

This is the pre-print of the chapter:

CAMERIN FEDERICO (2023). The European Joint Doctorate “Urbanhist” Insights from an Innovative Training Network across Europe. In Megan E. Heim LaFrombois, Jay Mittal (Eds.). Routledge Handbook of University-Community Partnerships in Planning Education (pp. . Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003347873>. ISBN: 9781003347873

# THE EUROPEAN JOINT DOCTORATE “URBANHIST”

Insights from an Innovative Training Network  
across Europe

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## Key Takeaways

UrbanHist is a scientific training program aimed at PhD students that shaped a new generation of researchers based on a new transnational and interdisciplinary approach to the field of urban history in Europe. This program saw the participation of 15 PhD candidates who were willing to get a double degree and involved in partnerships with the community and non-academic sector. It promoted a new research field about the investigation of inclusive historical change of urbanism throughout Europe during the twentieth century. The promotion of university-community partnerships was more successful for the academic sector than the non-academic one since UrbanHist was primarily aimed at enabling innovative partnerships within academia. The transformative approach helped to develop a new consciousness of European countries through the lens of urbanism to assemble a common history of the twentieth century. This happened through various initiatives that, in some cases, had an impact on society. However, the assessment of UrbanHist university-community partnerships is partially hidden by the lack of in-depth public information about the training experiences carried out by the whole group of PhD candidates in the non-academic sector. The assessment of UrbanHist transformational approach would be more effective with the provision of a public ex-post evaluation to find out more about the benefits that innovative doctoral training had in addressing societal challenges.

## Introduction

Urbanism and urban planning had a striking transformative impact on European cities during the twentieth century. Despite being the second smallest continent, Europe played an out-standing role in strengthening the concept of urbanism, developing planning as a discipline, and exporting it abroad (Stanek 2021). The need to create a pan-European scientific and training program on the urban (planning) history of the twentieth century emerged on two occasions, namely the lecture series implemented at the BUW Bauhaus University Weimar: “20th century European urbanism: towards a shared history” (2015) and “European urbanism in the 20th century. The tension between real and written history” (2016).<sup>1</sup> In fact, the current historiography of urbanism and planning failed to substantially develop a critical analysis and

create relevant knowledge on this specific topic. In order to fill this gap, a fundamental step was to establish a consortium formed by various universities and create the basis to develop the research field through the form of an international program financed by the EU called UrbanHist. UrbanHist leveraged an innovative network of high-profile experienced academics, young professionals (i.e., the PhD candidates or “Early-Stage Researchers,” ERSs<sup>2</sup>), and experts of selected academic and non-academic institutions to foster a shared research program among the members of the partnership. The consortium has focused on interdisciplinary research in the fields of urban and planning history, namely the study of the city and its planned – or unplanned – transformations over the course of the twentieth century.

Two were the main goals of this new program. First, to push for making the history of twentieth-century European urbanism understandable and for disseminating related knowledge through outreach and engagement activities (such as publications, teaching, and public events), consequently improving basic education, and strengthening the European identity on this subject. Second, to establish the knowledge basis to shape future generations of urbanists, politicians, and administrative staff members responsible for many sectoral departments that should apply the knowledge gained to inform better policy decisions at the EU and member states levels.

This work analyses to what extent the UrbanHist program stimulated an extended and fruitful university-community partnership, especially through the joint doctorate program aimed to train new academics and technicians that may possibly benefit the European society. While UrbanHist main goal was to build an academic community, there also were several interactions with the non-academic community: a three-month internships of PhD candidates in non-academic institutions; two international conferences held in 2018 and 2019; public events that engaged with local communities; and unexpected new collaborations out of the UrbanHist network in both academic and non-academic sectors. It highlights the main features of this partnership: first by interrogating how these collaborations worked to develop and sustain mutually beneficial exchanges that promoted knowledge co-creation; second, by exploring whether the critical analyses and reflections that emerged among the stakeholders involved in the activities promoted by the program contributed to stimulate new ways of thinking, managing, and benefitting the society and the community in general. By impacting society, UrbanHist intended to stimulate new ways to govern the issues covered by the project (urban history and planning) and to benefit the planning and management of future cities.

In analyzing the UrbanHist experience, it is important to clarify the meaning attributed to “community.” According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the community may be “a way of referring to people in general or the public,” but also “the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality community.”<sup>3</sup> According to these definitions, this chapter refers to the notion of “community” as both “academic community” and “non-academic community” (i.e., public or private entities, local associations, and citizens). The work presented in this chapter is based on the information collected by screening public open-access documents released by the partners belonging to this program and my personal experience since I was enrolled in the program as an Early Stage Researcher (ESR). UrbanHist’s official website,<sup>4</sup> social media profiles,<sup>5</sup> and the official reports of the results published on the European Commission website<sup>6</sup> were the main sources retrieved and analyzed for assembling this chapter. In particular, the work presented analyzes the context in which UrbanHist was developed, its logistics and collaborations, and then it focuses on the outcomes, best practices, and lessons learned. More practical knowledge of the partnerships themselves is conveyed through the practical evidence of my personal experience,<sup>7</sup> although it is fundamental to explain the foundation of this program that helps the

readers to better understand the university-community partnerships created. In light of the lack of public reports on the outcomes of the partnerships between ESRs and institutions coming from academic and non-academic, this analysis attempts to demonstrate how the program resulted in mutually beneficial partnerships for both university and non-academic sectors.

