



The Sustainable Design Lab was an international prototyping Lab for designers of different disciplines. It brought together designers from Mikkeli, Riga and Hamburg to jointly build prototypes for sustainable design in three 1.5-day sessions between March and June 2021. The aim was to network and exchange ideas in an international environment by working on prototypes that tackle one of today's major challenges for design, sustainability.

The organiser of Sustainable Design Lab, Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft, supports Hamburg's creative industry with knowledge, space, financing and innovation. In addition to workshops, lectures and networking events, they also offer individual consulting, coaching, crowdfunding and assistance in financing and finding suit-

able workspaces. They cater for authors, filmmakers, musicians, visual and performing artists, architects, designers, game developers and other professional groups from the eleven submarkets of the creative industries.

Aim and target group

A central aim of the Sustainable Design Lab was to encourage idea exchange in sustainable design among companies and individual designers. Furthermore, the aim was to demonstrate digital collaboration tools, benefit from working in an interdisciplinary and international peer group and educate designers on entering the global design market.

In addition to the aims above, the Sustainable Design Lab focused on using design to develop sustainable cities. It therefore directly contributed to reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly goal 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities.

For intermediary organisations, the Sustainable Design Lab presented an opportunity to gather new insights on workshop methods and the use of technology.

Participating designers naturally expanded their network in the Baltic Sea Region by collaborating with different international designers, getting to know CCI support organisations, experts and local companies.

Sustainable Design

Lab in figures

13 designers

3 countries

3 hosts

5 prototypes

The program

The Sustainable Design Lab took place in three sessions. The first two brought together five designers from every region in national groups. They worked digitally in interdisciplinary teams on ideas and prototypes to tackle the given challenge related to SDG 11. Although the designers were situated in their home countries, they were connected virtually to the other participating regions through online workshops and inspiration sessions. At the third meeting, participants received pitching advice and a presentation of the prototypes organised by the partner organisation, the Danish Cultural Institute in Riga.

The organisers conceptualised the program to build capacities through workshops and keynotes as well as peer learning. The focus was on circular design methods and international collaboration to advance the development of sustainable cities.

Intermediaries and local companies gave keynote presentations to inform the participants about entering new markets. At the end of the program, the presenters introduced participants to funding opportunities to develop their prototypes.

Event schedule

Block 1 Friday 19 March

Welcome & Getting to know each other

Introduction to SDG11

"Sustainable Cities & Communities"

Presentation

Pre-recorded video portraits of the three cities.

Focus on the challenges and best practices around SDG 11

Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft

Short discussion and Q&A after each portrait
Collaboration on Miro.com to gather thoughts,
input and first ideas
Check-out

Saturday 20 March

Check-in & warm up

Input: Design Market in Hamburg

Frances Uckermann, Head of designxport
Hamburg

Input: What is circular thinking? + Circular
Design Strategies

Torben Lohmüller, DarkHorse

Workshop: Circular design practice in action, fo-
cus on stakeholder analysis & systems mapping

Project planning in teams

Check-out/Next steps

Block 2 Friday 7 May

Check-in / Warm-up exercise

Input: The Design Market in the Mikkeli Area

Recap last workshop & team building

Group work: Further development of the ideas
in the working teams and prototyping planning

Concert by Paula Tebbe

(digital via SofaConcerts)

Saturday 8 May

Presentation of ideas and plans for the day by
each group and feedback

Group work Prototyping in the working teams

Progress-check and feedback

Tool 9 – Sustainable Design Lab

Block 3 Friday 10 June

Check-in, Warm-up (focus Riga)

Input: The Design Market in Riga

Inese Baranovska, Museum of Decorative Arts
and Design

Pitching workshop

by Kaspars Eglitis

Sustainable Design Night

(invitation-only-event on Zoom Webinar)

Presentations of the prototypes 5 x 10 minutes,
7 min presentation, 3 min questions

Keynote

Emīls Rode, specialist in strategy, design, and
innovation

Networking on Wonder

Saturday 11 June

Check-in

Recap final event

Inspirational talk

Aigars Lauzis, ZELTINI design & prototyping
workshop

Reflection Learning journey

Presentation International funding opportuni-
ties related to Sustainable Design

Discussion Continuation of the projects



Top image
Digital flyer for the event

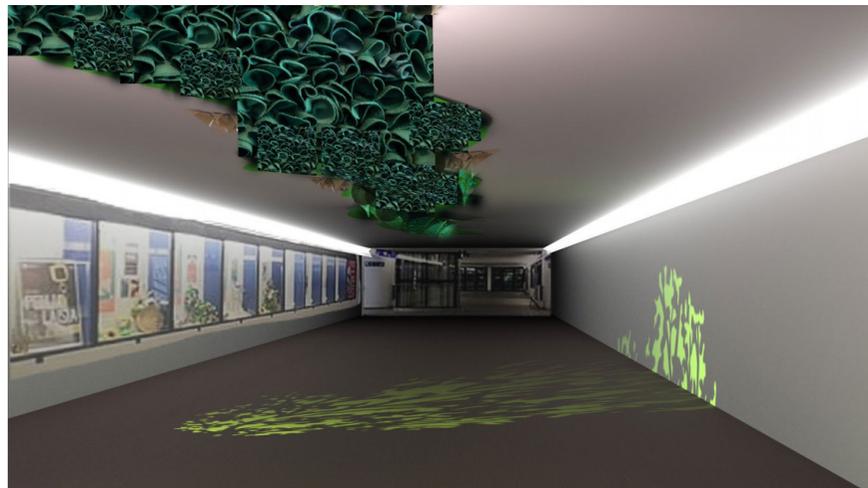
Bottom image
One of the prototypes from the Sustainable Design Lab by Team Komorebi

Communication

All communication was shared through the three hosting partners as well as Creative Ports. The main channels were web, LinkedIn, Instagram and newsletters from all three partners. The communication used visuals to highlight the topic of “Sustainable Cities and Communities”.

The communication strategy focussed on three main topics:

1. Open call for participating designers
2. The final event (by invitation only)
3. The experience of the designers. (video and interviews with the designers after finishing the lab).



Testimonials from participants

“During the workshop I really enjoyed working in an interdisciplinary team and exchanging ideas and thoughts and thinking and learning about circular design. It was a great pleasure and I enjoyed it a lot!”

“The whole experience during Sustainable Design Lab reminded me how to play. I really enjoyed the prototyping process and of course it also underlined that we as designers and architects, design spaces and places for people and it should be done in the least harmful way.”

Lessons learnt

Expectation management is critical, be clear on what you expect from participants and devote some time to negotiating expectations.

It remains problematic to mix workshops, networking and high-quality projects with limited time. Instead, it's better to focus on one or two goals and outputs, which makes it easier for participants to understand the programme and tackle expectations.

Prototyping digitally is a challenge and requires time. In online formats, meetings need to be shorter and more frequent. A good facilitator is always needed.