



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

ESTABLISHING, ANIMATING & OVERSEEING A LIVING LAB FOR THE GREEN & CIRCULAR TRANSITION

GREEN  LABS

MODULE N°3

PART 1

Understanding Living Labs in the
Green and Circular Transition
From concept to real-world
application





OBJECTIVES

CRITICALLY ANALYSE THE ROLE OF LIVING LABS IN THE GREEN AND CIRCULAR TRANSITION.

DESIGN AND PLAN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF A LIVING LAB FRAMEWORK ADAPTED TO A LOCAL CONTEXT.

IDENTIFY, MAP AND ORGANISE THE KEY CONDITIONS, RESOURCES, AND BASIC COORDINATION MECHANISMS REQUIRED TO ESTABLISH AND RUN A LIVING LAB.

ADAPT, POSITION AND SUPPORT THE ONGOING FUNCTIONING OF A LIVING LAB WITHIN A LOCAL ECOSYSTEM TO ENSURE COLLABORATION, EXPERIMENTATION, AND GREEN INNOVATION.

**TOGETHER WE
WILL DISCOVER:**



What is a living lab, how is it structured, and how does it function in a real ecosystem?



THE REALITY: THE WORLD WE LIVE IN





UNCERTAINTY



VUCA



COMPLEXITY



AMBIGUITY

V**Volatility**

Refers to the speed, volume, and magnitude of change. In a volatile environment, things change rapidly and unpredictably.

U**Uncertainty**

The extent to which we cannot confidently predict the future. It stems from a lack of information or clarity about the consequences of actions.

C**Complexity**

Describes a situation with many interconnected parts and variables. This makes it difficult to analyse cause-and-effect relationships.

A**Ambiguity**

A lack of clarity about how to interpret a situation. It occurs when information is incomplete or contradictory, leading to multiple possible meanings.



NAVIGATING THE VUCA WORLD A 90-SECOND GUIDE



[Watch this video](#)



Green & Circular
Transition and VUCA?
What's the deal?



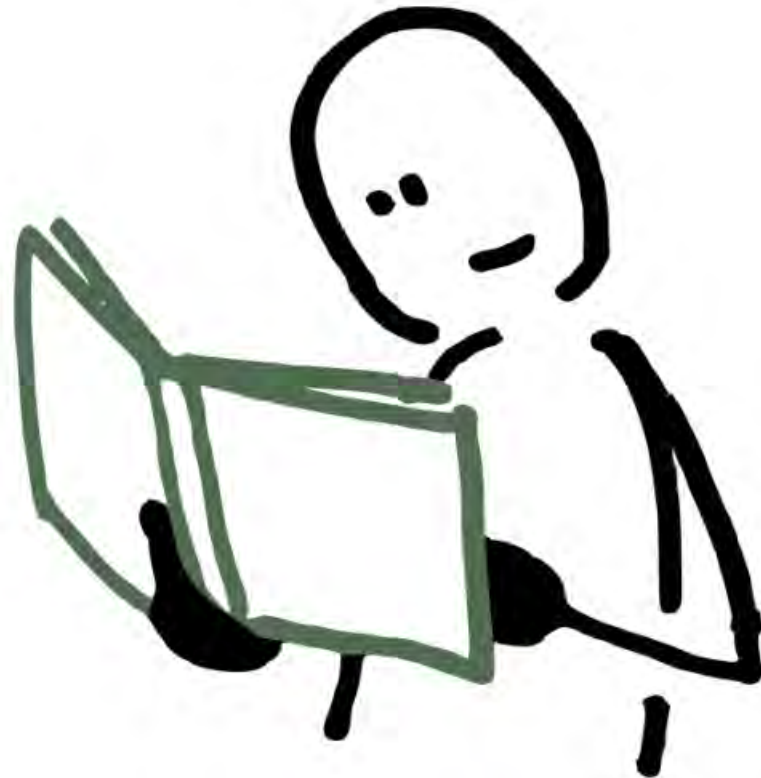


The shift from a **linear “take-make-waste” model** to systems that **reduce, reuse, regenerate**, and **restore** natural resources while decarbonising the economy.



It's not just a technical shift—it's a systemic transformation under VUCA conditions, requiring adaptive, collaborative approaches (like for example: 😊 living labs).

LET'S SEE SOME EXAMPLES OF CIRCULAR & GREEN TRANSITION 'WICKED' PROBLEMS



V

Volatility

Rapid, unexpected, and intense changes.



Sudden heatwaves spike city energy demand: Conditions change rapidly and intensely. Energy demand can surge within days, stressing infrastructure. The challenge is the **speed and magnitude of change**, not lack of information.

U

Uncertainty

Difficulty in predicting and planning future events.



Unpredictable rainfall affects local crops: Outcomes are hard to forecast even with available data. Farmers cannot reliably plan planting or harvesting cycles. The issue is **not knowing what will happen next**.

C

Complexity

Interconnectedness of factors that create chaotic situations hard to map.



Urban mobility + pollution + zoning conflicts: Many interconnected factors and stakeholders interact. Transport systems, environmental goals, and regulations influence each other. The difficulty lies in managing **multiple interdependencies at once**.

A

Ambiguity

Lack of clarity, information is vague, misleading, open to multiple interpretations.



