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How to anticipate constraints on upscaling inclusive Living Lab experiments

Ten constraints on upscaling and social inclusion in urban Living Lab experiments and ways to anticipate them

→ Download the detailed version of these guidelines at: smarterlabs.eu

Authors

ICIS, Maastricht University, Netherlands
Marc Dijk, Ron Cörvers, Joop de Kraker, René Kemp

Cosmopolis, VUB, Belgium
Nicola da Schio, Kobe Boussauw, Bas van Heur

Regional Centre of Expertise Graz-Styria, University of Graz, Austria
Mario Diethart, Thomas Höflehner, Petra Wlasak

SUPSI, University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland, Switzerland

Roberta Castri, Francesca Cellina

BRAL, Belgium
Tim Cassiers, Lievin Chemin

Contact: Marc Dijk – m.dijk@maastrichtuniversity.nl



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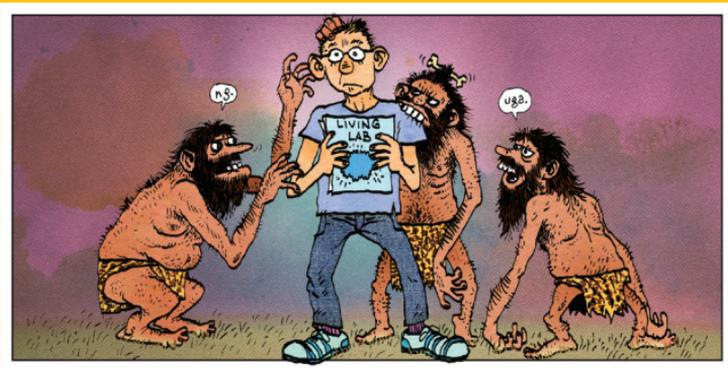
Social inclusion

#1

Citizens lack financial, intellectual and time resources to participate in the Living Lab



To participate meaningfully, citizens need time, energy and commitment, a certain level of understanding of the issue at stake or of the technology in use, and sometimes also specific economic and intellectual resources or skills. Certain social groups may therefore tend not to participate in Living Lab initiatives.





- **Apply stakeholder and requirement analysis tools (in relation to desired outcomes of the Living Lab) to identify types of exclusion, their motivations and coping strategies**
- **Include all Living Lab participants in such a reflection (not only the “institutional” initiators), across the Living Lab stages**
- **Strategically design Living Lab micro-practices, such as informative and educational material, choice of venue and schedule of meetings, language, provision of technological support to reduce digital divide**

Social inclusion

#2

Relevant stakeholders remain out of the Living Lab



Certain groups might not be interested in joining Living Lab activities, since they do not share the urgency to discuss the issues at stake and take action, or even have conflicting attitudes or goals. The Living Lab may thus become a low conflict circle of people sharing priorities, attitudes and goals, while the large majority of citizens would ignore it.





- **Stakeholder analysis allows to identify the relevant target groups and the reasons why they might/might not be interested to join Living Lab activities**
- **This suggests how to frame Living Lab activities in public communication campaigns aimed at recruiting participants and to identify the specific actions needed to also raise the interest of less intrinsically motivated target groups**

#2

Social inclusion

#3

Groups and impacts outside the Living Lab context are overlooked



The Living Lab project may lack or be poor of representatives from the larger urban context, though they might be impacted by the project. Likewise, effects beyond the Living Lab boundaries may be neglected (e.g. decrease of cars in one district shifts traffic to another).





- **Explicitly consider the project's indirect and cross-scale effects in the broader urban context, by reflecting on the multiple scales relevant to the Living Lab and on the actors that might be included/excluded at each scale**
- **Adopt adequate logistic arrangements and outreach strategies to help minimize exclusion, such as convening Living Lab meetings at different locations and being open to reframe meetings to achieve a shared vision and increase motivation**

#3

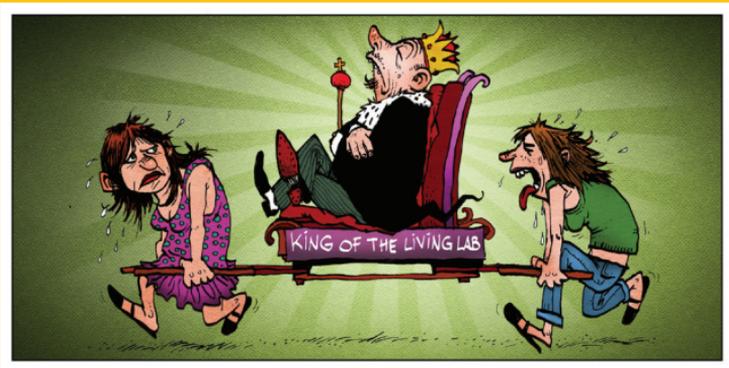
Social inclusion

#4

Existing power structures are reproduced inside the Living Lab



The Living Lab setup and applied methods may not guarantee that any group or participant has equal opportunities for participating in the discussion, so that every voice is heard and seriously taken into account. For example, the Mayor, technical experts, or simply male Living Lab participants, may be given more weight than other participants.





