

## Vacancy notice

Located in the heart of Brussels, you'll find the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Across the whole ULB, over 4000 professors, scientists, PhD students, and lab technicians are at work in every field from science and technology to life sciences and healthcare, and humanities and social sciences. The ULB's Faculty of Architecture is French-speaking Belgium's largest and most dynamic institution for education and research in the fields of architecture, urbanism, and landscape.

Faculté d'architecture La Cambre-Horta opens up a position within Clara research center and its Laboratory on Urbanism, Infrastructures and Ecologies (LoUISE) for an :

### **experienced researcher for two action-research projects on urban citizen participation (80% full time equivalent- 1 to 4 years)**

#### **FUNCTION AND CONTEXT**

You will be part of a multidisciplinary team, investigating the potential of new approaches to urban civic participation, such as by experimenting and developing new methodologies, design interventions and technological approaches. You will be mainly responsible for exploratory research and inquiries, in-depth field studies, and for evaluating and reporting of the action-research. Through your experience in field research (PhD or similar experience) and strong interest in urban issues, your input and critical reflections will nourish and trigger the team of design practitioners in coming up with (and improving upon) urban design interventions.

#### **TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To carry out fieldwork, to extensively prepare the ground for design interventions, and to follow them up closely during and after their implementation, using both proven and novel evaluation methodologies;
- To develop case specific tools and methodologies for conducting the fieldwork, for instance to better inquire and qualify social connections and conflictual situations;
- To participate to the elaboration of the project's conceptual, methodological and practical framework;
- To reflect on the specificities and possible rallying points between the various disciplines involved in the projects;
- To assemble the State of the Art of urban participatory and research methodologies, as well as civic media projects;
- To act as an active organizer and facilitator of co-creative processes and participatory workshops, employing listening, verbal and synthetic skills;
- To facilitate meetings with the various stakeholders (citizens, associations, institutional partners,...);
- To collaborate to the project's deliverables, such as the creation of participatory (design) toolkits, a web platform, and to provide critical reflection on the design thinking process;
- To contribute to the writing of conference and journal papers, as well as project reports.

## PROFILE

- You have a Doctoral degree (or similar experience, i.e. Master degree with at least four years' full-time research experience by the time of the call deadline) either in sociology, anthropology, architecture or urban design. Other degrees may also be accepted (i.e. political sciences, geography), if you can prove significant experience in the research methods and topics;
- Consistent experience in field inquiry and in the use of a variety of inquiry and participatory methods, including interviews, user observation, participant observation, focus groups;
- Previous experience, through practice or collaboration, evaluating projects employing either interaction design, game design, product design, HCI, participatory design, cartography or other artistic and design practices;
- Strong interests for urban matters and/or for citizen participation, co-creation processes, social innovation and design;
- Affinities with IoT, GIS and FLOSS are a plus;
- Excellent team player and communication skills;
- Excellent oral, reading and writing fluency in French, for carrying out the fieldwork and meetings with the different stakeholders;
- Excellent oral, reading and writing fluency in (academic) English, for integrating the research team;
- Basic knowledge of Dutch is a plus, but not a requirement.

## APPOINTMENT

- Part time (80%: 60% SUCIB and 20% P-LAB) temporary appointment in the function of experienced researcher, for a period of 1 year (March 2018 – 2019). The appointment will be prolonged with at least 1 year on the condition of a positive evaluation of the delivered work (and up to 3 years depending on the renewal of both projects, since they will last 2 to 4 years).
- Income based on ULB salary scale, according to your degree and years of significant experience.

## SELECTION PROCEDURE

- We expect your written candidature no later than 22/01/2018 in pdf format and via e-mail (max. 3Mb, or download link), to [lab.participation@gmail.com](mailto:lab.participation@gmail.com). Your application should include:
  - a motivation letter (in English);
  - a detailed CV (including your publications list);
  - up to 3 relevant publications or productions, ranked in order of relevance (including an electronic version of your PhD thesis, if it applies);
  - the contact details of two external referees.
- Selected candidates will be invited for an assessment and interview by a selection commission (online or face-to-face), between 29/01/2018 and 09/02/2018 (approximately). They will receive full project's proposals in order to prepare the interview. The interview will focus on their skills and competences, as well as on their motivation, including how they envision their contribution to the project.
- The selected candidate will be informed as soon as possible and invited to complete the administrative part of his/her application (See info below).