"Green" project impact unclear to community: Situations lack clarity or shared meaning. People interpret "sustainable" differently, leading to confusion or disagreement. The challenge is **unclear cause-effect and multiple valid interpretations**.

**GOOD
NEWS**

We can navigate our
VUCA world and turn
things over



V**Volatility**

Rapid, disruptive changes

**VISION**

Counteract volatility with a clear sense of purpose and direction.

U**Uncertainty**

Hard to plan long-term

**UNDERSTANDING**

Meet uncertainty by seeking diverse perspectives and staying informed about shifts.

C**Complexity**

Many actors & dependencies

**CLARITY**

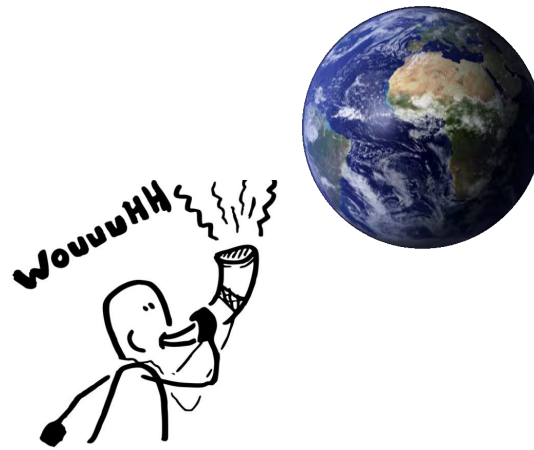
Simplify complex situations through effective communication and focused priorities.

A**Ambiguity**

Conflicting interpretations

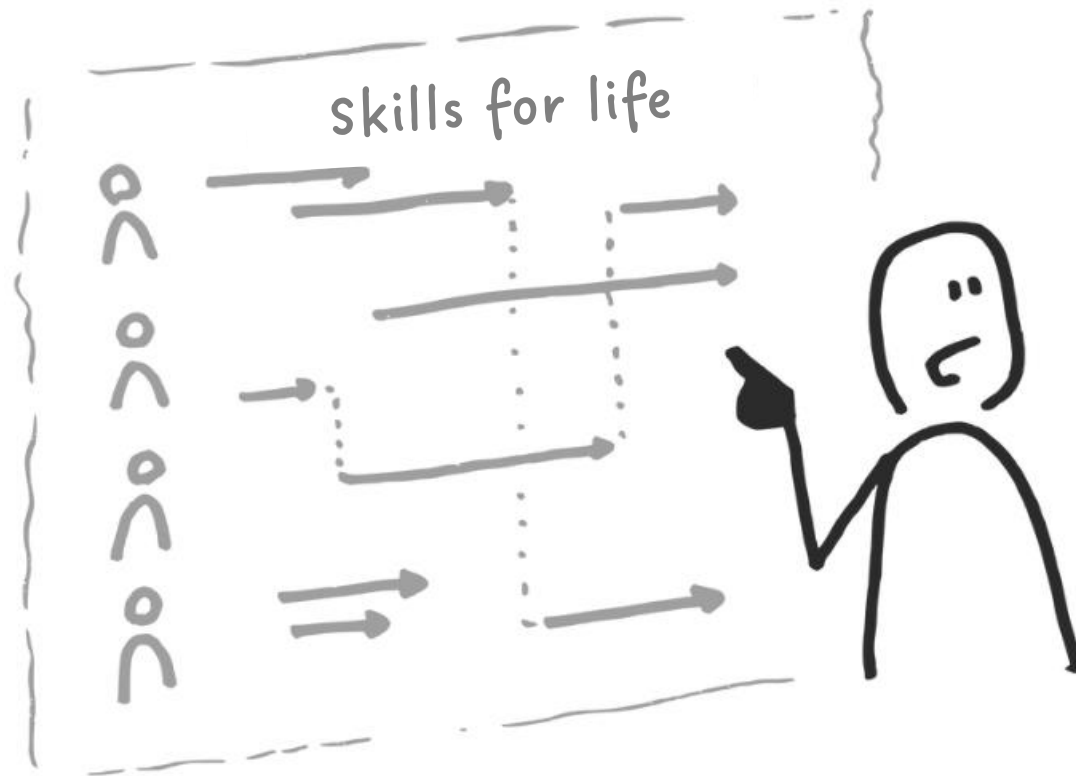
**AGILITY**

Respond to ambiguity by being flexible, promoting cross-functional collaboration, and iterating quickly.



vuca-world.org

NEEDED SKILLS FOR EMBRACING VISION, UNDERSTANDING, CLARITY & AGILITY





LEADERSHIP in a VUCA WORLD

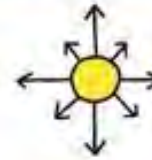
MINDSET/SKILLS TO THRIVE IN A VUCA WORLD



DEVELOP
an
ADAPTIVE
MINDSET



HAVE a
VISION



EMBRACE
ABUNDANCE
MINDSET



WEAVE
ECOSYSTEMS
FOR
HUMAN
ENGAGEMENT



ANTICIPATE &
CREATE
CHANGE



BE
SELF
AWARE



BE an
AGILE
LEARNER



NETWORK
&
COLLABORATE



RELENTLESSLY
FOCUS ON
CUSTOMER



DEVELOP
PEOPLE



DESIGN
FOR THE
FUTURE



CONSTANTLY
CLARIFY &
COMMUNICATE

5 Leadership Skills to thrive in a VUCA world **'the new normal'**

1 Think People First

forget about 'my needs' and focus on the others, on true collaboration.

