Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

BUILD SOLUTIONS

EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS FOR START-UP ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

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1 – FOREWORD

Building Urban Intelligent Living Design Solutions

Cities currently host more than half of the world population, which is projected to increase up to 70% by 2050 (UN, 2014). Already, cities account for 70% of global CO2 emissions (C40). With the expected population growth, cities would hence be the source of an estimated 85% of global GHG emissions.

There is a growing recognition and awareness that nature can help to provide viable solutions by using and deploying the properties of natural ecosystems and the services that they provide in a smart and 'engineered' way (EC). These living solutions provide sustainable, cost-effective, multi-purpose and flexible alternatives for various objectives. Working with nature, rather than against it, can further pave the way towards a more resource efficient, competitive and greener economy. It can also help to create new jobs and economic growth, through the manufacture and delivery of new products and services, which enhance the natural capital rather than deplete it (EC).

With that in mind, the big question is, why are nature-based solutions not used more to address the global urban challenges?

The main answer would be that there's a distinct skill and financing gap in the biotechnology sector. While we currently have great researchers in biotechnology, too often the commercialization and hence the implementation of their discoveries stumble due to a lack of personal experience in entrepreneurship and cooperation with industry leaders (Fritsch, 2010).

And even when most of those skills are present in a team attempting to commercialize a technology, another obstacle rears its head: the lack of short-term funding available to biotech start-ups and spinoffs (Swamidass, 2008). Recently, the High-Level Group for the European Innovation Council published their first recommendations which state that funding for disruptive, market-creating start-ups with deep-tech solutions (like biotech) is severely fragmented and doesn't meet the needs of the start-ups for developing the technology (http://ec.europa.eu/research/eic/pdf/eic_recommendations_set-1_2017.pdf). The lack of funding can be attributed to multiple factors, chief amongst them being the perceived risk and the huge capital expenditures necessary to develop sound biotechnology solutions.

Building Urban Intelligent Living Design Solutions (BUILD Solutions) project aims to set up transdisciplinary cooperation among universities and business, engaging students, teachers and researchers and providing them with the necessary entrepreneurial skills and connections to bring intelligent living solutions to the market, by investigating biological systems, creating smart design prototypes, business plans, plans for start-ups and working with accelerators.

The project's objective is to develop an experimental transdisciplinary educational system linking biology, intelligent design and business through several kinds of activities, such as courses for students and trainers, symposiums, development of educational resources, the set-up of an accelerator programme, launching an international call for ideas and creating new networks.

The project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

Living design solutions provide sustainable, cost-effective, multi-purpose and flexible alternatives for several urban challenges.

2 – BUILDs START-UP ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

2.1 Introduction

At the end of the One-Year Programme, a group of investors were invited to serve as a jury to identify the best-case idea developed throughout the educational programme.

During this Final Pitch event, Epiclay was chosen as the best project group and was given the opportunity to spend one month in the Bloxhub Accelerator Programme in Copenhagen. The incubator helped Epiclay in developing their start-up business idea with the aim of commercializing a real product and service that could contribute to city resilience and its re-naturalisation.

With the assistance of City Facilitators, GreenTech Challenge and BUILDs business experts, Epiclay received tailored and exclusive training, mentoring, and networking; pitches advice; had meetings with municipalities, architect studios, investors; among other activities, that helped them launch to the market their amazing green wall system.

2.2 About the Organisers

Copenhagen is a leading European hub for innovative climate and city solutions with a strong ecosystem of business, universities, venture capital, experts, and dealmakers. The customised Accelerator Programme is a unique path to fast track into the ecosystem with the aim of scaling an innovative business idea that will help to create a sustainable city.

The programme took place in four intensive weeks from August 31st until September 25th. With close mentoring from City Facilitator and GreenTech Challenge' team of business experts, the students got a unique opportunity to develop their business through training, mentoring, sales meetings with potential clients and industry stakeholders, pitches to investors and business angels, networking events, interaction with other start-ups, and a number of visits to relevant hubs in Copenhagen that work with sustainable urban development and innovative solutions.

The programme was located at the interdisciplinary innovation hub and co-working place BLOXHUB at BLOX in Copenhagen which is the heart of the smart city ecosystem in Copenhagen. The Accelerator Programme concluded in a demo day, September 24th, where the participating students present their solutions in front of an exclusive audience including the partners involved along the process.