### **Broad Context (Location, institution/program, and project/engagement)**

The European Joint Doctorate (EJD) “History of European Urbanism in the 20th Century” (“UrbanHist”) was an EU-funded multidisciplinary research and training doctoral program that lasted from October 1, 2016 to July 31, 2021, in the context of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action – Innovative Training Networks (ITN).<sup>8</sup>

The general aim of the ITN is to train a new generation of creative, entrepreneurial, and innovative ESRs with two main goals. The first is to face current and future societal challenges and to convert scientific knowledge and ideas into products and services for economic and social benefit. The second is to overcome national, sectoral, and disciplinary boundaries across Europe (European Commission n.d.). This kind of program exposes the ESRs to the academic and non-academic sectors and offers research training, transferable skills, and competencies that are relevant to foster innovation and long-term employability.<sup>9</sup> The university-community partnership is promoted by the overall program, but it is up to the program to establish how to work together and how to be transformative for the community.

UrbanHist received a European contribution of approximately 3.7 million euros through the “Horizon 2020 Framework Programme (H2020 – 2014–2020) – Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 721933.”<sup>4</sup> 4 European universities partnered UrbanHist in cooperation with 13 academic and non-academic partners located across Europe: BUW Bauhaus-Universität Weimar (Weimar, Germany; coordinator university), Universidad UVA de Valladolid (Valladolid, Spain), UPJŠ Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach (Košice, Slovakia), and BTH Blekinge Tekniska Högskola (Karlskrona, Sweden). This program aimed to employ 15 “Early-Stage Researchers” (i.e., PhD candidates), with a double affiliation covering 2 of the 4 main universities. ESRs were assigned to work in eight thematic research fields to achieve a joint understanding of twentieth-century European urban planning. Across a three-year research contract (2017–2020), ESRs were embedded into a network of high-profile academics and practitioners through a specific transnational-based training program that supported them in developing their PhD thesis and achieving a double title of PhD UrbanHist was divided into 4 thematic clusters entrusted to the host university with the crucial help of other 13 academic and non-academic partners. Each theme, in turn, included two major focus areas (Table 13.1).

This collaborative program presented a remarkable added value because of the different geographical location of the partners and their discipline specialization. Among the different disciplines covered in the program, UrbanHist provided its members with the crucial opportunity to embed urbanism with architecture, art history, geography, political science, town/regional/spatial planning, social anthropology, and sociology.<sup>10</sup>

### **Logistics**

The logistics were tied to the European Commission’s requirements and guidelines for a EJD. The whole EJD was divided into 8 thematic fields for a total of 15 ESRs, whose work was supported by a specific team of supervisors: each host university was provided with a local director and local coordinator. Eventually, a number of people belonging to the partner organizations took part to the advisory board.

Table 13.1 UrbanHist Program Structure Subdivided by Host Institutions and Themes.

| <i>Universities</i> | <i>Overall Themes</i>          | <i>Major Focus Areas</i>  | <i>Second Affiliation</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| BUW                 | Understanding complexity       | Historiography of European urbanism<br>Urbanism, politics and development strategies  | UVA<br>UPJŠ<br>BUW<br>BTH |
| UVA                 | 100 years expanding the tasks  | Public infrastructure, social housing and the evolution of cities<br>Heritage in the city and the landscape                           | BUW<br>UPJŠ<br>BUW<br>BTH |
| UPJŠ                | The other half of Europe       | From Austro-Hungarian Empire through Soviet sphere to European unification<br>Urbanism, ethnics and nation building                   | BUW<br>BTH<br>UVA<br>UVA  |
| BTH                 | Planning for growth as mission | The establishment of urbanism as a profession and a discipline<br>Planning for the growth society and the emergence of sustainability | UPJŠ<br>BUW<br>UVA        |

Source: Elaboration by the Author (Federico Camerin 2024).

In order to develop research in the main focus areas exposed in Table 13.1, UrbanHist’s provided an inter-sectoral doctoral training program<sup>11</sup> to the ESRs that include seven qualification tracks with different topics: sensitizing for central issues related to delicate topics and self-awareness such as gender awareness and ethics in science; educating and preparing for research on twentieth-century European urbanism; preparing for a career in the academic and non-academic sector; nurturing abilities or expertise which ESRs may use in a variety of intersectional roles; fostering employability, intercultural compatibility and promoting unique profile; and equipping with basic and specialized software needed in the academic and non-academic sector.

These tracks were the ground for developing the bi-annual reunions called “Network-wide workshop weeks” (Nwww). They were scheduled on a six-month basis as a one-week-long joint and face-to-face training, briefing, and supervision that took place sequentially at the four hosting universities.<sup>12</sup>

Besides this, specific tasks the ESRs were asked to fulfill during UrbanHist were the following:

- presenting progresses and results of their research in at least two international conferences and publishing them in two open-access peer-reviewed journals;
- attending bi-annual lectures by international researchers in the field of European urbanism history from inside and outside the consortium and regular open lecture series organized by the four host organizations;
- organizing two international conferences aimed at gathering young academics from Europe and abroad to discuss and exchange their ideas and enhance their research;
- attending three inter-sectoral “secondments” (a word used by the European Commission for internships) at the affiliated university (one lasting six months) and academic and non-academic partners (lasting 3 months each) for a total of 12 months; and
- fulfilling local requirements regarding mandatory attending to university courses about theory and methodology, as well as about English language courses and academic writing.

The ESR tasks and training program were formalized through the cotutelle agreement between the two universities in which the ESR was enrolled with the aim to achieve a double doctoral degree.<sup>13</sup> Each ESR was subjected to an individual “career development plan” that followed a year-basis review and update to accomplish with the progressive research goals. This document was aimed to collect the research and the professional development plans, both including concrete short-term (two years) and long-term career objectives (five years), as well as related achievements. In addition, ESRs were asked to deliver a “progress report” on a six-month basis to communicate the research project’s results, the difficulties faced in carrying out the research, and the identification of any additional need related to research support and personal development. The monitoring and quality control of the project was guaranteed by seven committees (Ethics Committee, Supervision Steering Committee, Budgeting Committee, Events Committee, Dissemination Committee, Training Committee, and Editor’s Board), whose meetings took place in each Nwww event.