2 Develop Cognitive Flexibility

cognitive flexibility enables you to envision multiple scenarios and develop different solutions simultaneously.

3 Focus on Systems Thinking

Don't blame others and stop focusing only on what is not working. Expand and use a systematic approach.

4 Embrace Ambiguity

5 Provide Clarity

Accept and navigate situations lacking certainty. Stay comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Welcome multiple perspectives. Turn confusion into shared understanding. Work on translating chaos into clear priorities.



<https://teachbetter.com/blog/5-leadership-skills-educators-need-to-thrive/>

THE CHALLENGE: WHY THIS MATTERS



Green and Circular Transition is complex and it requires:

- Local solutions
- Behavioural change
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration

Traditional Innovation approaches are often:



- linear, top-down, slow
- isolated, low citizen involvement
- not tested in reality, not user-driven

Wicked Problems like Climate Transition require Systemic Innovation

Systems thinking is a way of making sense of the complexity of the world by looking at it in terms of wholes and relationships rather than by splitting it down into its parts.



Systemic innovation is a holistic approach where value is created through the interconnectedness of multiple innovations, actors, and processes rather than a single, isolated invention.

**We need innovation in
real-life contexts, with real people**

THE SHIFT: LIVING LABS

Because innovation must happen with real people in real contexts and with a systemic approach



Living labs are **user-centred, open innovation ecosystems** operating in **real-life environments**, where stakeholders **research, co-create, test, and refine solutions.**

European
Network of
Living Labs



www.enoll.org

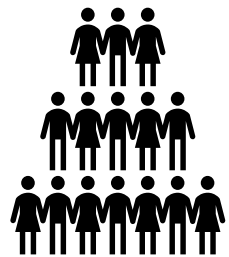


Living Labs are among the most successful approaches for **developing innovations**, functioning as real-world innovation ecosystems that enable **participatory design and testing**. In these environments, users, researchers, businesses, and policymakers **collaboratively co-create, prototype, and validate solutions** in real-life settings. Within the GREEN LABS project, the Living Labs focus on **green ecosystems, circular economy practices, and sustainable production and consumption models**, serving as testing grounds for eco-innovation, new policies, business models, and green technologies.

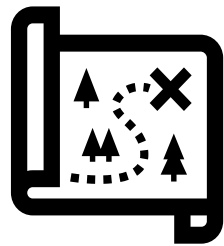
THE HOW: THROUGH 3 INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

3 key elements:

- Real-life context
- Multi-stakeholder participation
- Iterative experimentation



