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How to anticipate constraints on upscaling and social inclusion in mobility smart city living labs
Lessons from four "smarter" labs

The upscaling of innovations from urban Living Lab experiments (LL) is often assumed to be relatively easy, as if they can simply be 'rolled out'. In practice, however, upscaling is usually constrained by a range of factors in the wider context of the innovation, typically a context of interconnected and 'obdurate' urban socio-technical networks and institutions.

In the SmarterLabs project we developed and tested a LL approach to address constraints on large-scale upscaling and social inclusion in mobility smart city living labs.

Based on a retrospective analysis and action research in four LL experiments in four European cities, we identified ten common key constraints and developed guidelines to anticipate them.

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Bellinzona (CH)

Co-design of a smartphone app promoting behavioural change by rewarding voluntary reductions in car use.

Maastricht (NL)

Co-design of the renovation of the central station area by means of participatory visioning meetings exploiting a visualization tool

Graz (AT)

Engagement of local stakeholders in the "smart" redesign of Griesplatz, a highly frequented square in the center of the city and public transport mobility hub

Brussels (BE)

Participatory measurements of air quality to foster public debate and action on air quality and mobility

Conclusions

We identified strategies to anticipate constraints on upscaling of inclusive LL and tested them in our "smarter" LLs, as well as in three additional workshops in Helsinki, Istanbul and Santander.
Creatively designed policy brief guidelines now assist decision makers to initiate a LL and a practitioner's brief supports LL actors (researchers, businesses, citizens, or any other stakeholders) who are running or participating in a LL.
The SmarterLabs guidelines can be downloaded from the project website www.smarterlabs.eu.

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Constraints	Strategies to anticipate them
Citizens lack financial, intellectual and human resources to participate	• Apply stakeholder and requirement analysis tools (in relation to desired outcomes of the LL) to identify types of exclusion, their motivations and coping strategies • Include all LL participants in such a reflection (not only the 'institutional' initiators), across LL stages • Strategically design LL micro-practices, such as informative and educational material, choice of venue and schedule of meetings, language, provision of technological support to reduce digital divide
Relevant stakeholders remain out of the Living Lab	• Stakeholder analysis allows to identify the relevant target groups and the reasons why they might/might not be interested to join LL activities • This suggests how to frame LL 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
Groups and impacts outside the Living Lab context are overlooked	• Explicitly consider the project's indirect and cross-scale effects in the broader urban context, by reflecting on the multiple scales relevant to the LL 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 LL meetings at different locations and being open to reframe lab meetings to achieve a shared vision and increase motivation
Existing power structures are reproduced inside the Living Lab	• 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 LL participants, due to already existing institutional roles outside the LL (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
The Living Lab's potential for learning is underexploited	• Develop a comprehensive learning strategy, aimed at capturing and monitoring knowledge creation in the LL (collective knowledge co-production) and at transferring it to all relevant actors outside the LL • 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
The Living Lab is disconnected from broader societal debate	• Design and manage LL 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 LL, be ready to adapt to changing conditions in the outside social and political agenda. Ensure that both LL objectives and its framing can be adjusted and continuously redefined 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 LL
The 'co-created' Living Lab result consensus is not reflected in policy and society	• 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 LL participants and between LL 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 ad seek for new and unexpected alliances between groups of stakeholders, trying to build relationships with successful initiatives already developed by other actors
Stakeholders and institutions are highly fragmented	• Foster transparency and collaboration between administrative units, organizations, and stakeholders, right from the beginning of the LL process • Create occasions for them to interact and become familiar with the process, discussion topics and proposals emerging within the LL
The urban assemblage is sticky and locked-in	• 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)
The Living Lab meets low institutional receptiveness	• Seek for early inclusion of policy-makers and local institutions • Provided that LL 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