

# HybGen

Young generations trapped in hybrid lifestyles: Challenges in ways of living and working towards the urban green care in Lisbon and Oslo

## POLICY BRIEF

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Young generations trapped in hybrid lifestyles: Challenges in ways of living and working towards the urban green care in Lisbon and Oslo [EEA Grants Portugal (FBR\_OC2\_89)]

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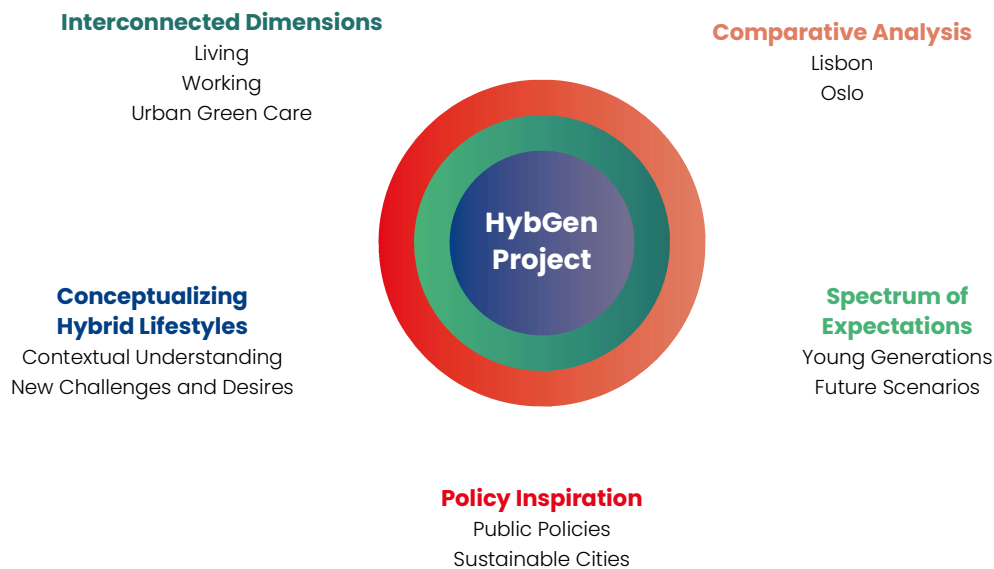
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# 1. SUMMARY

The hybridization of living and working is an increasingly prominent trend in urban Europe, driven by digital and technological transformation, growing socio-economic precarity, and environmental imperatives. Northern and Southern European cities are responding to these transitions in divergent ways: Oslo has implemented proactive hybrid urban policies, while Lisbon is fostering rapid innovation despite ongoing socio-economic inequalities. In both cities, young adults aged 20 to 35 are facing a range of complex challenges related to housing, employment, and environmental care. Simultaneously, they are expressing new values centered on flexibility, community, and sustainability, influenced by global climate activism and increased environmental awareness.

## HybGen Project: Conceptual Framework and Contributions



The **HybGen** project aimed to investigate the resilience values and survival strategies that young adults in Lisbon and Oslo are cultivating to cope with various pressures. Special attention was given to how these strategies intersect with urban green care practices and broader sustainability ideals.

To achieve this, a comparative study was conducted through a series of collaborative workshops in Lisbon and urban region of Oslo, engaging young adults, stakeholders from various sectors, including urban planning, mobility, housing, culture, creative industries, and labor, as well as researchers.

### Collaborative Workshop Scheme on Hybrid Trends Among Young Adults



This approach enabled a multidimensional analysis of the local contexts — social, spatial, economic, and environmental — and facilitated the identification of both shared and divergent values, perspectives, and strategies among participants.

The findings provide valuable insights into existing policy gaps and emerging practices, serving as a foundation for evidence-based policy recommendations designed to promote more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban futures in both Portugal and Norway.

## 2. THE CONTEXTS

In Portugal, alongside a growing commitment to sustainable values, young adults encounter significant barriers to affordable housing, precarious employment conditions, low wages, and limited public policy support. These constraints considerably delay youth emancipation, shape life trajectories, and compel many to consider emigration. Although Norway presents a comparatively less severe situation, generational challenges related to housing and labor market instability are widely experienced.