In general, the logistics of UrbanHist were managed by a group made up of eight people (i.e., a local director and a coordinator belonging to each of the four main beneficiaries of the program).<sup>14</sup> The logistics were formalized in the ESRs’ contracts, which, in turn, resulted from a negotiation required organizational and administrative arrangements. The cotutelle agreements were the tools that brought together and homogenized the different institutional regulations, supporting a smooth and practical conduction of the PhD research in terms of formal aspects. In addition, cotutelles fixed the conditions to apply for granting the award of the double doctorate degree on the basis of a single academic contribution elaborated by the PhD researcher in English language. Finally, cotutelles established bilateral arrangements concerning fees, formal format of the doctoral thesis, regulations related to supervision aspects, and assessment requirements. The regulations contained in each Cotutelle were accepted by the researcher, the two academic supervisors, and the authorities in charge of awarding the degree (i.e., deans or heads of the PhD programs).

Each ESR’s supervision team surveyed the ESRs’ professional and personal development in compliance with the UrbanHist requirements (such as publications, secondments, and conferences). All ESRs were assigned to a two-person supervision team composed by two academic supervisors coming from his/her two affiliated universities and one supervisor from a non-academic partner.<sup>15</sup> The role and engagement of non-academic supervisors have been equal to the one of academic ones to ensure the maximum impact of the PhD thesis throughout the whole project and to increase the prospective of employability of the ESR. Individual consultations with the principal supervisor took place at least every two months and meetings with the whole supervision team were scheduled in person during Nwww events. Eventually, ESRs had the possibility to organize online meetings with all members of the supervision team on a monthly basis.

To sum up, the logistics and organization model of the program aimed to provide the best conditions for ESRs to conduct their research in the academic community, even though the non-academic community played a key role in the path toward achieving the double degree of PhD.

### Collaborations

Collaborations established under the umbrella of UrbanHist ranged from to supervise the doctoral student, provide academic and non-academic support for his or her research, provide administrative support, and to host the doctoral student at the affiliated partners’ locations.

These collaborations have been directly and indirectly implemented. On the one hand, the collaborations directly established with academic and non-academic partners were carefully chosen based on the field of expertise and the competencies they can provide to promote a wider understanding of urbanism history in Europe during the twentieth century. Three kinds of events set the basis for fruitful collaboration in the frame of UrbanHist. First, Nwww meetings were the occasion for formal and informal colloquia among ESRs and the local university supervisors, as well as to participate in seminars delivered by keynote speakers (such as Peter Clark, co-founder of the European Association for Urban History in 1989; Clark 2013) and interact with them. Second, the two “Young Urban(h)ist” conferences promoted the opportunity for establishing new and strengthening existing collaborations among the institutions taking part in the events, providing feedback to doctoral works by international scholars and non-academic professionals, identifying further research gaps, and improving the quality of their research and related outcomes. Third, the four host universities launched specific initiatives to engage ESRs with non-academic communities such as the European Researchers’ Night.

Besides formal collaboration activities stipulated in the frame of UrbanHist, partnerships and networking were also unexpectedly launched by ESRs in two ways. On the one hand, ESRs strengthened already existing collaborations due to their previous experiences in academic and non-academic environments. On the other hand, ESRs promoted new collaborations thanks to their participation in conferences and public events that have boosted chances for networking. These collaborations involving academics and non-academics have continued also after the achievement of the PhD degree (see the section “Outcomes”).

Concerning the academic community, the participation of ESRs and mentors at international conferences – such as the 18th IPHS (International Planning History Society) “Looking at the world history of planning” and 14th EAUH (European Association for Urban History) “Urban renewal and resilience cities in comparative perspective,” both of them held in 2018 – made possible the interaction with high-profile academics and offered further opportunities for networking.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the internal meetings between the program members contributed to strengthen the high-profile network of people involved in this field of study. The challenge for the future is to keep maintaining these collaborations in the long term.

In terms of university and non-academic-community collaboration, the three-month internship was the most important experience to make ESRs aware about how research may have a “societal impact,” i.e., generating relevant knowledge, strengthening the impact of research and innovation in supporting the development and implementation of EU policies, and addressing global challenges, inter alia the SDGs.<sup>17</sup> This training period was aimed to directly shape ESRs’ inter-sectoral profile by their incorporation in everyday working life, expanding networks outside academia, and increasing their employability. The rationale of the non-academic internship was to overcome the so-called “ivory tower of academia” (Oliver-Lumerman and Drori 2021) and provide ESRs with the essential means to deliver concrete societal impact, alongside achieving academic and scientific excellence. The internships were managed by the UrbanHist consortium by assigning to each PhD student a non-academic institution according to the specific field and work package. Despite this first assignation, the secondments have been eventually changed in relation to the specific ESRs’ needs. For instance, I had this experience while enrolled in the position “Urban Heritage Planning, its Relations to Real-Estate, Economic and Social Models in 20th Century Europe” belonging to the field “Heritage and Urbanism in Europe” (work package “Hundred years expanding tasks”). I proposed to change the non-academic institution by switching the Dresden City Museum (Germany) for the Madrid

Official Chamber of Architects – COAM<sup>18</sup> (January to April 2019) – as it was better aligned with the theme and tasks of my research. My proposal was well accepted by the program consortium.