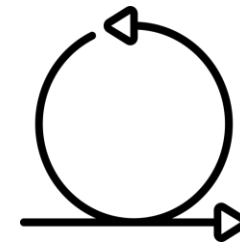
People



Environment



Experimentation



Iteration

THE WHY: LIVING LABS FOR GREEN TRANSITION



**Complexity Of
Climate
Challenges**



**Need For
Behavioral
Change**



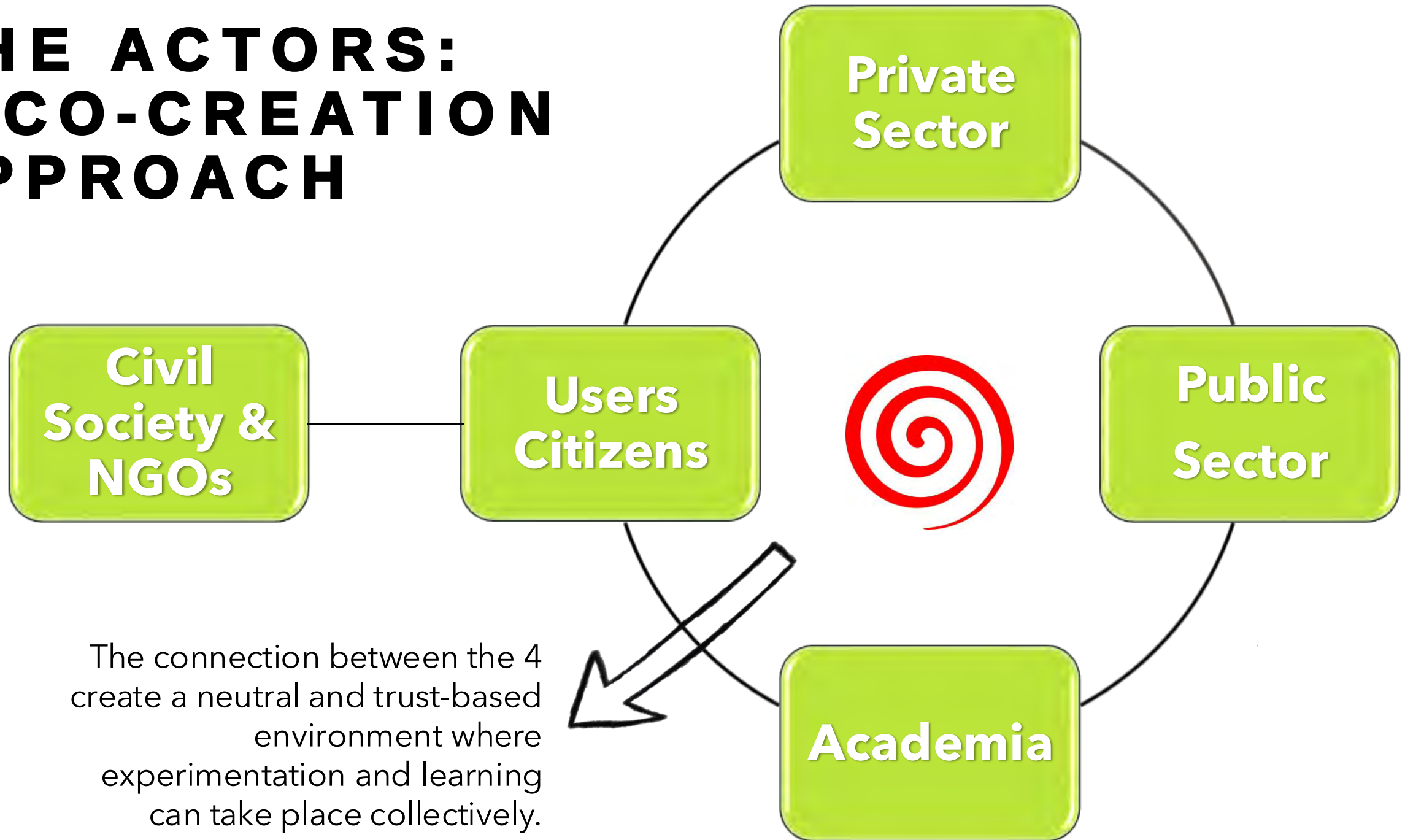
**Need Of
Local
Adaptation**

Therefore, Living Labs enable:

- ✓ Testing solutions locally
- ✓ Engaging communities
- ✓ Iterative learning



THE ACTORS: A CO-CREATION APPROACH





Government & Municipalities

Policy development, funding, regulatory support

Provide policy frameworks, grants, and infrastructure support



Academic Institutions

Research, expertise, training

Contribute scientific knowledge, conduct impact assessments



Businesses & Startups

Solution development, piloting

Develop & test green technologies, provide funding



Civil Society & NGOs

Community engagement, advocacy

Ensure public participation, advocate for sustainability



End-Users (Citizens, Local Groups)

Testing, feedback

Provide real-life testing environments, suggest improvements

THE ROLE OF THE USERS



Australian Living Labs Innovation Network

Professor Lars Coenen
<http://sustainable.unimelb.edu.au/people/lars-coenen>

Professor Annica Kronsell
<http://www.svet.lu.se/en/annica-kronsell>

Governance of Urban Sustainability Transitions
<http://www.urbanlivinglabs.net/>



[Watch this video](#)

LET'S SEE HOW LIVING LABS ARE IN REAL LIFE

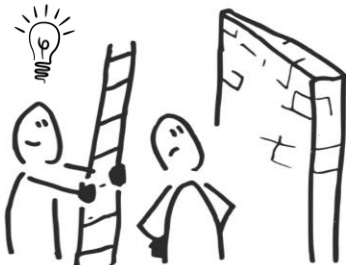


THE REAL LIVING LAB: CORE CHARACTERISTICS



Active Users

End-users are active co-creators from idea generation to implementation



Multi- Method

Problem-driven approach selects methods based on desired outcomes



Multi-Stakeholder

All four Quadruple Helix groups are engaged



Real-Life Test

Operates in real life, everyday environments, not traditional labs



Co-Creation

All stakeholders design and develop the solutions together



Orchestration

The Lab facilitates and manages the innovation process, connecting actors and coordinating efforts

Living Lab



User-Centric Approach

End-users help shape solutions, ensuring real needs are met and social acceptance is high.

Open Innovation

Stakeholders share data, insights, and methods, enabling faster iteration and better collaboration.

Co-Creation & Experimentation

Participants jointly design, prototype, and test ideas in real environments, building shared ownership.

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

Brings together government, academia, industry, civil society, and the environment to enable broad, long-term collaboration.

EVOLUTION OF LIVING LABS

**Early
2000s**

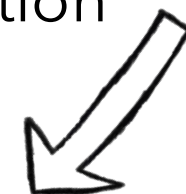
- Concept emerges

Expansion

- Urban, digital, social innovation

Today

- Key tool for sustainability and circular transition



**Increasing
relevance in EU
Policy Context:**

Living labs
operationalise
these policies
on the ground

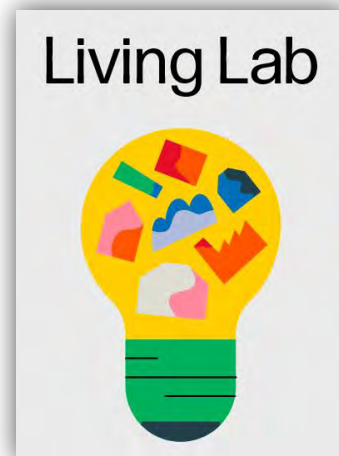


Vision
Understanding
Clarity
Agility

Leadership
SKILLS



G&CT as a wicked problem



**Characteristics
& Principles**



THINKING TIME



TOP
TIPS



- brainstorm GENUINE social, urban, or green transition challenges
- one brilliant thought per sticky note
- keep it straightforward yet feel free to describe details
- stick to relevant challenges, only in your country

What **wicked problem**
in your community
needs a Living Lab?