- **Regularly perform a stakeholder group dynamics analysis, in order to understand group structure and leadership relations among group members**
- **Particularly, identify any dominant position among Living Lab participants, due to already existing institutional roles outside the Living Lab (political responsibility, lobbying activity)**
- **Design a communication and management strategy to address all identified target groups, keep flexibility, favor development of activities along different tracks, allowing each group to adapt to their speed of progress**

Upscaling

#5

The Living Lab's potential for learning is underexploited



If the lessons offered by Living Lab activities are not explicitly monitored, understanding of the innovation process, its implications and consequences, may be low. In this case, only limited transfer of learning is possible, thus precluding the diffusion of innovation across spatial scales.





- **Develop a comprehensive learning strategy aimed at capturing and monitoring knowledge creation in the Living Lab (collective knowledge co-production) and transferring it to all relevant actors outside the Living Lab**
- **Knowledge exchange can be favored by people-to-people real-life interactions (i.e. physical meetings), which make learning more rewarding and comprehensive to all and also ensure tacit knowledge to emerge**

#5

Upscaling

#6

The Living Lab is disconnected from broader societal debate



The Living Lab experiment may lack coordination with the social, economic, cultural and political conjuncture. In such a case, the policy climate may not support the adoption of the innovation pursued in the Living Lab. The broader public may either not share the Living Lab's goals and outcomes or find them irrelevant.





- **Design and manage Living Lab activities with great care for the local conjuncture: consider broader socio-economic, cultural and political aspects, ensure links with the existing public debate, with what a community considers to be its priorities, and what stakeholders consider to be feasible**
- **Maintain a certain flexibility throughout the Living Lab, be ready to adapt to changing conditions in the outside social and political agenda. Ensure that both Living Lab objectives and its framing can be adjusted and continuously re-defined by all actors**
- **Place citizens at the core of the process and actively coordinate with other societal developments and initiatives related to the content of the Living Lab**

Upscaling

#7

The Living Lab consensus is not reflected in policy and society



Even if the topic addressed by the Living lab is a priority of the social and political agenda, persistence of conflicts on specific topics may preclude reaching agreements, either inside or outside the Living Lab. The outcomes of the Living Lab may therefore lack wide consensus, support and political majority.





- **Open to participation as much and as early as possible and regularly update the stakeholder analysis whenever external conditions change, in order to avoid the exclusion of any relevant stakeholder group**
- **Favor emergence of any conflicting goals within Living Lab participants and between Living Lab participants and possible external stakeholder groups not actively engaged, and manage conflicting goals by multi-criteria decision-making techniques**
- **Always emphasize and give weight to potential community-level benefits of the options under discussion, against personal or partisan benefits. To this purpose, exploit already existing networks and coalitions and seek for new and unexpected alliances between groups of stakeholders, trying to build relationships with successful initiatives already developed by other actors**

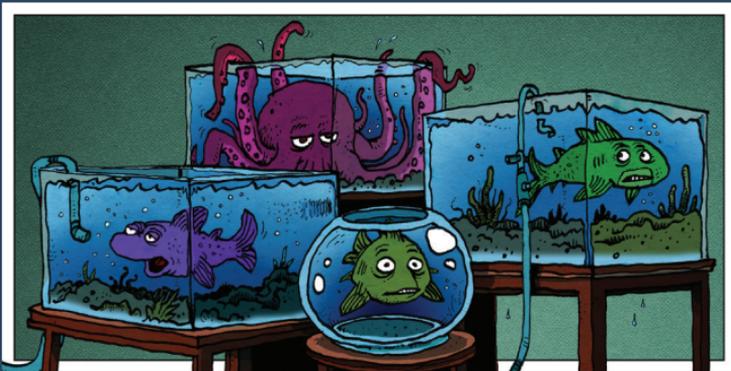
Upscaling

#8

Stakeholders and institutions are highly fragmented



Fragmented institutional arrangements between and within institutions (“silo compartments”) may preclude clear distribution of responsibilities among the actors involved in Living Lab activities, and effective cooperation between them.





- **Foster transparency and collaboration between administrative units, organizations and stakeholders, right from the beginning of the Living Lab process**
- **Create occasions for them to interact and become familiar with the process, discussion topics and proposals emerging within the Living Lab**

Upscaling

#9

The urban assemblage is sticky and locked-in



Technical, infrastructural, legal or financial aspects, such as long-term contracts or legal lock-ins, may cause obduracy of the urban assemblage, thus precluding possibilities for practical implementation of the outcomes of the Living Lab.





- **Activate a dialogue with relevant actors as soon as possible: by developing future visions with stakeholders and crucial decision-makers, the potential of more structural changes can be highlighted**
- **Local actors might be empowered by teaming up with supra-urban actors, such as municipalities with provinces or local NGOs with their national counterpart (scale jumping)**

Upscaling

#10

The Living Lab meets low institutional receptiveness



Local governments and other actors involved in the Living Lab process might be unfamiliar with, or open to, co-creation approaches, favoring instead expert-driven way of thinking and agreement with powerful lobbies. If so, institutions may not have real commitment to implement Living Lab outcomes.





- **Seek for early inclusion of policy-makers and local institutions**
- **Provided that Living Lab organizers show genuine commitment and give voice, role and responsibility to diverse groups of citizens, civil society organizations and experts, institutions might start appreciating the approach and its benefit**
- **Carry out multiple successful pilot processes**
- **Build on existing practices and procedures of representative democracy to promote dialogue between stakeholders**