### Outcomes

UrbanHist program has contributed to enriching the debate in the field of European urban and planning history toward building a shared and solid history of urbanism. Many were the academic outcomes that were provided to the program community and the general public through EU-required open-access periodic reports, newsletters, and blogs on the program websites, scientific publications, and PhD dissertations.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, among the outcomes, there was also the building of unexpected partnerships with other academics and non-academics.

First, UrbanHist members contributed to disseminating 14 “UrbanHist Newsletters” (ISSN: 2585-7118) released to scientific and public communities between April 2017 and July 2020.<sup>20</sup> Each newsletter included an overview of the consortium activities, a space where academic and non-academic partners could present themselves and their specific roles within the program, and a list of relevant conferences and book reviews.

Second, ESRs encouraged community engagement through specific blog contributions in which they described their achievements and research paths over the course of the program.<sup>21</sup>

Third, according to the last public update,<sup>22</sup> ESRs published their works in 17 conference proceedings, 27 peer-reviewed publications, 1 monographic book, and 2 book chapters, as well as 24 other publications mainly consisting book reviews in scientific journals. Moreover, Routledge recently published a co-edited book with the contributions of a selected pool of UrbanHist members after a peer-review process (Welch Guerra et al. 2022).<sup>23</sup> This book may catalyze the academic development on the topic of urbanism and planning, which is relevant for supporting the development of European society. Although urban history may be listed as an academic discipline aimed at general education (Welch Guerra 2022, 3–4), it plays an essential role for society to learn from the past experiences. Research undertaken by UrbanHist has not neutrally interpreted the past but disseminated (and aim to continue disseminating) the main facts and lessons learned to improve the planning and management of European society and cities by learning from the past. This fact may be the most far-reaching milestone of UrbanHist for the whole community. By critically approaching urbanism and planning in the twentieth century, the UrbanHist consortium has provided the current and future generations with fresh insights for a better comprehension of the past planning experiences and for building suitable models to shape future cities, territories, and society and their needs. The research created a proper theoretical and practical framework based on which planners and decision-makers can foster sustainable community development, including the dimensions of gender, cultural, sexual, religious, social status, origin, and mental and physical conditions.

Fourth, by December 2022, 4 out of 15 ESRs have successfully defended their theses, while the other PhD candidates are still working on their dissertations or have deposited them.<sup>24</sup>

Eventually, unexpected partnerships were built by ESRs with researchers belonging to other universities not directly involved in UrbanHist. For instance, this was the case of my research. My specialization in analyzing and interpreting both urban regeneration processes and the management of military land during the twentieth century resulted in the publication of my findings with other academics (Camerin and Gastaldi 2018; Fabris and Camerin, 2018) and in the invitation as a lecturer in universities and international workshops devoted to bachelor’s and master’s students.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, main outcomes of UrbanHist related to university-non-academic-community partnerships include the following collaborations:

- the two international conferences organized by the consortium. They were the “Young urban(H)ist conference” (Košice, Slovak Republic, October 1–2, 2018) and “Interpreting 20th Century European Urbanism” (Stockholm, Sweden, October 21–23, 2019);
- the three-month internships experienced by all ESRs. It was possible to choose a specific organization at a later stage, prior to the start of the fellowship. However, it was compulsory to describe in the application forms what type of organization, main activities, and impact it was envisaged for the secondment;
- public events organized by the host Universities with the aim to engage with the local population; and
- collaborations with academic and non-academic institutions non included in UrbanHist.

The two conferences established and reinforced already existing partnerships among the university and non-university communities. These events were a milestone for ESRs to confront their research with a wider group of academics and professionals involved in the history of twentieth-century Europe urbanism. The first event included 22 proposals elaborated by 23 young academics (of which 8 were not ESRs) on the basis of the four main themes of UrbanHist (see Table 13.1 of Section “Broad context”). The event started to spread the research progresses of the whole program: it was held in two parallel sessions chaired by academic and non-academic experts that critically evaluated ESRs’ contributions. The output was a constructive discussion and feedback that helped developing the communication and professional skills of the PhD candidates. While this first conference benefitted especially the university community with the involvement of non-university partners, a further step was taken with the second conference.<sup>26</sup> This event directly involved ESRs as they drafted and co-chaired 13 tracks with experienced academics.<sup>27</sup> Outcomes were larger in comparison to the first conference and attracted a wider international academic and non-academic community. This way, UrbanHist expanded its influence out of its network: the call for abstracts received more than 100 applications from both UrbanHist members and non-members.<sup>28</sup> On this occasion, the partnership with the local community took place thanks to the roundtable “Gaps in Sustainable Urban Development Research” jointly organized by “ArkDes” – the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design – and “Boveket” – the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning. The session generated a debate about what is required to connect academics with society’s needs to ensure sustainable urban development and highlighted the main challenges for implementing the knowledge co-created by the local community. The discussion focused on the problems of communication difficulties between academic and non-academic institutions, limited funding, and weak public and political support. Overall, the two conferences are not quite easy to assess in terms of benefits for the non-academic community due to the publication of only a booklet as their main goals were for the academic community. These events were pivotal steps for boosting new alliances among the academic and non-academic participants and for enhancing the capabilities of addressing the current societal challenges through a high-quality PhD education. However, during these events, there was only one critical reflection centered on the non-academic community that took place in Stockholm.