Detailed Accelerator programme can be found here.

2.3 Objective

The aim of evaluation is contributing to improve educational activities - while they are happening, as well as to provide insights to design better educational activities.

The evaluation of all educational activities will include analysis of:

- the effectiveness of the workshops/learning programme including its reach of the target audience
- the impact of the programme on students understanding about Biotech methods
- the skills, competencies and dispositions gained during the programmes
- the application of the knowledge and skills gained
- the strengths and weaknesses of the education approach used
- recommendations for changes to the programme so the programme may be implemented in new courses.

In this document we present a summary of the evaluation results that we have done to support the improvement of the programme.

2.4 Methodology

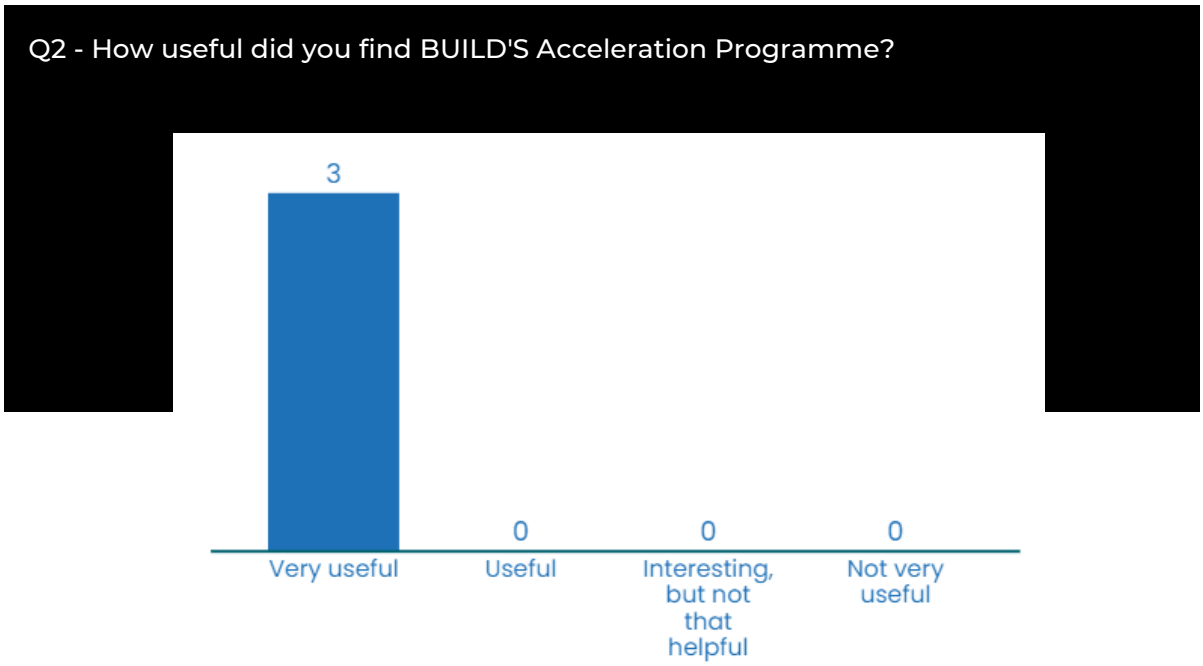
We carried out an evaluation survey which included a mix of qualitative and quantitative feedback to evaluate the success and impact of the event.