<https://canva.link/green-labs-problems-in-our-communities>

A simple line drawing of a person with a lightbulb above their head, symbolizing an idea or inspiration. The person is depicted with a large, rounded head and a simple, curved line for a smile. Above the person's head is a lightbulb with several short lines radiating from it, indicating it is lit. The person's right arm is raised, with the hand pointing towards the lightbulb. The drawing is minimalist, using only black lines on a white background.

COFFEE TIME ! LET'S TAKE 15 MINUTES

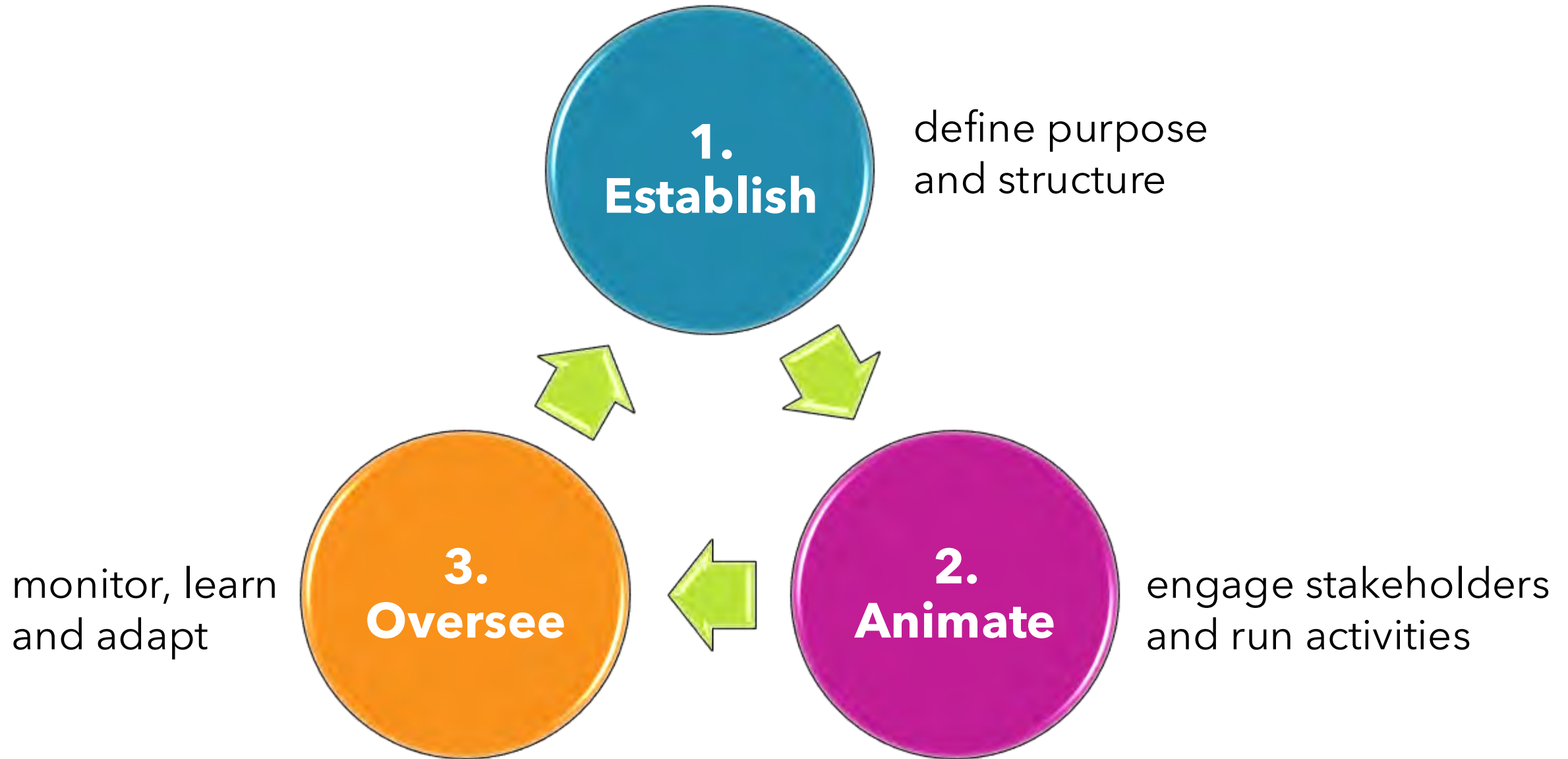


15:00

LET'S GET INTO BUSINESS AND BEGIN UNDERSTANDING HOW TO SET UP OUR OWN LIVING LAB



THE LIVING LAB LIFE CYCLE





1. Establish

Define & Set up

Define the challenge or focus area

→ e.g. reducing food waste in a neighbourhood, improving urban mobility, circular use of materials

Identify and engage key stakeholders (initially)