Concerning the non-academic internship, by taking into consideration my experience at COAM, the benefits of this secondment were mutual for the agency and myself for two main reasons. On the one hand, this non-academic institution actively involved me in everyday working life, giving me the possibility to conduct the activities of the Library (i.e., the



classification of publications regarding Madrid's twentieth-century urban history) and the Historical Service (i.e., the categorization of classified documents regarding Madrid's twentieth-century scanned images documentaries). On the other hand, this internship enriched my planning education by giving me the possibility to access the cultural program scheduled during the internship by attending exhibitions, workshops, lectures, and seminars. The combination of activities and findings resulted in three main outcomes based on the new knowledge co-created during the secondment. The first was the acceleration of the thesis, specifically the theoretical chapters based on the conceptualization of urban renewal and regeneration policies implemented in Madrid during the twentieth century. The second, and in strict connection with the first one, was the publication of a paper in a double-peer-reviewed scientific journal (Álvarez Mora and Camerin 2019). The third was the organization of a lecture on the role played by the Italian urban planner Giuseppe Campos Venuti in drafting the 1985 Madrid General Master Plan and in influencing the resulting urban transformations across the city. This event (COAM 2020) triggered a debate among architects belonging to the Madrid Official Chamber of Architects and the local association "Club de Debate Urbano" (2020) about the current needs for a more people-centered General Master Plan in order to avoid massive urbanization waves and socio-spatial segregation as it happened over the twentieth century. Overall, the internship had a direct influence on shaping my intersectoral profile, strengthening my network, and increasing my employability, as well as on strengthening COAM as a vehicle of innovation in the field of urban history. This internship could have been more transformative, but it lacked time to be implemented due to the primary goal of UrbanHist – i.e., the achievement of the double PhD degree. The work done generated a debate among local stakeholders but did not elaborate on any community-engaged model to prepare a debate among City Council spokespersons.

As regards the public events organized by the four main universities, a number of events aimed at engaging the local population were organized to discuss the findings of UrbanHist and their relevance for society. A proper example was the cycle of conferences "Cities in transformation. Histories of Urbanism in the 20th century" mutually organized by the Instituto Universitario de Urbanística (Universidad UVA de Valladolid) and UvaDivulga – the scientific culture unit of Universidad UVA de Valladolid – with the support of the City Council in April 2021. The aim of this cycle of conferences was to present ESRs research results to citizens living nearby the University and start a debate with them on the development of Valladolid urbanism during the twentieth century (UvaDivulga 2021). My lecture "Large military land as an engine of urban transformation"<sup>29</sup> showed how the building, dismantling, and redevelopment of military infrastructure such as barracks triggered urban development dynamics in Europe and in the specific case of Valladolid. On this basis, citizens were shown two main dynamics. The first was how military barracks generated new waves of urbanization in the city over the last century and the second was the challenging redevelopment of these barracks after the military progressive withdrawal from the city starting from the end of the Cold War. The debate with citizens especially focused on the relevance of military barracks intended as public goods that should benefit public interests, it questioned the expected effects of three barracks redevelopments (such as the demolition of barracks remains worth preserving and the provision of public equipment and affordable housing) (Figures 13.1–13.3), and it discussed the legacy of reuses already carried out. This experience leveraged the citizens to better understand how Valladolid urban environment was and will likely to be shaped by the reuse of former military sites and the task that public institutions should fulfill to guarantee the so-called "right to the city." A deeper understanding of the current redevelopment affecting abandoned military sites in the city was claimed in the debate with citizens, but afterward,



*Figure 13.1* The General Monasterio barracks lying abandoned in Valladolid, Spain.

*Source:* Photo by Federico Camerin in 2022.

the City Council did not provide more occasions to foster the university-community partnership that started with this conference. Despite this, I successively launched an international conference in September 2021<sup>30</sup> on the redevelopment of former military sites during my post-doctoral fellowship and I personally asked the City Council to participate. This request was declined, although two local academics participated in the event (Fernández-Maroto 2021; Santos y Ganges 2021). Regrettably, the case of Valladolid was not isolated, as other Spanish local administrations did not accept the invitation.

Eventually, ESRs triggered external collaborations with the non-academic community by, for instance, being involved as speakers in local conferences and debates (my personal experience is reported in the section “Best practices”).

### **Best Practices**

UrbanHist lacked an in-depth assessment of the transformative approaches driven by university-non-academic-community partnership in planning education under the lens of urban history. UrbanHist involved non-academic institutions with the task of influencing the training program of ESR by providing three-month internships, supervision, and input to impact societal challenges, so it is worth to provide a first attempt to identify best practices of these collaborations to understand the influence of ESRs research findings in society. To do so, this



*Figure 13.2* The decayed entrance of the Conde Ansures barracks in Valladolid, Spain.  
*Source:* Photo by Federico Camerin in 2022.



*Figure 13.3* A view of the abandoned internal area of La Rubia barracks (Valladolid, Spain) behind the impenetrable military walls.

*Source:* Photo by Federico Camerin in 2022.

section inquires my participation in six non-academic events (Table 13.2 sums up the main contents and stakeholders involved). On this basis, the analysis shows the societal concerns to address according to the research findings (i.e., speech's contents) and whether my discourse has stimulated possible societal changes by fostering new legislation on the theme, new negotiation among the stakeholders involved, attempts to achieve public funding, and land-use changes in the general master plan (Table 13.3). The contribution of my research to stimulate effective changes in society is empirically addressed by the thesis results and their dissemination published before and after the events. The reliability of this comparison is intrinsic to the publications as they have been peer-reviewed.