2.5 Survey results

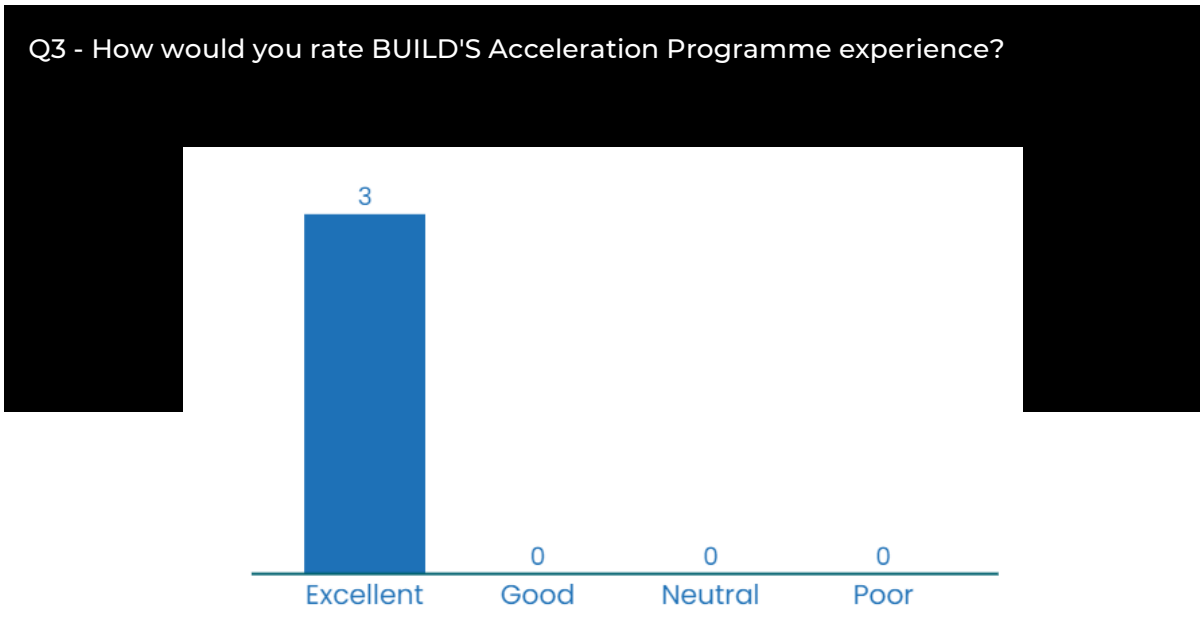
3 students answered the survey.

Q1 - What words come to your mind that explain, summarize or symbolize your experience in BUILD'S Acceleration Programme?

The students responded positively about their experience in BUILD'S Acceleration Programme.

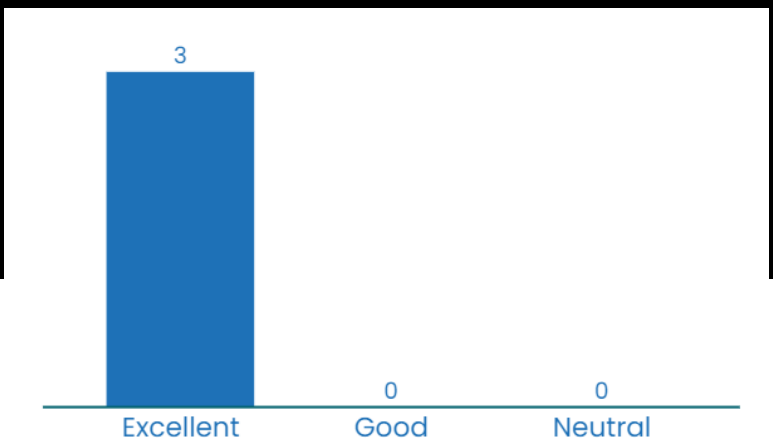


All students responded that the BUILD'S Acceleration Programme was very useful.



All students responded very positively about the overall experience.

Q4 - Rate the quality of the content throughout BUILD'S Acceleration Programme?



All students responded very positively about the content throughout BUILD'S Acceleration Programme.

Q5 - Any overall comments, feedback, or suggestions?

This is the specific comment reported by the student:

- It was a great experience and it was really helpful for us.

2.6 Feedback from Accelerator Programme participants

At the end of the Accelerator Programme, some of the participants highlighted the following:

Christoph Hornik - Epiclay (CEO): "*I think the intensity of the feedback we had every day (at the Accelerator Programme) from different people was something that definitely helped to shape the EPICLAY idea further and then streamline it to something probably more concrete.*"

Mauricio Casian - Epiclay (Head of architecture): "*All the different meetings we had and all the different engagements we had with different people have helped us to define what the product is and make it more refined. It's about processing and getting to the point where you're close to something final. I think this has really helped us to identify how to improve ourselves as a company, but also the product itself.*"

Sumit Nemmaniwar - Epiclay (Head of design): "*What happened after coming here wasn't a change of idea but more concretizing, making the concept or the idea of our system much stronger and to look at different possibilities of what it could be rather than what it is right now. So I think the idea just got stronger and broader.*"

