The Rambla of Innovation

“Living is the new Learning”
1. Introduction

The *Rambla of Innovation* is a strategic project consisting of a series of new learning laboratories that boost the development of ESADE’s academic model – as well as boosting local levels of innovation and entrepreneurship. Each of the laboratories focuses on one or several of the stages in the value chain of an innovation project (such as product development and strategic change). The learning labs at the Rambla of Innovation coordinate the development of projects.

a. ESADE Business and Law School

ESADE operates a Business School and Law School with more than 11,000 students and participants enrolled in a broad portfolio of programmes, in bachelor and master degrees in business and law, and Executive Education programmes.

Source: 2016-2017 ESADE, Annual Report
As well as campuses in Barcelona and Madrid, ESADE has an active presence in Miami, São Paulo, Lima, Mexico City, Bogotá, Santiago de Chile, and Buenos Aires. It also has agreements with more than 100 top universities and business schools around the world.

ESADE was founded in Barcelona (Spain) following the initiative of the Society of Jesus and a group of local businessmen. This academic year it celebrates its 60th anniversary.

ESADE is well known for the proven excellence of its programmes, especially in areas linked to innovation and responsible leadership. It has more than 150 faculty members, as well as some 700 academic assistants. ESADE has a clear international perspective and is consistently placed among the top global positions in the main business school rankings (Financial Times, The Economist, Forbes, Business Week and QS).

ESADE Alumni is the alumni association and it boasts a network of more than 63,000 alumni holding positions of responsibility (including 126 nationalities and working in more than 100 nations). ESADE Alumni encourages continuous training, professional development, and entrepreneurial initiative. This association works with the ESADE BAN investor network, which was named the best private network of business angels in Europe by the European Business Angels Network (EBAN) in 2016.

Source: 2016-2017 ESADE, Annual Report
b. ESADE Barcelona-Sant Cugat campus

ESADE has campuses at Barcelona-Pedralbes, Barcelona-Sant Cugat, and Madrid. The campus of Barcelona-Sant Cugat, inaugurated in 2009, is specially designed for innovation and entrepreneurial initiatives.

Some 3,000 students a year, from more than 100 nations, study on the campus. Key courses include: Full Time MBA (with some 360 participants); the Masters of Science programmes (with some 540 student enrolled in MSc degrees such as International Management, Finance, Marketing, Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Global Management, or Business Analytics); and the four-year Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration (with nearly 1,400 participants).

The campus includes:

1) 15,000 squared meters of buildings for academic use
2) The ESADECreapolis building for businesses and measuring 20,000 squared meters
3) A student dorm measuring 5,500 squared meters
c. ESADECreapolis

The laboratories of Rambla of Innovation are in the ESADECreapolis building and generate an attractive and unique ecosystem for innovation and businesses. ESADECreapolis is the business and knowledge centre linked to the ESADE Business School. The mission of ESADECreapolis is to serve as a bridge between the knowledge and assets of ESADE and the corporate world. ESADE opens its ecosystem to any company that wants the ESADE knowledge and methodologies. ESADECreapolis works with 67 resident companies in the centre and it also designs innovation projects and programmes for the major companies that are linked to its ecosystem – as well as identifying threats and opportunities and launching pilot programmes for new solutions and business models.

ESADECreapolis is an active agent in ESADE’s innovation system and provides complementary skills and shared knowledge from other academic technology institutions.

2. The *Rambla of Innovation*:

Definition and Objectives

The main entrance of the Barcelona-Sant Cugat ESADE campus has been redesigned to become the *Rambla of Innovation* and it represents a new educational model and relationship with the community.

The *Rambla of Innovation* includes five laboratories where education is based on innovation and experimentation. The set of skills and assets found in each of the laboratories represents the development of ESADE’s academic model and these skills are being harnessed to transform businesses.
The entrance is a pathway that leads from the conception of a new idea (Fusion Point) to the design and execution of experiments on user behaviour intended to test the viability of such an idea (Decision Lab), manufacture prototypes (Fab Lab), define the business model (EGarage), and culminating in the creation and implementation of a new business (EWorks).