Five out of six events regarded the analysis of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) disposal policies, redevelopment processes of former military sites, and the potential of these reuses to trigger sustainable transformations that benefit civil society. As I claimed about the dichotomy between profit-driven spaces and urban commons (Camerin 2021b), these aspects have been affected by a neoliberal tendency that resulted in the privatization policies of potential urban commons. This is why I proposed a cross-cultural analysis aimed at identifying good practice and offering good practice guidelines on the basis of my doctoral research (Camerin 2021a). In general, no new legislation updated the MoD disposal process to avoid privatization, and the second and third “Study day on Italy’s historic waterways” were the weakest initiatives because the promoter was

Table 13.2 Outcomes of the University-Non-Academic-Community Partnerships Triggered by Federico Camerin.

| <i>Promoter</i>   | <i>Data</i>                     | <i>Event</i>   | <i>Scope</i>   | <i>Participants</i>  |
|---|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <i>On Disposal Processes of Military Land</i>                         |                                 |  |  |  |
| Aviazione Marittima Italiana  | 15/11/2018<br>and<br>17/12/2018 | 2nd and 3rd<br>“Study day on<br>Italy’s historic<br>waterways”                     | Redevelopment of<br>the Italian Navy<br>seaplane bases                                     | Academics,<br>Associations,<br>Citizens, City<br>Councils              |
| Volpago del<br>Montello City<br>Council (Treviso<br>Province)         | 15/02/2019                      | Alienation of military<br>sites: national<br>perspectives and an<br>initial survey | Participatory<br>planning on the<br>redevelopment of a<br>former military site             | Academics,<br>Associations,<br>Citizens, City<br>Councils              |
| Casarsa della Delizia<br>City Council<br>(Pordenone<br>Province)      | 15/03/2019                      | Beyond barbed wire.<br>What future for<br>disused military<br>areas?               | Redevelopment<br>proposals for the<br>former Trieste<br>barracks                           | Academics,<br>Associations,<br>Citizens, City<br>Councils              |
| YouBuild for the<br>Italian Chamber<br>of Engineers and<br>Architects | 19/11/2020                      | The urban<br>regeneration  | Regeneration of<br>former military<br>sites in Verona                                      | Academics,<br>Associations,<br>Citizens, City<br>Councils              |
| Universidad UVA de<br>Valladolid                                      |                                 | Cities in<br>transformation  | Addressing<br>sustainable urban<br>development on<br>the basis of former<br>military sites | Academics,<br>Associations,<br>Citizens,<br>Valladolid<br>City Council |
| <i>On Urban Regeneration of Barcelona’s Poblenou Neighborhood</i>     |                                 |  |  |  |
| Museu d’Història<br>de Barcelona<br>MUHBA–Barcelona<br>City Council   | 21/09/2020                      | Urban history and<br>heritage dialogues  | Fostering knowledge<br>on urban<br>regeneration in<br>Barcelona                            | Online speech<br>(890 views by<br>04/12/2022)*                         |

\* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7F91fQFujoM>.

Source: Elaboration by the Author (Federico Camerin 2023).

able just to ask for state funding. Instead, the cases of Volpago del Montello, Casarsa della Delizia, and Verona were more successful as the events triggered negotiation among the stakeholders involved, who agreed on the development of new projects to ratify in the planning tools and to participate in international and national calls for funding (Camerin 2022a).

The main concern of the speech at Barcelona’s Museum of the History of Barcelona (MUHBA) was a change in the planning tool for a more people-centered urban regeneration in the Poblenou neighborhood to avoid gentrification and loss of relevant industrial heritage (Camerin 2019). The reflections contained in this event were eventually, but partially, taken into consideration for the modification of the General Master Plan toward a more inclusive and sustainable regeneration of Poblenou (Camerin 2022b).

To sum up, my research tried to impact the non-academic community by proposing new ways to improve people living conditions, reinforcing the sense of belonging of them and stimulating citizens’ participation and transformative actions to actively contribute to shape the environment

Table 13.3 An Attempt to Assess the Impact of Federico Camerin’s Research Results.

| <i>Event</i>  | <i>Speech’s Contents</i>  | <i>New Legislation</i> | <i>Negotiation</i> | <i>Funding</i> | <i>Land-Use Change</i> |
|---|---|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <i>On Disposal Processes of Military Land</i>                             |   |                        |                    |                |                        |
| 2nd and 3rd “Study day on Italy’s historic waterways”                     | No further privatization or only tourist-intended redevelopment of military sites in areas with ecological value          | No                     | No                 | Yes            | No                     |
|   | People- and environmental-centered redevelopment of Sant’Andrea seaplane base in Venice                                   | No                     | No                 | Yes            | No                     |
| Alienation of military sites: national perspectives and an initial survey | Volpago del Montello’s military armory located in an ecologically protected area to redevelop as “commons”                | No                     | Yes                | Yes            | Yes                    |
| Beyond barbed wire. What future for disused military areas?               | Begin negotiations between Casarsa della Delizia City Council and State to find new uses for a 20-year-abandoned barracks | No                     | Yes                | Yes            | Yes                    |
| The urban regeneration  | Need to unblock redeveloping Verona’s former military sites   | No                     | Yes                | Yes            | Yes                    |
| <i>On Urban Regeneration of Barcelona’s Poblenou Neighborhood</i>         |   |                        |                    |                |                        |
| Urban history and heritage dialogues                                      | Avoid gentrification, heritage loss, and massive urbanization in Barcelona’s Poblenou neighborhood                        | No                     | Yes                | Yes            | Yes                    |

Source: Elaboration by the Author (Federico Camerin 2023).

they live in. The ESR role was to contribute to the advancement of the public good (i.e., public-owned assets as urban commons) and social agenda (i.e., people-centered urban regeneration) and to foster the leadership of societal change as a distinct and integral goal of UrbanHist education.

### Lessons Learned

More than one year after the official closure of UrbanHist (i.e., July 31, 2021), it is the right time for reflecting on the lessons learned from this program in terms of university-community partnerships. It is important to highlight what worked, what did not, and the possible changes/improvements from all stakeholders’ perspectives for those who may be interested in replicating such collaboration and engaging with future EJDs.

