



Q&A Webinar 2: Cities as change agents: building competences for future food systems

Overview of questions:

- What do you think the impact of Covid-19 and similar disruptions is and will be on city-region food systems? – [Cristina Paca](#)
- If someone is interested in setting up their own lab, do you have an important tip to help them succeed and where can they find more information? – [Cristina Paca](#)
- How do you see this developing outside the scope of FIT4FOOD2030, will the city labs be continuing? – [Cristina Paca](#)
- Rosina, there are masses of initiatives related to food and nutrition in Barcelona. How do you link with the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact which Barcelona has signed (the MUFPP summit in 2021 is expected to be hosted by Barcelona)? – [Rosina Malagrida](#)
- How is the private sector associated with this living lab (in Barcelona): retailers (mass retailers and outlets) as well as food processors? – [Rosina Malagrida](#)
- Have you tried PERMACULTURE within your projects? It seems to be a very interesting and global approach that could solve many problems related to healthy food access. – [Rosina Malagrida and Martina Arabadzhieva](#)
- How is the private sector associated with this living lab (in Sofia): retailers (mass retailers and outlets) as well as food processors? – [Martina Arabadzhieva](#)
- If someone is interested in setting up their own lab, do you have an important tip to help them succeed and where can they find more information? – [Martina Arabadzhieva](#)

What do you think the impact of Covid-19 and similar disruptions is and will be on city-region food systems? - [Cristina Paca](#)

The Covid-19 pandemic and disruptions resulting from it emphasise the need for further work to secure future food systems that are resilient, sustainable, innovative, adaptive and inclusive – and we hope that the collective sense of urgency that has emerged during the crisis will act as a powerful impetus for further transformation at the level of the city-regions. We are motivated to continue to articulate recommendations concerning Research & Innovation at this time when their value for our societies is so apparent. FIT4FOOD2030 has kept an eye on the key reflections on this subject, dedicating a new [webpage](#) to resources on this matter, which I invite you to consult. The publication [Covid-19 and the crisis in food systems](#) written by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems could be a good starting point into the subject.

From the perspective of the FIT4FOOD2030 City Labs, we also saw a need to reimagine engagement, finding digital solutions that complement the Labs' on-the-ground work. The resource page mentioned above contains a few links that can get organisations started with digital engagement. And in the context of a crisis that disproportionately affects those who already struggle, paying attention to issues of social justice has never been more important - this [reflection on this issue from the field of science engagement](#) could be an interesting complement to your own thinking about the issue.

If someone is interested in setting up their own lab, do you have an important tip to help them succeed and where can they find more information? - [Cristina Paca](#)

A few key points to which I'd recommend that everybody interested in setting up communities of practice around transformation to pay attention are: communicating expectations (and obstacles, if this is the case) clearly, developing a sense of shared responsibility for the actions of the Lab, and looking closely at under-representation of certain stakeholder groups, the reasons for it and measures to overcome it – in particular, to groups that we might think about as hard to reach, but which could also be seen as *'easy to ignore'*. As for where to find more information, keep an eye on the FIT4FOOD2030 website where all our tools for transformation will be published this autumn!

How do you see this developing outside the scope of FIT4FOOD2030, will the city labs be continuing? - [Cristina Paca](#)

City Labs have taken many forms and have different functions and components, very much responding to their local context. We are certain that a good part, if not all, of the processes they have been developing will survive even if, at times, under new forms: embedded in other existing structures or in institutional practices of the host organization, or passed on as training and insights to stakeholders themselves. Sustainability is a key topic in the labs' work at the moment, and a few ongoing developments include:

- The City Labs Milan and Tartu are hosted by a science centre and a science museum respectively – they are embedding FIT4FOOD2030 training modules in the programme offered to visitors on a regular basis as well as producing complementary materials such as activity guides for teachers and teacher training. They are also supporting local actors to develop their understanding of the role of public engagement and education in transformation.
- The City Lab Athens secured funding as an Accelerator Lab under the H2020 project FoodSHIFT (2020-2023) to continue the work began on establishing an 'Open School Lab' connecting young people with land and nature. They'll be working in close collaboration after the lifetime of the project with two key stakeholders: the Municipality of Pallini and Draxis, a company working on environmental ICT solutions.
- The City Lab Amsterdam has supported the establishment of a collaborative centre on research for food system transformation in Amsterdam and the region (called 'Academische Werkplaats Voedsel'). This initiative is part of the program of the Chief Science Officer of the municipality of Amsterdam and represented by 8 knowledge institutions from the region. The centre will provide the agenda for actions and research for years to come in order to accelerate transformation. The City Lab will itself be part of developing this food-related research and innovation agenda and will also be part of delivering this agenda through student projects conducted at the Athena Science Shop at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The Lab will continue working with the centre's partners to ensure that the philosophy and insights of the Lab are anchored in future actions. To further support the sustainability and visibility of the centre's actions, the Lab is connected to a specific online platform, called 'openresearch.amsterdam', which facilitates knowledge sharing and networking activities after the project has ended.
- The City Lab Barcelona signed a collaboration agreement with the Barcelona City Council and 'la Caixa' (Spain's largest foundation) to continue food system transformation towards healthy and sustainable diets with concrete action plans and strategies in a neighbourhood in Barcelona – but more about that in Rosina's presentation, part of this very webinar event!
- The City Lab Sofia has supported a pilot school in setting up a Food Club on its premise – an initiative that will outlive the project lifetime and inspire other schools in Sofia and beyond – and you can hear more about it in Martina's presentation, part of this very webinar event!

