

TEAM THOMAS

What is Team Thomas?

Team Thomas is a pilot platform of problem solvers for neighborhood challenges. As a concept it has been developed during an internal intrapreneurship program at Thomas More and for the first time put into practice as an experiment from September 2021 until May 2022. Team Thomas does not only involve students from Thomas More but also teachers, coaches, local residents, local policy-makers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders of a certain neighborhood in a city or municipality. All together they participate in a transdisciplinary co-creation setting, and provide strategies to solve neighborhood-related challenges. As a result, Team Thomas engages in 'community knowledge building': although knowledge is locally and collectively produced to empower local stakeholders in the neighborhood to solve neighborhood-related challenges; we discovered during first pilot that the solution strategies provided can also be used elsewhere. Team Thomas can also be a lever for social entrepreneurship. The participants experience 21st century skills and skills in a tangible and concrete way: creativity and entrepreneurship, transdisciplinary collaboration, service learning & transformation literacy. The pilot project concerned the neighborhood of the "Karmelietentuin" in Mechelen. In terms of output, 4 solution strategies to enable re-connection between local residents were developed in a transdisciplinary co-creation setting.

What does Team Thomas do?

1. Establishing a vital coalition: cross-sector parties commit to solve a complex problem together or seize a challenging opportunity in an entrepreneurial way based on the realization that they cannot do alone with the intention of sustaining this in the longer term.
2. Multi-stakeholder co-creation: Spread over a longer period (e.g. a semester) workshops, brainstorming sessions, co-creation sessions, peer reviews, etc. take place in which stakeholders participate. The methods used include Design Thinking, participative design, culture probes, service learning etc.
3. Design of a sustainable business plan for the Team Thomas method.

What does Team Thomas wants to achieve:

- Team Thomas promotes educational innovation: learners acquire 21st century skills without having to intervene in the existing functioning and curricula of study programs.
- The civic role of the higher education institution as an active participant in neighborhood-related challenges is made explicit. The knowledge and expertise of the institution is tangible and concretely translated into practical solution strategies.
- Team Thomas is a testbed for transdisciplinary learning, as knowledge and expertise from other knowledge providers is integrated with 'school' knowledge.
- Team Thomas can be a lever for social entrepreneurship.
- Team Thomas provides knowledge building among local residents, visitors and organizations in the neighborhood to learn from each other.
- We emphasize people-oriented thinking and ensure that people's talents are seen. This is how we empower them.
- We focus on positive aspects of living together in the neighborhood and thereby try to reduce the negative experiences in the neighborhood.

We would like to share Team Thomas as a project staircase.

We are particularly interested in finding partners to jointly investigate funding opportunities regarding the design of competencies frameworks needed for: social entrepreneurship, participative design competences, inter- and transdisciplinary competences, social innovation competences, collaboration with non-academic partners etc.