The first main lesson learned is that PhD research takes time and may go beyond a three-year project, as well as three-month non-academic secondments may be not enough to engage

profitable collaborations that have a direct impact on society. Although just less than a third of ESRs have achieved the double degree, this data is not negative. Innovation in a field of research does not come easy. It takes time to build a theoretical and practical framework to investigate all four main themes of UrbanHist, so the initial steps of inexperienced researchers into the academic sector are fraught with complexity. Moreover, the several EU and university requirements for achieving a double title of PhD were complex to manage. For instance, the three mandatory secondments were demanding as ESRs had to temporarily move to foreign countries. These experiences surely enriched the research and outputs in terms of academic-community partnerships but demanded strong efforts (e.g., in terms of adapting the routine of married couples with children during a year). The three-month secondments were challenging as in a few months is objectively difficult to stimulate a real impact in society, but they were enough to inform non-academic communities on the state of the art of UrbanHist research. Generally speaking, a three-year period is claimed to be insufficient for doctoral candidates to achieve a PhD degree (Woolston 2019) and the achievement of a double degree requires even more effort. Plus, the COVID-19 outbreak occurred in Europe right after the 7th Nwww (February 10–13, 2020). The pandemic was a disruption for the entire world and it has surely affected academic tasks because specific research that required on-site visits was not possible for several months (Pyhältö, Tikkanen, and Anttila 2022). Delays in delivering PhD theses may be also related to personal situations such as parenthood.

The second element that is worth highlighting is that EJDs may be a first step for enabling university-university-community relationships with the help of the non-academic sector to start having an impact on society. UrbanHist attempted to group academic and non-academic entities to introduce innovation in the vast and diverse urban history culture in Europe. UrbanHist members were able to make a contribution in the field of research thanks to the multiple events and secondments carried out during the program. The effectiveness of the knowledge gained during the program to have an impact on society needs more time to implement the knowledge co-created and to transfer it to society.

For sure, UrbanHist established an innovative community represented in both academia and practice. This community elaborated a unique scientific contribution, which, contrary to the mainstream approach to twentieth-century European urbanism, proposed new perspectives and reflections on changes and changing processes that have shaped European city planning. Not only academic contribution, though. As demonstrated by this chapter, scientific culture may permeate society and establish new collaborations, especially with the closest environment to the university as it happened with the cycle of conferences “Cities in transformation. Histories of Urbanism in the 20th century” and the 2019 “Young Urban(h)ist” held in Stockholm. By doing so, academia applied knowledge to real situations and promoted critical thinking to facilitate the decision-making of citizens in the planning choice for the future from a critical and rational point of view.

## Conclusion

UrbanHist is a higher education (PhD) program that has focused on community involvement and non-academic partners to ensure that research findings find more practical implications in society. The many researches, activities, and collaborations with academic and non-academic communities constituted the ground on which UrbanHist delivered a new understanding of European urbanism history and influenced the future ways to address societal challenges through urbanism. The use of history and the knowledge of the historical city-making process revealed fundamental aspects to understanding the past of European society, but also to learn lessons to build its future.

The sections “Results,” “Outcome,” and “Best Practices” showed that the international conferences, three-month internships, public events, and unexpected partnerships had a benefit for both ESRs and academic and non-academic communities, even though UrbanHist apparently implied more tangible benefits for the academic sector. A fundamental gap to assess the impact of UrbanHist in society is the fact that the European Union did not publish a public inventory about university-community collaborations and about the outputs achieved during the three-month secondments and thanks to the other collaborations established with non-academic actors. Consequently, the chapter analyzed only publicly available information and a specific case study (i.e., my personal experience). The inquiry shows that academic-non-academic-community partnerships were helpful for communities and PhD researchers, but a number of critical elements need to be highlighted. The first is the lack of information about the benefits of all the university-community partnerships implemented within UrbanHist as they have not been officially and/or systematically collected. The second is that the collaborations between ESRs and local communities should have needed more time to have a greater impact, as demonstrated in the case of the debate occurred at COAM in 2020. The third concerns the intrinsic difficulty to persuade public institutions such as City Councils to keep promoting debates such as in the case of the event “Cities in transformation. Histories of Urbanism in the 20th century” in Valladolid. The willingness of public authorities to keep continuing to organize these initiatives is fundamental, but it is not easy once UrbanHist is ended. Eventually, publicly available information about the ESRs post-UrbanHist careers is needed to understand the benefits of the whole program for academic and non-academic sectors.

To conclude, Europe is currently facing many disruptions that may undermine the wealth of its territory, the sense of identity and even the same existence of the European Union as an international entity, such as Brexit (Malik 2018) and the war in Ukraine (United Nations Development Programme 2021). From an urbanism perspective, the need for solutions toward the ecological transition of society and people-centered urban environments (Caprotti 2018) has been accelerated by the pandemic outbreak (Florida, Rodríguez-Pose, and Storper 2021). It is in this sense that the application of UrbanHist transformative approach can guarantee plenty of cultural, political, and social support to face these disruptions with proper adjustments to the local contexts by developing healthier, safer, and more ecologically and socio-economic balanced urban environments.

### Acknowledgments

Federico Camerin conducted this study during the research project “La Regeneración Urbana como una nueva versión de los Programas de Renovación Urbana. Logros y fracasos.” This project is co-funded by the Spanish Ministry of Universities in the framework of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, by the European Union – Next Generation EU, and by the Universidad de Valladolid. The author is also a former Early Stage Researcher involved in UrbanHist program.