### **Housing Affordability and Youth Emancipation: contrasting realities in Lisbon and Oslo**

In Lisbon, young adults are grappling with a severe **housing affordability crisis**, driven by rising market prices, stagnant wages, and limited government intervention. Public policies aimed at youth aged 18 to 35 — such as the Porta 65 Jovem rental subsidy and public mortgage guarantees — have proven insufficient. Instead of alleviating structural inequality, these measures often exacerbate socio-spatial exclusion and fail to curb the ongoing increase in property values. Consequently, **76% of Portuguese youth aged 20 to 29 continue to live with their parents**, compared to the European average of 30% (OECD, 2024). The **average age for leaving the parental home is 28**, significantly higher than the EU average of 25.3 (Eurostat, 2024). **Rental costs frequently surpass average wages**, forcing many young people to the **urban periphery**, where house-sharing becomes not merely a coping strategy but a default condition for achieving independence.

In stark contrast, Oslo region provides a more supportive environment for youth autonomy. Despite **high housing costs** and some reliance on **family financial support**, Norway offers a **robust system of public subsidies** that encourages early residential independence. **Most young Norwegians leave their parental homes around the age of 18**, with **only 19% of those aged 20 to 29 living with their parents** (OECD, 2022). These favorable conditions are further enhanced by **formal co-living arrangements**, which are often selected as a **lifestyle choice**.

The Norwegian models are **diverse and flexible**, designed to accommodate various life stages and personal preferences, and they stand in marked **contrast to the informal, necessity-driven house-sharing practices in Lisbon**, which are frequently accompanied by long commutes and limited access to urban amenities.

## **Employment and Workspaces: facing precarity and digital transition**

In Lisbon, young people encounter substantial obstacles in the labor market, with **a youth unemployment rate of 21%** (INE, 2025) which is more than triple the national average of 6.6%. Employment is frequently marked by **precarious contracts and deregulated labor conditions**, particularly impacting younger cohorts. While the digital economy is growing, it remains unstable and unevenly distributed, providing opportunities while also **exacerbating job insecurity**. The digitalization of work is reshaping skill requirements and occupational roles, introducing new forms of employment that challenge conventional notions of job stability.

At the same time, **open and global labor markets** are reshaping Lisbon's employment landscape, increasing competition while **broadening the scope of remote and transnational work**. This shift reflects the values of younger generations, who increasingly prioritize **flexibility, work-life balance, and mobility**. However, public policy has largely failed to keep pace with these transformations by providing adequate support mechanisms. Instead, **informal and fragmented adaptations** have emerged, such as the proliferation of **coworking spaces** typically driven by private entities and initiatives aimed at attracting **digital nomads** promoted through state planning rather than coordinated urban policy. A growing culture of **experimentation and entrepreneurial risk-taking**, supported by reduced regulatory burdens and incentives for start-ups, is shaping a distinct hybrid model – one, however, marked by inequality and volatility.

In contrast, Oslo's labor market offers a more **structured and supportive environment** for youth. With a youth unemployment rate of **13%**, compared to the national average of 4.3%, Norway has implemented **targeted policy measures** to facilitate the integration of young people into the workforce. Public strategies emphasize **digital inclusion**, supported by **innovation policies and start-up funding**

schemes that seek to foster a **digitally resilient and forward-looking economy**.

The **contrasting models** of Lisbon and Oslo illustrate different hybrid responses to labor market transformation. While Lisbon leans on **market-driven, informal experimentation**, Oslo combines **public support with strategic investment** in innovation and digital infrastructure. These divergent paths underscore the importance of context-sensitive approaches to managing youth employment and the future of work in European urban settings.

## **Urban Green Care: mobility, accessibility, and emerging environmental practices**

Urban green care defined as the integration of environmental sustainability into everyday urban life has become an increasingly important aspect of youth engagement in cities. In Lisbon, efforts toward ecological transition are evident but inconsistent. In 2023, **electric vehicles comprised 18.2% of new car sales**, and **free public transport is available to youth up to 23 years old**, marking a step toward more inclusive mobility. Initiatives promoting **soft mobility** such as expanded cycling lanes and pedestrian zones are gaining momentum, and the city has expressed interest in the 15-minute city concept. However, **implementation remains incomplete**, and increasing commuting distances, along with fragmented urban planning, **raise concerns about green gentrification in urban regeneration projects**, which often **displace lower-income populations** from revitalized areas.

