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Inter-university knowledge transfer in (sustainable) campus management: an exploratory study for Campus NL

Knowledge transfer in campus management has a decades-long history in the Netherlands, ever since the Dutch (research) universities became owners of their university buildings and land in the nineties. The shared challenges have urged universities to join forces and exchange insights about their solutions. One of those pressing challenges has been sustainability. Since 2008, long-term agreements on energy-efficiency have become effective in the Netherlands for various sectors. Higher education was one of these sectors and - as a result - universities have developed sustainable visions and road maps for their campuses. At the same time, universities started to improve inter-university knowledge exchange, in general and about sustainability in particular.

Knowledge transfer from theory to practice, from practice to practice, and from practice back to theory, has built a knowledge base with scientific and societal relevance and benefits for academia and professional campus management. Over the years, inter-university networks have given many new and valuable insights to support (sustainable) campus decision making. This presentation/paper combines findings from past campus research with new findings - from Neva Wardenaar's research - about the different existing networks, drivers, barriers, and tools of knowledge sharing between universities, providing an answer to the main research question: "How can inter-university knowledge transfer support university campus managers to achieve the universities' sustainability goals?". Wardenaar's research also served as exploratory research for (and before) the larger inter-university Campus NL research (2023-2027) by TU Delft's Campus Research Team.

Through an extensive literature review, ten in-depth semi-structured interviews, strategy-analysis, and observations, Wardenaar's research concludes that universities have similar (sustainability) goals and that, by working together, they might accelerate the (decision-making) process of achieving these goals. Collectively, universities can acquire more funds, receive more guidance and get insights into what others are doing. This research provides an overview of the barriers and drivers of knowledge transfer that campus managers (working on the energy transition) are experiencing and contributes to the debate of knowledge transfer and (sustainable) campus management, with lessons beyond Campus NL.

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