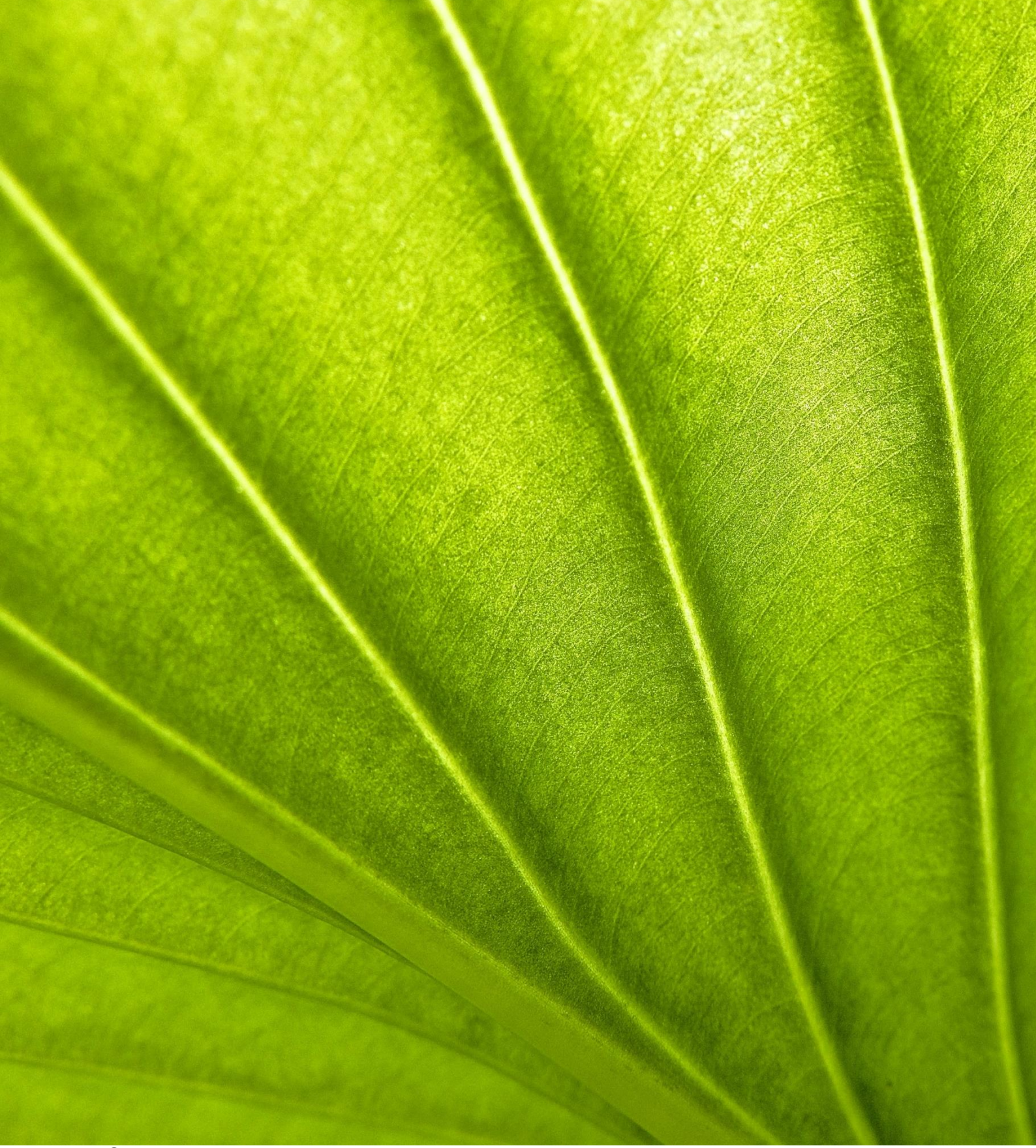
Melanie Kálmán - Epiclay (COO): "*We were immensely lucky to have all these different insights and feedbacks and it's almost like within sculptural work, where you have your block and based on what's other think we chip the way and it comes more and more to this final product, its final vision. We were able to streamline it. It was very gratifying to know that we can go step by step, making it manageable. Now we have a clearer final objective, and this is immensely valuable to us."*

3 – CONCLUSION

The accelerator experience is a process of intense, rapid, and immersive education aimed at accelerating the life cycle of young innovative companies, compressing years' worth of learning-by-doing into just a one month.

Epiclay had this the opportunity and was a part of the Accelerator Programme in Bloxhub Copenhagen.

All participants were very satisfied with the BUILD Solutions Accelerator Programme at Bloxhub.



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