In contrast, **Oslo has emerged as a European leader in sustainable urban practices**. An impressive 93% of new cars sold in 2023 were electric, and the city **exhibits Europe's highest levels of micro-mobility use**, including shared bicycles and scooters. Public transportation is **highly subsidized**, with **students under 30 receiving a 50% discount**. Additionally, infrastructure for **walkability and bikeability** is well-developed under the 10-minute city paradigm, which promotes accessibility to essential services within compact urban areas. Crucially, **green initiatives are structurally integrated into urban policies**, combining high electric vehicle adoption with investments in active mobility and low-emission urban living.



While both cities are advancing green agendas, their trajectories differ in terms of inclusivity and depth. **Lisbon's initiatives remain largely fragmented**, with structural inclusion still limited, posing a risk of exacerbating spatial inequalities. In contrast, **young adults in Oslo are more systematically engaged**, supported by infrastructure and **digitally mediated practices** such as mobility apps, community-based green initiatives, and low-carbon lifestyle habits. These hybrid responses reflect broader socio-political differences: one city navigating grassroots innovation amid socio-economic constraints, while the other is advancing systemic transformation through integrated policy frameworks.

### 3. HYBGEN KEY FINDINGS

#### Hybrid Lifestyles and Emerging Vulnerabilities Among Young Adults

The **HybGen** project has revealed that hybrid trends in housing, employment, and urban green care are reshaping the daily lives of young adults in Lisbon and Oslo.

These shifts are often driven by structural constraints rather than lifestyle choices (e.g., home sharing options in more peripheral urban locations, limited access to more organic and local food sources, limited access to more green mobility options). But despite the challenges, young adults in both cities are already taking steps toward more sustainable and conscious daily habits, both at home and in work environments.

#### Sustainable Practices Already in Place (Lisbon and Oslo)

- Reducing red meat consumption
- Purchasing second-hand items (furniture, clothing)
- Saving energy and managing household waste
- Cycling and using public transport
- Trying to opt for organic and local food
- Practicing recycling consistently

Additional Practices in Oslo:

- Growing food at home or in community gardens
- Household composting

### **Opportunities for Reinforcement in Daily Life (Lisbon and Oslo)**

There is a clear potential to strengthen existing sustainable behaviors and introduce new ones to support ecological and social well-being:

- **Water conservation**
- **Avoiding unnecessary purchases** and opting for **biodegradable or reusable products**
- **Repairing instead of replacing;** prioritizing **durability and circular consumption**
- **Minimizing plastic packaging** and **supporting local food economies**
- **Further reducing fast-fashion consumption**
- **Increasing reliance on active and low-carbon mobility** (biking, walking, public transit)

Additional Priorities in Oslo:

- **Reducing air travel**
- **Combating social isolation** through stronger local engagement
- **Enhancing awareness and participation in urban green care initiatives**

### **Digitalization as a Double-Edged Sword**

Digital technologies play a central role in shaping hybrid urban lifestyles. On one hand, they facilitate remote work, reduce the need for commuting, and promote sustainable behaviors – from managing energy consumption to participating in sharing economies. On the other hand, digitalization introduces a new axis of inequality, exacerbating socio-economic divides and reinforcing social isolation, particularly for individuals lacking access, skills, or infrastructure.

These divides are more pronounced in Lisbon than in Oslo, reflecting broader structural asymmetries. In Lisbon, limited digital inclusion is compounded by precarious living and working conditions, which primarily exclude elderly populations from accessing digital benefits. In contrast, Oslo's public policy has more effectively aligned digital tools with sustainability and inclusion goals, although challenges persist regarding the pace of behavioral adaptation to technological change.

## 4. SCENARIOS FOR FUTURE URBAN LIVING

### Lisbon | Reactive–Adaptive Scenario

Lisbon exemplifies a **reactive and community-driven adaptation model**, where informal networks and grassroots innovation emerge in the context of **weak structural support**. Digital engagement among youth is robust; however, it often coexists with precarious material conditions and limited institutional responsiveness.

- The outlook of youth is characterized by **skepticism and frustration**. Many young adults express uncertainty about their ability to achieve traditional life milestones — such as owning a home, starting a family, or securing stable employment — due to ongoing economic insecurity and concerns about climate change.
- A sense of **disempowerment prevails**, driven by the belief that major decisions are controlled by a privileged minority who are insulated from the consequences of their actions.
- Although **collective actions** such as improved public transport and sustainable infrastructure are seen as necessary, public policies frequently **lack the intermediate steps** and **fail to address social, territorial, and cultural asymmetries**.
- **Digital exclusion among older generations** is an increasing concern, that reinforces existing inequalities and exacerbates intergenerational disconnects.