Rosina, there are masses of initiatives related to food and nutrition in Barcelona. How do you link with the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact which Barcelona has signed (the MUFPP summit in 2021 is expected to be hosted by Barcelona)? - [Rosina Malagrida](#)

Yes sure. We constantly conduct stakeholder analysis to identify key actors to invite to our workshops and not to miss any key initiative in our city. In brief we will also launch a survey where we will ask our participants to identify key actors. We are more than open to all existing initiatives. Our project aims to help those already working in the field through strategic conversations and exploration of complexity. We hope that the knowledge mobilization our workshops facilitate will help them to improve their impact. The organizers of the Barcelona summit are participants in our workshops and they are part of our advisory board. We are exploring together how the knowledge, recommendations and action plans will fit into the strategy that the City is developing.

How is the private sector associated with this living lab (in Barcelona): retailers (mass retailers and outlets) as well as food processors? - [Rosina Malagrida](#)

If we look at the categories defined by the MUFPP, we are currently focusing on promotion of healthy and sustainable diets. We are aware that production is key for such a promotion but it is not our main goal at the moment. However, we have had key actors within this category, as we do not want to focus in our MUFPP category with a compartmentalized approach. So we have had participants from primary production and processors. Regarding retailers, they are key in our project. We believe that there is a huge need to reflect on the future model of retailers and outlets with a more systemic and collaborative approach. We are now organizing a new cycle of workshops and one will be devoted to such an aim. We are inviting retailers, to expand the list of past participants, where we already had some.

Have you tried PERMACULTURE within your projects? It seems to be a very interesting and global approach that could solve many problems related to healthy food access. - [Rosina Malagrida](#)

Dear participant, I am glad you found it interesting. We have had around 60 participants so far, and some of them promote initiatives in line with permaculture. As our main goal is integration of knowledge, expertise in this field is very welcome. If you have contacts in Barcelona please ask them to contact us!

Have you tried PERMACULTURE within your projects? It seems to be a very interesting and global approach that could solve many problems related to healthy food access. - [Martina Arabadzhieva](#)

Permaculture was one of the things that was discussed a lot during the first workshops. One of our stakeholders have a lot of experience in the field and she was sharing how the project worked. However, it was related to a place outside the (and not near) the city of Sofia and we felt that we cannot include activities directly connected with it. As in the case with urban farming a lot of people – stakeholders and participants in the educational modules were interested in the concept but lacked opportunity and resource to practice it. That is why we discussed what could be done to stimulate such activities and whether it would be useful and how to ask the municipality for support.

How is the private sector associated with this living lab (in Sofia): retailers (mass retailers and outlets) as well as food processors? - [Martina Arabadzhieva](#)

There are a few representatives of the business who are part of City Lab Sofia. The representative of a large chain store supported us a lot in the beginning but was interested in a massive change at a national level. That is why with time, our team found it more useful to work with representatives of small businesses, who are more engaged with the change on a city level. Several of them are active and support lab's activities continuously even through taking part in implementing modules. At the same time, we tried to stay focused on the big picture as well and invited various associations of



producers to take part in different training and events. Now what City Lab Sofia has done is supporting the communication between some of these producers and particular state institutions.

If someone is interested in setting up their own lab, do you have an important tip to help them succeed and where can they find more information? - [Martina Arabadzhieva](#)

One useful advice is to have a clear process. Having a good idea about the steps you would like to take keeps your work organized and it is easier to achieve your aims. Also, finding the people who will support your Lab in the best way is of crucial importance for the success of the Lab's activities. These might not necessarily be the stakeholders on highest positions or with biggest businesses, but the ones who are most willing to work with you towards change. The network is the most valuable part of a City Lab and the Lab's develops is quite dependent on stakeholders' ideas and feedback.

There is more information on FIT4FOOD 2030 website and there will be even more added in the following months. Also, there are details about Labs' Coordinating organization, which could be helpful as well.