## DETAILED PROJECT INFO

You will be working on SUCIB and P-LAB, two action-research aimed at supporting the socio-cultural environment in the Brussels Capital Region (with a special focus on two different neighborhoods: Schaerbeek and the pedestrian area in the City Center). They are funded by Innoviris (the Brussels Institute for the encouragement of scientific research and innovation), and are carried out by 3 academic partners:

ULB - Faculté d'architecture La Cambre-Horta (Clara – LoUISE), coordinated by prof. Judith le Maire

ULB - Faculté de sciences sociales (GRAP), coordinated by prof. Jean-Louis Genard

LUCA - School of Arts / Intermedia, coordinated by prof. Steven Devleminck

In collaboration with institutional partners:

Schaerbeek town council

Bruxelles-Environnement/ Leefmilieu Brussel

MAD Brussels - MAD in Situ

Brussels Smart City

Atrium Brussels - Retail & Development - Business Unit Development

The Brussels Center observatory and the Brussels Studies Institute

## SUCIB abstract

The urban environment can be described as a wicked problem, meaning that any action taken to tackle an urban issue evolves the situation in unpredictable ways, potentially requiring new types of answers. City-solutions, such as Smart City platforms and city-renewal processes, are often unable to adapt swiftly and efficiently to the ungraspable problems to solve. Top-down approaches are frequently rejected by citizens, while more citizen-driven participatory approaches may not only lead to increased acceptance, but also fosters “smarter” and civically empowered citizens. Our assumption is that there is a role for a toolkit for physical, interactive interventions that intercede in situations using playful tactics. Through keeping such toolkit modular and adaptable, we aim at maximizing its sustainability, as well as stimulate creativity, self-initiative and learning of the participants, and for the research team to critically evaluate a multitude of effects. Can a modular system of ludic urban Internet of Things (IoT) infrastructures and services facilitate citizen engagement, constructive social exchanges and self-organisation? If so, how and to which extend? The goal of the *Smart Urban Community Interaction Blocks* (SUCIB) research project is to design and evaluate a toolkit for creating interactive urban interventions for both placemaking and civic purposes. This toolkit consists of physical IoT components we call Interaction Blocks (IB), as well as an online platform on which these IB's can be connected and configured. Our aim is to make the IB-toolkit as easy-to-use as possible, allowing divers types of (non-expert) participants to be engaged and empowered to voice their opinions and act in their neighbourhood. The toolkit is developed through two use-cases that are socially and culturally motivated, and two use-cases that address major urban inconveniences such as noise and road works, which tend to generate frictions or conflicts both among citizens and with public authority. Throughout the cases, new insights and tactics on participation and citizenship in the context of social Smart Cities are developed and put into a critical perspective through the multidisciplinary approach of the research team.

## P-LAB abstract

What does “urban participation” actually mean? The aim of the P-lab project is to open up the definition of participation by pointing out existing minor forms of participation, such as commercial, ludic, technical or artistic practices and actions performed by citizens in the urban realm. These forms do not typically fit the standards of institutional participation procedures, but nevertheless

contribute significantly to society. The groundwork of P-lab is an extensive ethnographic survey of such micro participatory citizen actions, in order to dig out specific objects, actions or devices that enable a *transition towards the politicization of ordinary practices*. The other way around, the research project also tackles “transition enablers” through which public authorities are *shifting political issues towards unpolitical procedures* and actions (i.e. through the use of social media, entertainment, gamification...). Based on this groundwork, we will experiment different forms of amplifying, hacking, disseminating, these transition enablers by design interventions (as “urban amplifiers”). These interventions will be evaluated critically, both in the larger perspective of “best practices”, and through the principles and practice of FLOSS. The urban amplifiers are meant to be part of a design research process, with an increasing level of consistency, evolving from simple prototyping to full-blown design solutions for specific urban participatory projects and initiatives.

## RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

You will integrate the ULB - Faculté d'architecture La Cambre-Horta (Clara – LoUlsE) team, working in close collaboration with all the academic and institutional partners.

### Clara

Clara for “Centre des Laboratoires Associés pour la Recherche en Architecture” is a research platform that gathers 4 research centers: LoUlse, Alice, hortence and Sasha. Clara is interested in carrying out research and experimentation in the broad field of architecture with an approach that works in partnership with different disciplines (sociology, history, art, medias,) and a range of communities and public services.

### LoUlsE

LoUlsE – Laboratory on Urbanism, Infrastructures and Ecologies- research is focusing on the dynamics of transformations of metropolitan territories. The research goes beyond the discipline of urbanism to take on environmental, infrastructural, political and social issues concerning cities and urban territories in the larger sense. Next to this activity of research, Louise is actively taking part in ongoing debates on the development of the Brussels-Capital Region, by co-organizing the regional initiative ]pyblik[ dedicated to the training of skills in the creation of public space and being part of the Metrolab, a trans-disciplinary and inter-university laboratory for applied and critical urban research, funded by the Brussels Capital Region through its ERDF program.

Workplace will be located next to the research fields. Short travels abroad to attend conferences and networking activities are possible.

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFO

- Visa requirements:
  - No visa is required by Swiss nationals or nationals of one of the Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA).
  - Foreign nationals, who already hold a permanent Belgian identity card, are not required to obtain a visa.
  - Nationals of a state that is not part of the EEA or who are not from Switzerland must obtain a Type D visa before their arrival in Belgium in order to gain access to the Belgian territory.
- Administrative dossier of the selected candidate should include the following documents (with certified translation if issued in a language other than French, Dutch or English):
  - a legally certified copy of your original PhD and/or Master degree;

- a certificate of your prior employer(s), or any equivalent document, proving: full-time equivalence, period of employment, position held;
- birth certificate;
- if applicable, any document certifying that you have completed your duties in matter of compulsory military/civil service, or that you are exempt of such obligation;
- household composition certificate.