## Oslo | Progressive–Structural Scenario

Oslo represents a more progressive and structurally supported scenario, where co-living arrangements, hybrid workspaces, and sustainable practices are institutionalized and incentivized through effective public policy.

- Young people tend to be **more optimistic and open to sharing lifestyles** that are already normalized and supported by digital and urban infrastructure. However, it is acknowledged that **technological advancement often outpaces societal adaptation**, sometimes resulting in **contradictory outcomes**. For instance, there is a reliance on unsustainable conveniences, such as pre-packaged food and the relatively high cost of second-hand goods.
- The **affordability of sustainable choices** remains a significant challenge. While pre-packaged and ready-made foods are cheap and widely available, **local production and ethical consumption** – such as second-hand clothing – often carry a higher price tag. Nevertheless, the **alignment between state incentives and individual behavior** has proven effective in promoting environmentally conscious lifestyles.
- Continued public investment in **digital inclusion and green care infrastructure** will be crucial for accelerating the transition toward sustainability.

## 5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**HybGen** reveals the contradictions of youth urban transitions: high potential blocked by structural inequalities. Hybrid lifestyles are adaptive strategies that reflect resilience, not privilege.

Policymaking must address these gaps to avoid deepening generational and territorial divides. Here are some **evidence-based policy recommendations** tailored to address the critical challenges and support young adults in hybrid transitions in Lisbon and Oslo:

## **Housing and Youth Emancipation**

### **Strengthen Affordable Housing Policies for Youth**

- Expand public housing stock targeted specifically at young adults (18–35).
- Reform existing programs like Porta 65 Jovem to avoid reinforcing socio-spatial exclusion.
- Promote cooperative and community-led housing models as alternatives to speculative markets.

### **Support Innovative Co-Living Arrangements**

- Encourage formal co-living through zoning reforms, public-private partnerships, and tenant protections.
- Incentivize intergenerational and multigenerational living to bridge demographic divides and reduce social isolation.

## **Employment and Hybrid Workspaces**

### **Regulate and Support Precarious Work Conditions**

- Implement minimum standards for digital and freelance work, including access to social protection and collective bargaining.
- Create publicly funded platforms for gig workers to organize, access legal advice, and develop careers.

### **Develop Public Hybrid Work Hubs**

- Invest in publicly accessible coworking spaces in underserved areas to ensure equal access to digital infrastructure.
- Integrate training programs and peer support to upskill youth in digital and green sectors.

## **Urban Green Care and Mobility**

### **Mainstream Green Care in Urban Planning**

- Institutionalize urban green care by embedding it in municipal planning guidelines.
- Support youth-led green initiatives, community gardens, and local food systems with small grants and logistical support.

### **Ensure Equitable Access to Sustainable Mobility**

- Expand subsidies for public transport for youth beyond age 23, especially in Lisbon.
- Improve cycling infrastructure and ensure safe pedestrian access in peripheral and lower-income neighborhoods.

## **Digital Inclusion and Ecological Transition**

### **Close the Digital Divide in Portugal (digital tools are usable by 90% of the population in Norway)**

- Provide universal access to affordable broadband and digital tools, especially targeting low-income and older populations.
- Launch intergenerational digital literacy programs co-designed by youth and seniors to foster mutual learning and inclusion.

### **Promote Circular and Sustainable Consumption**

- Support repair cafés, tool libraries, and upcycling initiatives through local funding and awareness campaigns.
- Implement fiscal incentives (e.g., VAT reductions) for second-hand goods and circular economy practices.

## **Cross-Cutting and Governance**

### **Foster Participatory Urban Governance**

- Institutionalize youth representation in urban planning bodies and advisory councils.
- Ensure participatory budgeting processes include priorities from young people living in peripheral and vulnerable areas.

### **Bridge Regional and Generational Gaps**

- Launch integrated urban strategies that link housing, mobility, employment, and environmental justice, with a regional lens.
- Develop pilot projects that test holistic responses to hybrid life challenges, co-produced with youth communities.

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