→ local authorities, citizens, SMEs, NGOs, researchers

Clarify purpose and value proposition

→ what problem is being addressed and why it matters locally

Map the local context / ecosystem

→ existing initiatives, gaps, opportunities, community needs

Design the initial structure of the living lab

→ roles, basic governance, how collaboration will happen

1. Establish

Define & Set up

Select or create the “real-life environment” for testing

→ a neighbourhood, school, city district, company setting

Define initial activities or pilot actions

→ workshops, co-creation sessions, small experiments

Secure basic resources

→ space, tools, partners, minimal funding or support

Agree on how stakeholders will participate

→ how users/citizens will be involved from the start

Set initial expectations and scope → what is realistic at this stage (avoid over-design)



“Establish” is not about building something perfect, it is about:
creating the conditions to start experimenting in a real context



2. Animate

*Engage &
experiment*

Organise co-creation workshops or sessions

→ bringing together stakeholders to generate and refine ideas collaboratively

Facilitate stakeholder engagement and participation→

ensuring citizens, users, and partners are actively involved over time

Run pilot activities or real-life experiments

→ testing solutions in the selected environment (e.g. neighbourhood, school, company)

Create and maintain communication channels

→ meetings, online platforms, updates to keep participants informed and engaged

2. Animate

*Engage &
experiment*

Encourage continuous feedback from users

→ collecting insights, reactions, and experiences during activities

Adapt activities based on participant input

→ adjusting workshops, pilots, or focus areas as learning emerges

Build a sense of community and shared ownership

→ fostering trust, motivation, and long-term involvement

Activate collaboration between stakeholders

→ connecting actors who may not usually work together



“Animate” is not about delivering activities, it is about:
keeping the living lab active, participatory, and evolving through
continuous engagement and experimentation



3. Oversee

*Monitor &
adapt*

Monitor progress of activities and experiments

→ tracking what is happening and whether actions are moving in the right direction

Collect and analyse feedback from stakeholders and users

→ understanding what works, what doesn't, and why

Review results of pilots or experiments

→ assessing outcomes, impacts, and lessons learned

Facilitate reflection and learning moments

→ organising debrief sessions, sharing insights across participants

3. Oversee

*Monitor &
adapt*

Adjust and improve activities based on evidence

→ refining approaches, changing focus, or scaling what works

Ensure coordination among stakeholders

→ keeping communication flowing and roles clear over time

Track simple indicators or signals of success

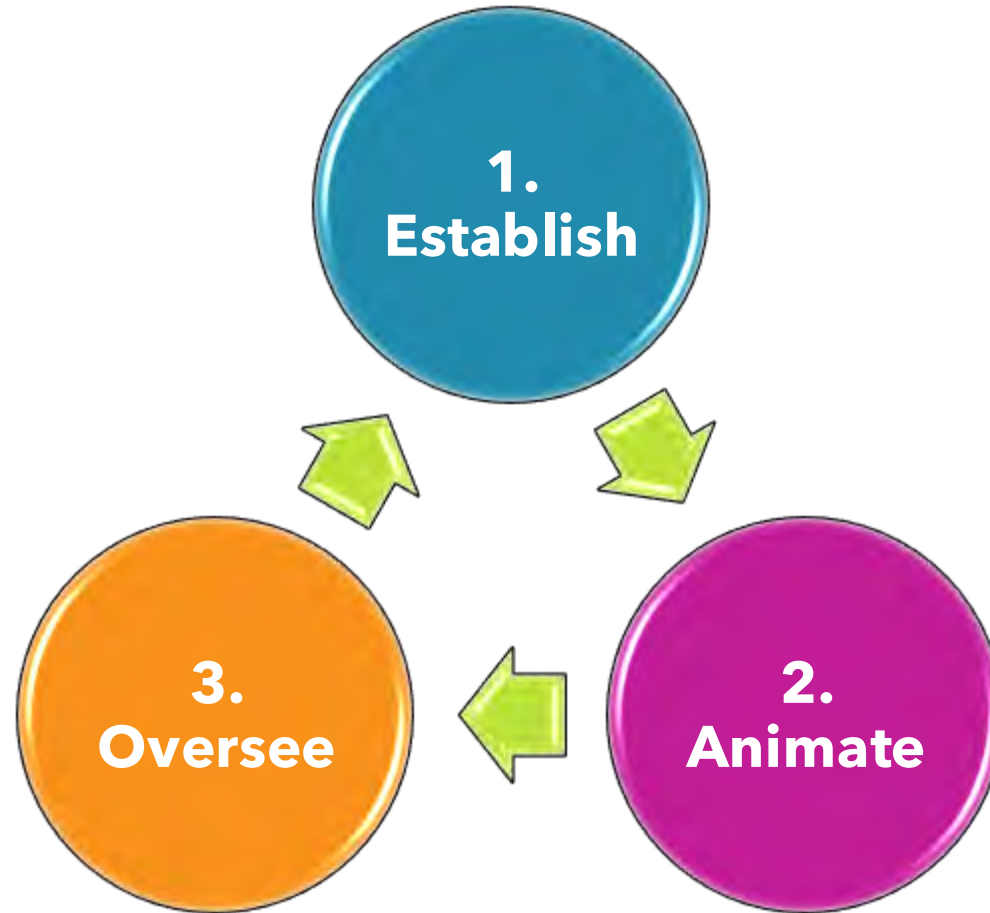
→ e.g. participation levels, engagement, initial impact