It is a circular ecosystem with no predetermined beginning or end; each project finds its principal support and starting point in the most appropriate laboratory. Therefore, the spaces are designed to generate a positive impact of continuous development and experimentation for both the participant, the business community, and ESADE.
The design and construction of the *Rambla of Innovation* project was carried out during the Academic Year 2016-17 and construction finished at the beginning of the AY 2017-18. Some learning laboratories have been devised to increase the impact of the capabilities that were carried out in a conventional or experimental basis until the inauguration of the *Rambla of Innovation*. Other learning labs constitute entirely new spaces for hosting academic and business activities.

The laboratories have direct access from the street connecting the ESADECreapolis building (where they are located) to the academic building. This encourage an easy flow between academia and business. At the same time, the various environments are internally connected to facilitate the flow of projects and ensure permeability for results from one laboratory to the next, as well as a continuity of the activities carried out in the different spaces. Finally, there is a central space in the *Rambla of Innovation*, which serves as a coffee corner and a meeting point for entrepreneurs, researchers, students, businesses, and management teams for exchanging ideas and discussing ongoing projects.
Each of the spaces has been designed with contributions from the academic coordinators of the departments involved in the laboratories. The aim has been to ensure that the Rambla of Innovation accommodates a wide range of activities (including experimentation in methodologies) and with space for the current and future needs of research, teaching, and business innovation. The spaces are therefore polyvalent by definition.

3. Project Development: The Learning Laboratories

The Rambla consists of five laboratories with specific and complementary objectives so that they can coherently contribute to the overall objectives.

a. Fusion Point

Fusion Point is the result of five years of collaboration between ESADE, Istituto Europeo di Design (IED) and Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), following more than 10 years of experience at Aalto University Design Factory. Fusion Point brings together lecturers and students from various disciplines (engineering, design, and management) to solve real challenges through innovation – and represents a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration where businesses, universities, and students can connect. Fusion Point is a member of the Design Factory Global Network (DFGN), a network of more than 20 centres that share methodologies, subjects, and objectives.
Fusion Point divides its activities into three areas:

1. **Training**: Fusion Point began as a teaching platform for interdisciplinary collaboration, project-based learning, application of innovation methodologies to real cases, interaction between different profiles, and people-centred innovation and experimentation as a methodology for validating results. This represents a unique educational experience for students and often serves as a launch pad for new startups. The list of subjects developed and managed by Fusion Point is growing constantly and currently consists of:
   - **Challenge Based Innovation**: business, engineering and design students from the three collaborating institutions work in mixed teams applying technology that has emerged at CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) to solve real problems that impact on society (such as the integration of persons with disabilities). The final result offers a prototype validated with real users, as well as technical documentation, and a business plan.
- I2P (Innovation to Practice): An Internship Innovation Project. This was the course that launched Fusion Point. It was managed in collaboration with Aalto University during the first four years and since the Academic Year 2016/17 it has been managed by the existing partners of Fusion Point. Mixed teams of students spend five months looking for solutions to real business challenges and deliver prototypes validated with end users.
- Advanced Prototyping Project: this project combines BBA students from ESADE with engineering students from the UPC to collaborate on advanced prototypes and business plans for companies.

2. **Research**: Fusion Point offers lecturers and researchers the opportunity and tools for research on the following areas:
   - Methodologies and teaching tools to design and implement interdisciplinary courses based on real business cases.
   - Connecting the results of scientific research in centres of excellence (for example, the CERN in Geneva) with the needs of business and society.
   - Methodologies to ensure that innovation is inclusive, sustainable, ethical, and aligned with the needs of society.

3. Collaboration with industry: one of the fundamental pillars of Fusion Point is the need to work with real cases rather than case studies. This creates a series of advantages for teaching and business. Fusion Point offers a range of services to help companies develop innovations. Collaboration with companies is specified in an action plan that responds to their needs through an ad-hoc combination of workshops, hackathons, and other services. Companies gain access to the creative and innovative contribution of a multidisciplinary team of students, guided by experts from Fusion Point, who strive to make an impact on the company. In addition, companies have the opportunity to recruit
talent and learn about the profiles and skills of the students. Over the last five years, Fusion Point has involved 650 students on 103 projects with 48 companies and helped create seven startups – and 11 students have been hired by participating companies.

Fusion Point needs flexible and adaptable spaces and its presence at the centre reinforces the message about the flexibility of the *Rambla of Innovation*. FabLab is for the development of prototypes; EGarage is for experiments; Decision Lab tools is for tests with real users; and when finishing their studies, EWorks helps teams follow up their projects by creating new startups.