### Notes

- 1 See respectively <https://uedxx.net/2015/04/09/20th-century-european-urbanism-towards-a-shared-history/> and <https://uedxx.net/2016/06/14/european-urbanism-in-the-20th-century-the-tension-between-real-and-written-history/>. Both events were sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and developed through the international network “Urbanism of European Dictatorships during the XXth Century Scientific Network” (Sassi 2015).
- 2 An Early Stage Researcher is a person hired in an ETN by a beneficiary, usually also enrolled in a PhD program (EURODOC 2020, 5).



- 3 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/community>.
- 4 <https://www.urbanhist.eu/>.
- 5 Such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/urbanHIST>) and Twitter ([https://twitter.com/urbanhist\\_h2020](https://twitter.com/urbanhist_h2020)).
- 6 <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/721933>.
- 7 No public report on university-community partnerships was released by EU, so my experience as Early Stage Researcher may help to interpret these relationships along with the existing public reports.
- 8 The fields of science involved by UrbanHist according to the EU portal were “history,” “heuristic programming,” and “government systems” (see <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/721933>). While the program was about to end on July 31, 2020, the European Commission expanded this period on the basis of the maternity leave of one of the fellows in Košice. However, the contracts of the Early Stage Researchers were not extended.
- 9 Candidates must not have lived or carried out his/her main activity (i.e., studies or work) in the country of the recruiting beneficiary for more than 12 months in the three years immediately before the recruitment date.
- 10 <https://www.urbanhist.eu/consortium>.
- 11 <https://www.urbanhist.eu/training>.
- 12 In chronological order they were the following: the first Nwww took place in Weimar (May 2017); the second Nwww was hosted in Karlskrona (October 2017); the third Nwww in Valladolid (February 2018); the fourth and fifth Nwww in Košice (October 2018 and April 2019); the sixth in Stockholm (October 2019); and the seventh in Valladolid (February 2020). The last reunion did not take place due to the pandemic outbreak.
- 13 In case the ESR is not able to conclude the PhD dissertation within the three-year contract, the validity of this agreement goes beyond the funding period.
- 14 <https://www.urbanhist.eu/management>.
- 15 Additionally, ESRs may have opted for choosing a consultant from the academic staff working at their home institution or any other academic partner.
- 16 Such as the involvement of Carola Hein, current president of the IPHS and editor of the 2018 Routledge Handbook of Planning History, in the co-edited volume (Hein 2022). Moreover, ESRs started to publish in the most relevant urban history journal at international level, such as “Planning Perspectives” (Bihlmaier 2020; Camerin 2023; Gimeno-Sánchez 2022; Manzano Gómez 2022).
- 17 SDGs are the Sustainable Development Goals ([https://unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/sustainable-development-goals/?gclid=CjwKCAiA7vWcBhBUEiwAXieItnylx\\_0PR0waiOKk86rb\\_r0A3jqh3Bcx3bH2liWStnvqnF3Qh4PZYxxoC3pMQAvD\\_BwE](https://unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/sustainable-development-goals/?gclid=CjwKCAiA7vWcBhBUEiwAXieItnylx_0PR0waiOKk86rb_r0A3jqh3Bcx3bH2liWStnvqnF3Qh4PZYxxoC3pMQAvD_BwE))).
- 18 In Spanish “Colegio de Arquitectos de Madrid.” <https://www.coam.org/>.
- 19 They are <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/721933> and <https://www.urbanhist.eu/>.
- 20 <https://www.urbanhist.eu/newsletter>.
- 21 <https://www.urbanhist.eu/blog>.
- 22 <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/721933/results>.
- 23 The volume is divided into 3 main sections for a total of 25 chapters: “emergence of contemporary urban planning”; “functions and practices of urban planning under changing social orders”; and “interpretation of the twentieth century planning history.” Each section comprises eight chapters.
- 24 Three theses were defended from June 2020 by researchers whose first affiliation was Universidad UVA de Valladolid (Manzano Gómez 2021), two of them written in both English and Spanish (Camerin 2020 and Khairullina 2021), and the other candidate was from BUW Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. (Arzmi 2020).
- 25 Such as the lecture “Giuseppe Campos Venuti in XX century Italian urbanism and the austerity challenges for the future” held at Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña in March 2018 (<https://www.urbanhist.eu/single-post/from-giuseppe-campos-venuti-to-federico-oliva-xx-century-italian-urbanism-and-the-austerity-chall>) and the international summer school “Re-inhabiting Cold War NATO Bases Valorization and Reuse of the NATO Base WEST STAR (site B)” organized by the University of Brescia in September 2019 (<https://www.urbanhist.eu/single-post/participation-at-international-summer-school-re-inhabiting-cold-war-nato-bases-valorization-and-reu>).
- 26 <https://www.bth.se/eng/about-bth/organisation/faculty-of-engineering/tifp/urbanhist-conference/>.
- 27 “Writing Town Planning Histories”; “Dissemination and Mobility of Town Planning Ideas”; “Urban Regeneration in European Cities”; “Discourses of Consumption in Modern Architecture and City Building”; “Cities and the Environment”; “Facets of Modernity in Housing Development”;

- “Post-socialist transition: Between Conflicts and Legacy”; “Housing beyond State Power”; “The impact of Industrialization on Central and Eastern European Cities”; “Nature and the City: (Re) creating Urban Landscapes”; and “Discourses of Consumption in Modern Architecture and City Building” (UrbanHist 2019).
- 28 The peer review evaluation resulted in the acceptance of 37 abstracts coming from 46 external researchers and 15 abstracts coming from the ESRs.
- 29 <https://iuu.uva.es/ciclo-conferencias-ciudades-en-transformacion/>.
- 30 <http://www.iuav.it/DIPARTIMEN/CHISIAMO/eventi/2021/09-settem/Rigenerare/index.htm>.

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