Document and share learnings

→ capturing knowledge for future use and for others



"Oversee" is not about controlling the process, it is about:
ensuring continuous learning, coordination, and improvement
of the living lab over time



A continuous process: Identify → Co-create → Test → Learn → Improve

THE LIVING LAB LIFECYCLE



- Define the challenge
- Identify stakeholders
- Understand the local context
- Design the structure
- Set up the real-life testing space
- Plan initial activities



- Facilitate co-creation
- Engage stakeholders continuously
- Run real-life experiments
- Collect feedback
- Adapt activities
- Build collaboration



- Monitor progress
- Collect feedback
- Review results
- Facilitate learning
- Adapt and improve
- Coordinate stakeholders

GET COMFORTABLE



LET'S ENJOY A REAL CASE OF A MARVELOUS GREEN LIVING LAB

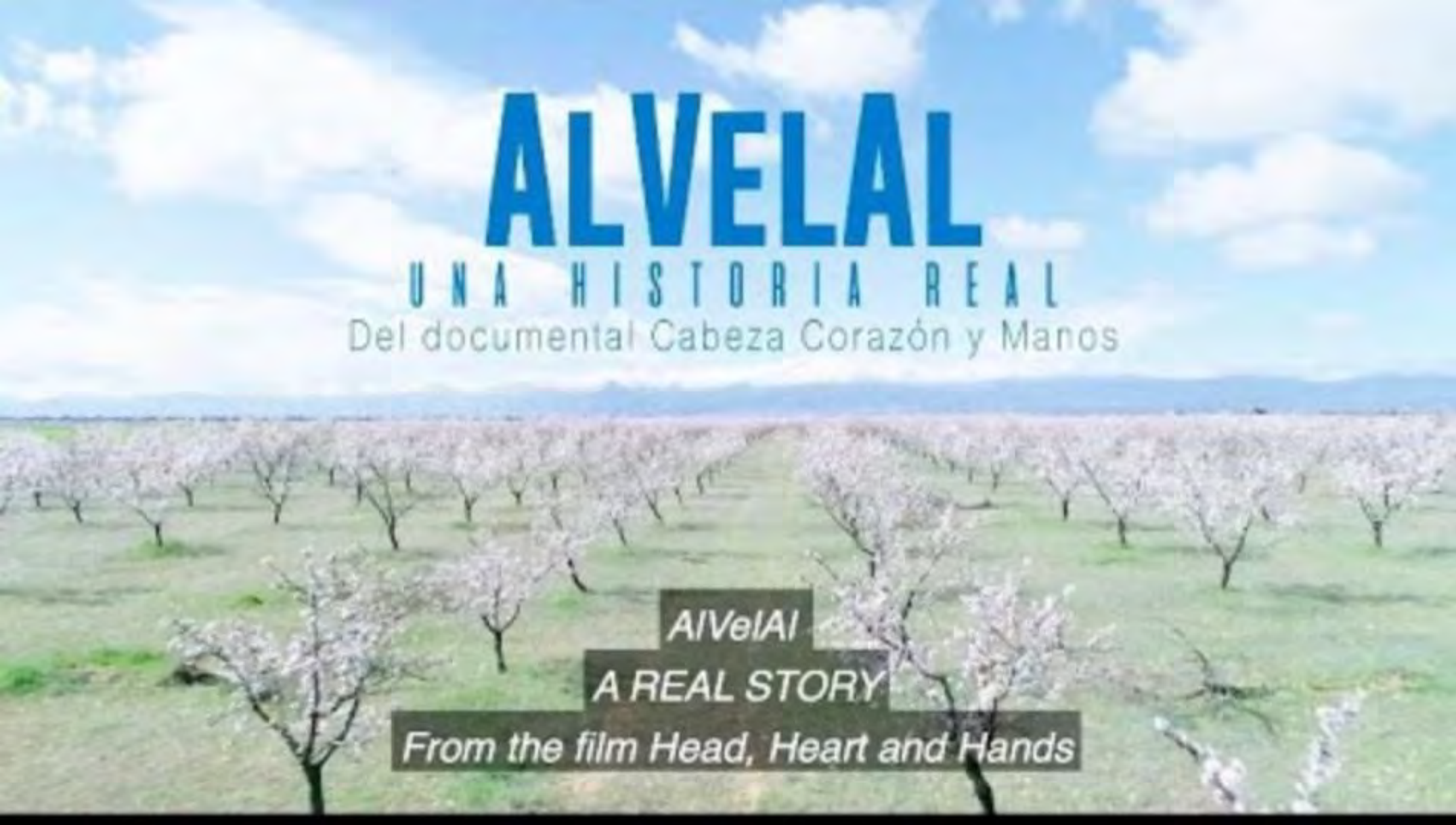


<https://alvela.es/>

added value
4 returns business
stakeholders
community
future
creativity
economy
entrepreneurs
research
social impact
policy
opportunities
education
monitoring
ecology