**b. Fab Lab**

First created in 2001 at the MediaLab of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), fablabs are today a global network that fosters creativity and innovation by providing digital manufacturing tools. The Fab Lab Sant Cugat is an open laboratory equipped with the most advanced technologies (including laser co-orters, 3D printers, numerical control machines, and an electronics laboratory) where ideas are turned into products.
The Fab Lab of the Rambla of Innovation is the first fablab in Europe that is located at the heart of a business school, and it provides a space that is open to the social and business community – as well as ESADE students, lecturers, and researchers. The Fab Lab brings digital production to different groups through training, research, and innovation:

1. **Training**: Involves design and various workshops focus on different groups (such as families, university students, and businesses) so that they understand how to use the new technologies. The Fab Lab aims to make digital manufacturing part of the knowledge and skills used by people to develop their projects on a day-to-day basis and so turn ideas into products.

2. **Research**: Consists of the ideation and realisation of projects using the latest digital manufacturing techniques and always with an applied research approach that aims to solve questions and challenges.

3. **Innovation**: For a fablab, means building prototypes and physical elements that carry out the results of research in other areas. The innovation is to bring new ideas to the market successfully – and so prototyping and rapid manufacturing is essential to validate the functional characteristics of the initial idea and test that the idea works.

As part of the global fablabs network, this learning laboratory has the capacity to absorb new knowledge and cooperate with more than 1,000 centres in 78 countries (http://www.fabfoundation.org/index.php/fab-labs/index.html). This connectivity, together with its link to ESADE and the Rambla of Innovation, gives this space unique capabilities for creating new and sustainable business models.
c. EGarage

The EGarage is a multi-purpose space that is used for activities linked with entrepreneurship. The space, the forerunner of the current *Rambla of Innovation*, was created in 2012 to respond to the growing need for a flexible area that is easily adaptable to the changing needs of students working on projects with companies. EGarage was the first space to open 24/7 on the campus and is available for the activities of students, lecturers, and staff. It is highly successful in terms of use – with an average of 8,100 participants in 250 events per year.

With the creation of the *Rambla of Innovation*, the EGarage has been reformed, although preserving its original spirit, and is now positioned as a stage where the creative and entrepreneurial impulses of students take the leading role. EGarage is still a flexible space, easily adapted to different requirements, from master classes to conferences, interactive sessions with entrepreneurs, and product presentations. The users of the EGarage include:

- **Faculty members**: EGarage is used to teach classes that require team activity and/or the construction of objects and prototypes (involving creative thinking and innovation).
• **Students**: students are the main users of the EGarage. Specifically, ESADE Student Entrepreneurs (E3) use the space as a base for all of their activities – from weekly meetings to major events (including informal events with invited entrepreneurs, an annual event that brings together students from several universities for a weekend of creation of new business projects; and TEDxESADE with international speakers participating within the TED framework and organised entirely by students).

• **Business Plan Tutors**: Students who choose to write a business plan for their final degree or masters project are assigned a mentor, an expert in creating businesses with experience in the field in which the student is proposing the project.

• **Entrepreneurial students**: when it is not occupied by a scheduled activity, the EGarage becomes an open space of co-creation and is used by students who are working on a company project. Due to the nature of this activity, this use is generally more intense at night and during weekends.

d. **EWorks**

EWorks is ESADE’s entrepreneurship support programme. Located within the ESADE Entrepreneurship Institute (EEI), it was created in 2015 to respond to the specific need of students (especially masters and MBA students). EWorks aims to bridge the classroom teaching of business tools and the real needs of people who start high-growth business projects. The academic and management team at EWorks has a long experience in entrepreneurship: including startups, accelerators, incubators, investment, and advice for entrepreneurial teams.
EWorks offers a wide range of services for students and recent graduates of any ESADE programme. The services are in continuous development and offer the best possible support to the ecosystem. There are three main services plus a series of accessory services:

- **EWorks Space**: a workspace for hosting entrepreneurs and startups in the first stages of development, located in the heart of the *Rambla of Innovation* and open 24/7.
- **EFounders Meetups**: a series of events organised every 15 days during the academic year that offer a meeting point for the ESADE entrepreneurial community and serve as sources of inspiration, opportunities to obtain feedback on projects, find co-founders, and network.
- **The EWorks Accelerator**: a selective programme – maximum of ten teams per year – that takes place during the summer and offers mentoring from experienced entrepreneurs to accelerate projects so that they can raise investment.

