research (HELSUS)

Finnish Academy funding for urban inequality (INEQ).

Joint master’s programme between University of Helsinki and Aalto university.

The institute is Finland’s first academic unit of multiple disciplines focused on urban and regional studies. Urbaria’s operations combine the academic specialist expertise of the University of Helsinki with cross-disciplinary cooperation with the cities and other operators.
Urban research from various perspectives

Read more about research groups and project from www.helsinki.fi/urbaria

Places

The process of urbanisation combined with global economic integration and local national specificities produce new spatial nodes of specialisation as well as urban sprawl. The traditional planning and policy strategies within these regions are increasingly inadequate, as the hierarchical urban form is transformed into something else. The functions of the traditional centers and subcenters as well as the new optimal locations for different actors are changing, which is visible in the accessibility, mobility and migration processes as well as in the local fragmentation of urban growth. This research cluster examines the spatio-temporal mobility and use of space as well as new forms of socio-spatial differentiation of the city region and the changes in its new form. In addition, urban socio-spatial phenomenon such as segregation, selective migration, housing and neighbourhood effects are to be examined.

Politics

This research cluster seeks to understand both the policies of urbanization and the politics of producing urban environments and urban experience. It is premised on recent advances in the fields of urban political economy, urban social-ecological systems, and urban political geographies more generally. Scholars in this cluster examine the ways in which urbanization is constituted in different geographical contexts – and in northern Europe in particular.

Understanding the specific processes and patterns of urbanization in this particular context potentially produces a set of insights on how both local and transnational processes of urbanization, and the associated ideas, practices and institutions, come together in the production of urban environments and infrastructures. Moreover, in this research cluster scholars and students pay particular attention to urban political contestation and struggle whereby certain knowledges are produced and consumed, new infrastructures constructed, various forms of

People

The characteristics and distribution of populations living in urban areas define the long-term sustainability of urban centers and underlie decisions on many urban policies; such as construction, transport and provision of health-care and social services. The cluster for urban demography studies the interactions of people with urban physical and social geographical processes. Urban Demography is the study of population change of urban areas as a function of fertility, mortality, migration and the social forces that drive these processes. On the one hand, studying these multi-level or micro-macro processes will provide key evidence to understanding how the characteristics of urban areas and neighbourhoods affect individuals – for example how neighbourhood socioeconomic structure affects the well-being and health of residents. On the other hand, changes in population composition – driven for example by individual decisions to migrate or have children – affect urban areas and neighbourhood segregation.
Professors and other senior researchers have participated in the discussions and development processes of urban research.
Urban sustainability

The urban sustainability research theme includes research for a more sustainable urban future. This research theme is formed in collaboration between the Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science HELSUS and the Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies Urbaria.

Equitable, engaged and empowered communities

While sustainable urban environments can support a range of health and well-being outcomes, they are not always equitable and inclusive places. We develop knowledge-creation processes to understand multi-level governance processes and issues of social justice, power and inclusion across sectors and scientific disciplines. We also encourage empowered participation—empowering people to not only negotiate for their own needs but also enable them to add their unique contribution towards the health and well-being of the larger wholes in which they are embedded. We concentrate our research on the following areas:

- Understanding and engaging with multiple values and voices for sustainability
- Multi-level governance and active citizenship
- Political coalitions and urban-rural relations
- Knowledge co-production for sustainability
- Citizens’ preparedness for socio-ecological disruptions

Smart, green and climate neutral cities

The smart nature-based solutions agendas have been presented as critical to the achievement of climate-neutral cities. We will examine the emerging discourse and critically evaluate its impact on sustainable urban development. We also develop novel theory, tools, methods and processes for assessing the co-benefits and costs of each agenda, as well as the interactions between social, ecological and technological systems across the following focal areas:

- Design, implementation and monitoring of nature-based solutions
- Design and governance of climate resilient urban infrastructures
- Critical perspectives on the smart, green, climate neutral and sustainable city
- Systemic approaches to understanding the climate neutral city
Regenerative and prosperous urban economies

New economic models are urgently needed for enabling humans to live and prosper within planetary boundaries. Regenerative and prosperous urban economies are about supporting circulatory flows of money, information, resources, and goods and services to support ecological and human well-being. Our research addresses the following focal areas:

- Recovery and recycling of materials, water and resources
- Collaborative economy and other modes of exchange
- New narratives for a sustainable energy transition
- Regenerative urban planning and design
- Market-based incentives for regenerative urban systems

Connected, healthy and climate friendly lifestyles

As an urban society, we face many challenges concerning how to rapidly transform toward climate-friendly lifestyles in ways that also support human well-being and social connectivity. We develop novel theory, tools, methods and processes for supporting pathways toward connected, healthy and climate-friendly living across the following focal areas:

- Healthy urban living environments and lifestyles
- Sustainable urban food systems
- Sense of place and regenerative place making
- Sustainable mobility and urbanization
- Social and environmental movements for sustainability transitions
- Barriers to and enablers of climate friendly lifestyles

Professor Christopher Raymond leads the research theme of urban sustainability
The Cities of Espoo, Helsinki and Vantaa are providing funds for doctoral researcher positions (36 full-time equivalents) at the University of Helsinki for the term 2018–2023.