The EWorks also offers other services to the ESADE entrepreneurial ecosystem and these include:
• **High-growth startup job placement** and a direct communication channel between students and entrepreneurs looking for ‘non-traditional’ profiles (such as entrepreneurs looking for co-founders, collaborations with startups in exchange for equity).

• **Immigration assistance**: support for non-European entrepreneurs in obtaining visas.

• **Legal**: advice from specialist law firms under favourable conditions for startups (such as deferred payment, equity, and flat fees).

• **Information**: weekly newsletter with a distribution list of 1,000+ users with news about relevant events, opportunities to participate in entrepreneurship events, and announcements about public grants and contests.

Finally, EWorks works in constant contact with ESADE BAN (Business Angels Network). This network organises more than 20 investment forums each year where invited startups present their project to a selection of 250+ investors. The EWorks team continuously monitor the needs and level of development of the projects involved in the programme and connect entrepreneurs with ESADE BAN at the ideal moment.

EWorks benefits from the services and activities offered by other learning labs: projects developed in Fusion Point or EGarage can become startup projects incubated by EWorks; entrepreneurs can access prototyping in FabLab or use the Decision Lab to validate their value propositions.

In the first three years of activity, EWorks helped start 27 companies; incubated 48 entrepreneurs in their initial co-working spaces; and accelerated 24 entrepreneurial projects (which have attracted more than €2.5 million in funding). The inauguration of the *Rambla of Innovation* means these activities are going to expand.
e. Decision Lab

The Decision Lab is ESADE’s first academic research laboratory and the first lab of its kind in a Spanish business school. The lab has positioned ESADE as a leader in science research related to management and decision-making.

The main objective of the laboratory is to provide resources and facilities for cutting-edge research. Decision Lab facilities research in a variety of fields such as analysis, economics, behavioural finance, consumer behaviour, organisation, public policy, and social action.

Specifically, it has several multipurpose spaces equipped with the latest technologies for quantitative and qualitative studies. The rooms are equipped with cameras and other elements of observation that may be configured or operated from a control room. Studies can be conducted by observing users and recording their behaviour. All computers, cameras, and projectors in the space can be managed from the control room. It is also possible to communicate through audio and telephone to other rooms.

- **Observation room**: this is a multifunctional hall designed as a ‘living room’ and equipped with a large touch screen for studies on quasi-real
situations (such as the consumer behaviour in front of a simulation of a supermarket shelf where they can choose products).

- **Interaction room:** a multifunctional room with a meeting table. This is designed for group experiments or focus groups.

- **Computer room:** includes 21 workstations and equipped with projectors to deliver instructions. Each station has a computer, videoconference monitor, and screen (in addition to headphones and keyboards to measure reaction times with millisecond precision). Maximum occupancy is 250 participants per day.

- **Individual cubicles:** for experiments requiring concentration or privacy (such as tasting or smelling samples of food and drinks).

One of the great advantages of having a laboratory of these characteristics in ESADE is the access to a large number of volunteer participants with diverse profiles: students and employees, as well as members of ESADE’s community. The Decision Lab is generating a database of volunteers (+500 and growing). It is important to mention that every study carried out in the Decision Lab is first approved by a committee on the use of human subjects in research, which is responsible for validating that research is high quality and complies with the highest ethical standards.

Another objective of the Decision Lab is to promote the culture of research and knowledge generation in the ESADE community: the lab is a space where students, researchers and faculty members can learn to investigate in an experiential way and where they can be assisted in the development of their studies. The laboratory organises a series of training activities aimed at faculty members, including workshops on the use of specific software packages, seminars on research topics, and workshops. In addition, students who participate in research receive the results of the research. In this way, the volunteers can see the fruits of their participation (knowledge and publications) and may also receive privileged information that could be useful.
in their professional development. Therefore, through these activities, the Decision Lab contributes to the diffusion of knowledge and encourages research.

Finally, the Decision Lab generates an interface where academics work with businesses to perform rigorous and quality research, and the lab also acts as a listening post for the concerns and needs of the entrepreneurial and business ecosystem.