Through the partnership projects, research activities founded on the shared interests of the cities and researchers are launched to support the development of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. All postdoctoral researchers involved in the collaboration are working in a multidisciplinary research group at Urbaria, but some may also be located at Aalto University, depending on their discipline.

Lasse Tarkiainen
Demograhy/Sociology

Cristina Bratu
Urban economy

Seona Candy
System analysis and future studies

Isabel Ramos Lobato
Urban geography

Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies URBARIA (UH)
coordinates
- the recruitment of the researchers
- their multidisciplinary Postdoc Forum group

University
- defines the discipline and the faculty
- consults disciplinary experts
- recruits the researcher
- appoints an academic supervisor

Researcher and city representatives meet in a kick-off meeting to identify common research interests

Follow-up meetings between researchers and cities twice a year

High-level strategic meetings with the cities’ directors of research twice a year
Urban Lunch Hour

A seminar series for researchers in urban studies in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

Urban Lunch Hour is a monthly multidisciplinary seminar for urban researchers where one or two specialists briefly introduce their research activities during a light lunch. The primary language of presentations is English.

After the presentations, the meetings continue in the form of joint discussion and questions on the topics presented. The discussions focus, for example, on the societal impact of research and the significance of the findings to Finnish cities and municipalities.

The seminar series is aimed at convening urban researchers in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area – and even Finland as a whole – round the same table for informal discussion. A key goal is to increase interaction among researchers and provide peer support for colleagues in questions pertaining both to content and methodology.

The seminar series is organised by the University of Helsinki’s Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies Urbaria, the Urban Research and Statistics unit of the City of Helsinki and the Aalto Living+ Platform.

**Autumn 2018**
Suburban life  
Integration and employment of immigrants  
Cost of housing  
Cities from the perspective of residents  
Mobility and accessibility in urban areas

**Spring 2019**
Regional development in Finland and the Helsinki region  
Housing and residents’ experiences  
Work in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area  
Cities as innovation platforms

**Autumn 2019**
Sustainable cities  
Education and immigration in urban areas  
Gender equality in urban environments  
Multi-sectoral wellbeing in municipalities

**Spring 2020**
Engaging budgeting  
Urban aesthetics  
Ageing in cities  
Relationship between cities and the government
Education

Master’s Programme in Urban Studies and Planning (USP)

The Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies Urbaria conducts close cooperation with the education provided in the field, with the Master’s Programme in Urban Studies and Planning (USP), jointly coordinated by the University of Helsinki and Aalto University, serving as the principal partner.

Through this collaboration, Urbaria aims to contribute to supporting the multidisciplinary content of the degree programme as well as to providing teaching opportunities for researchers working under the auspices of Urbaria.

In addition to the teaching collaboration, Urbaria takes part in the public engagement efforts of the master’s programme, while offering students, among other things, topics and cooperation opportunities for their master’s theses.

Eiran aikuislukio

In 2020 Urbaria initiated general upper secondary school cooperation in the form of preparatory training for general upper secondary education at the Eira High School for Adults. The preparatory training is targeted at immigrants and students not proficient in Finnish or Swedish whose goal is to complete general upper secondary education and the Finnish matriculation examination.

The goal of this collaboration is to build bridges between young immigrants and higher education, as well as between young people and their urban environments. Under the partnership, Urbaria organises a part of the social studies syllabus for the training utilising a range of guest lectures, workshops and excursions.
Who listens to researchers? Urbaria plans and implements various channels and operational models relevant to public engagement. Alongside traditional methods used in science communication, the institute emphasises the establishment of diverse dialogue between different parties active in society.
Urban Academy

Cooperation between universities and cities in current research and in making cities better

The Urban Academy is a collaboration platform for research-based urban development coordinated by Aalto University, the University of Helsinki as well as the Cities of Espoo, Helsinki and Vantaa, which promotes interaction between urban studies and urban development while supporting multi-disciplinary collaboration.

The new contractual period of the Urban Academy commenced in 2019 and will close at the end of 2023. In the new term, the academy added Espoo and Vantaa as new partners, in addition to which a strategic management group was established, at the initiative of the mayors, composed of the mayors and university rectors.

At the University of Helsinki, the Urban Academy collaboration is the responsibility of the Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies Urbaria.

Henrik Lönnqvist
Chair

Annina Ala-Outinen
Project manager

Neetta Eriksson
Planner

Morning coffees

The Urban Academy is organising a morning coffee seminar series to disseminate research-based knowledge and to support interaction related to practical urban development. Each session includes two to three presentations from the University of Helsinki, Aalto University and the research units of the city organisations.

Thesis market

Every year, the Urban Academy organises the Thesis Market, an event for matching students with interesting thesis opportunities. At the Thesis Market, potential thesis topics from the research groups of the University of Helsinki and Aalto University as well as different city sectors are introduced to students.
Future seminars

In 2020, the Urban Academy is launching a new seminar series on themes relevant to the cities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In the seminar, opportunities provided by research-based knowledge for sustainable urban planning and development are discussed.

Partnership seminars

The Urban Academy conducts close cooperation in a range of events organised by city organisations and universities, adding the dimension of academic research and research collaboration to the programme. In 2018–2019, the Urban Academy contributed to the organisation of these events, among others.

Helsinki Impact Conference

The Helsinki Impact Conference calls together European leaders, experts and academia to discuss urban policy and urban planning. In 2019 the Urban Academy served as a partner organiser of the City of Helsinki, producing a research section on current urban studies and the globally unique research collaboration in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

Helsinki Design Week

During the 2019 Helsinki Design Week, the Urban Academy served as an organiser of Climate School, a part of the programme. The Climate School speakers examined climate change from the perspectives of consumption, traffic, construction and societal structures, among other factors. A total of 14 scientists from Aalto University and the University of Helsinki took part in Climate School.

Helsinki Climathon Challenge

Climathon is a 24-hour hackathon that engages city residents in climate activities. In the challenge, hosted by the Urban Academy, the Teurastamo wholesale market area was developed into an increasingly sustainable urban food hub.
Table of 50

Discussions on the future of Finnish cities

Table of 50 is a discussion concept originating in Amsterdam that has been utilised in broad-based and independent roundtable discussions for nearly 20 years. Originally an extension of a triple helix operational model developed for Amsterdam’s innovation project, which was awarded the iCapital award, Table of 50 expands the traditional partnership concept for cities, universities and businesses to encompass agile grassroots-level operators in each sector. Among other things, this form of cooperation has resulted in the WeMakeTheCity urban festival.

The goal of Table of 50 at the Urban Academy is to expand discussions on the future of cities and to develop operational methods to supplement the institutionalised forms of action already employed by individual operators.

The launching and goals of the Table of 50 cooperation are the responsibility of the Urban Academy management group, while the Urban Academy steering group and its partners are responsible for related event organisation.

Dinner nro.1

The first Table of 50 event, Dinner No 1, was hosted by the City of Helsinki, with all other Urban Academy partner organisations also contributing to its implementation. The purpose of Dinner No 1 was to trial the feasibility of this new form of cooperation and to further refine the concept for the requirements of urban cooperation in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.
Urbaria Forum

Urbaria Forum is an event concept developed by Urbaria for the promotion of public engagement and societal impact. Urbaria Forum focuses on current topics from the perspectives of research and a variety of parties active in society.

The forum’s goal is to consolidate the status of research and researchers as participants in public discussion. The aim is to involve science in determining the content of public discussion, instead of merely answering questions.

In the term 2018–2019, Urbaria organised three Urbaria Forum sessions. The first and second sessions focused on housing themes and the number of small apartments in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, with the latter event organised together with the Helsingin Sanomat daily.

The third Urbaria Forum of the term was held in September 2019, with urban schools of the future as the theme. In the event, segregation particularly at schools in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and Amsterdam was discussed. The research department of the City of Amsterdam was a partner for the event. In the spring of 2020, Urbaria Forum was organised collaboratively with the City of Helsinki, as part of the Helsinki Symposium seminar.

Direct Dialogue

The mission of the Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies Urbaria is to promote the public engagement efforts of the University of Helsinki related to urban studies. Direct Dialogue is an interaction concept developed by Urbaria connecting a range of parties active in society, leaders, decision-makers and research.

Direct Dialogue is organised as either personal meetings between decision-makers or various meetings and workshops involving decision-makers and researchers.

The first Direct Dialogue, in the form of a workshop, was organised collaboratively by Mayor Jan Vaapaevuori of Helsinki and Urbaria to support the planning of the Helsinki Symposium seminar. Researchers interested in specific themes were invited to the event to discuss potential topics with the mayor.
Urbaria Summaries Series

The Urbaria Summaries Series is a new online publication of the Helsinki Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, which compiles brief literature reviews and research summaries. The purpose of the series is to develop the societal impact of urban studies. Summaries accepted to the Urbaria Summaries Series are published on the Urbaria website, with Urbaria distributing them broadly to various parties active in society.

In addition, the Urban Academy notifies the city organisations of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa of publications in the series.

The ISSN identifier of the Urbaria Summaries Series online publication is 2670-2363.

Urbaria blog

What the Urban?! is a blog by Urbaria Community and KATUKO that praises the message of multidisciplinary urban research. Our aim is to make the ongoing research known, share it with the larger audience and sparkle new discussions.

KATUKO (Urban Studies Collective) is formed of PhD students from different Finnish universities, faculties, disciplines and viewpoints with the common factor that we wish to meet and discuss in a low threshold manner with fellows in the same professional situation. Peer-support has developed into a way of interaction.

Find the blog www.urbariablog.fi