4. Impact

The Rambla of Innovation was conceived as a transformative project for ESADE and business and society. It is fully aligned with the ‘Student First’ project. Moreover, the Rambla of Innovation is a project that makes tangible ESADE’s objective to generate a positive impact on society and increase business innovation and competitiveness – both globally and locally.

a. ‘Student First’ project

One of ESADE's strategic priorities is to offer a “unique, innovative and transformative educational experience”. This has been implemented into a major project that has been called ‘Student First’. The development of the educational and academic model at ESADE has been at the heart of the definition of the Rambla of Innovation and is totally aligned with the ‘Student First’ project. This project represents a renewal of ESADE's educational methodology and is based on four key aspects:

- From information to knowledge – the methodological emphasis advances from transmitting information to creating meta-knowledge applicable to
analysing specific realities. Students base their learning on real challenges and projects oriented to action.

- The basic theory to be learnt by students is **studied before classes** (students use online formats, readings, videos, and tests that confirm the acquisition of the basic concepts and so enable students to attend class already informed. The classroom then becomes a place to clarify, deepen, apply and compare perspectives)

- **Key role for digital content** (digital content enables the transfer of an important part of the teaching to outside the classroom, as well as enabling interactions between lecturers and students and evaluations)

- **Students learn in ‘wide-angle’ mode** (meaning that the world is not a combination of subjects designed by lecturers from their respective silos of knowledge: but a complex reality that students must understand and manage in a multidisciplinary way).

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**b. Impact of the Rambla of Innovation on business relationships**

The digital revolution is making the environment more competitive for organisations. The famous ‘Innovator's Dilemma’ (Clayton Christensen) occurs whenever a company chooses between traditional business models based on known technologies, or new models and emerging technologies that are uncertain and immature – but may change the competitive environment. Digital technologies are pushing businesses to make these types of decisions continuously and, often, without enough objective elements to minimise the inherent risks.

The formula that enables reconciling traditional business with the exploration of new and uncertain competitive territories consists in assimilating ‘open innovation’ (Henry Chesbrough) with mechanisms for finding knowledge and capabilities outside the corporate frontiers.
Innovative ecosystems are testing grounds with controlled environments and a rich diversity and connectivity for new business models. Companies find the necessary elements to explore their future, identify opportunities, and test their chances of success. Innovative ecosystems are made by public and private agents who generate or transfer knowledge and technology in the market. Thus, the infrastructure and knowledge enable continuous exploration and adaptation to the competitive environment by organisations.

ESADECreapolis is an innovation centre for companies whose main aim is to accelerate innovation by stimulating interaction between ESADE, resident companies, and other knowledge and innovation networks. The *Rambla of Innovation* and the various assets and methodologies associated with its learning labs represent a definitive step to becoming the core of an experimentation ecosystem for businesses.

c. The *Rambla of Innovation* enables more and larger projects

Projects at the *Rambla of Innovation* have demonstrated its ability to generate value and this has been perceived by ESADE’s students and faculty, as well as the business and entrepreneurial community. The *Rambla of Innovation* and the synergies generated between the learning labs will increase this level of impact. For example, programmes involving companies and a challenge-based methodology previously had a limited capacity, the *Rambla of Innovation* enables other ESADE activities to be impregnated and so expands the reach to a greater number of organisations.

Projects can now be more complete, and incorporate the complementary capacities of different laboratories, offering a continuity and level of coordination that, until now, was limited to the focus of the team managing each programme. Challenges are turned into ideas that can be rapidly prototyped, tested on users, and developed into sustainable startups.
As a result, the number and quality of innovative and entrepreneurial projects will grow considerably.

5. Conclusions

The *Rambla of Innovation* is a strategic project that decisively contributes to achieving the objectives of ESADE as a business school and also serves as an international reference for the development of people and their social and economic environment.

For training and research, the Rambla of Innovation offers the assets needed to adapt continuously to new methodological requirements. The spaces and academic leadership of the people involved in its design and operation make it possible to substantially expand the results of the business school. The new laboratories mean that more training and research activities linked to innovation and entrepreneurship can be launched. The Rambla has been designed to advance these academic objectives while serving the needs of the business community and society. The Rambla therefore represents a turning point in the dissemination of ESADE's knowledge and capabilities.
ESADE's differential positioning is that of a global business school with a broad and responsible social impact – and with a special emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship. The *Rambla of Innovation* contributes to making this position tangible and consolidating the foundations that have sustained ESADE in the past and will reinforce it in the future.