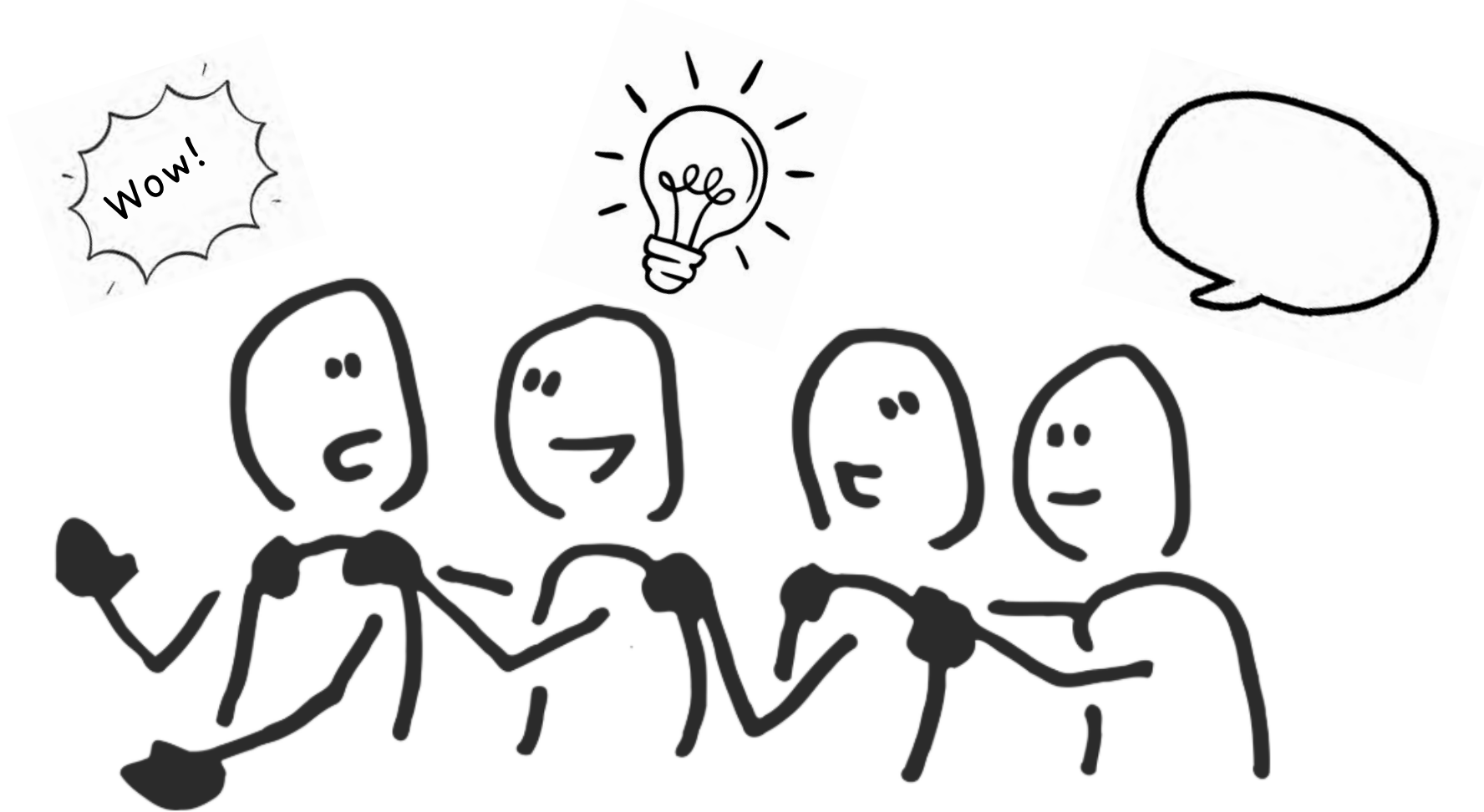
Let's get inspired by it,
take note of the ideas
that resonate with you



[Watch this video](#)



WHAT CAUGHT YOUR ATTENTION? LET'S SHARE!



LET'S DO IT!

GROUP CO-CREATION TIME



🌱 Designing Your Living Lab

Country:

Let's define how your living lab will be established, activated, and sustained over time!

Focus / Challenge:

Context (Where? Why?):

1. ESTABLISH

Define & set up

What will you put in place to start?

✓ Select key actions:

- ☐ Define the challenge
- ☐ Identify stakeholders
- ☐ Map the context
- ☐ Design structure
- ☐ Select real-life environment
- ☐ Plan initial activities

🔥 Your main actions:

1	
2	
3	

2. ANIMATE

Engage & experiment

How will you keep your living lab active?

✓ Select key actions:

- ☐ Facilitate co-creation
- ☐ Engage stakeholders
- ☐ Run experiments
- ☐ Collect feedback
- ☐ Adapt activities
- ☐ Build collaboration

🔥 Your main actions:

1	
2	
3	

3. OVERSEE

Monitor & improve

How will you ensure your living lab evolves?

✓ Select key actions:

- ☐ Monitor progress
- ☐ Analyse feedback
- ☐ Review results
- ☐ Facilitate learning & reflection
- ☐ Adapt & improve
- ☐ Coordinate stakeholders

🔥 Your main actions:

1	
---	--

REFLECTION

What is strongest in your living lab?

What still needs development?

Your next step:

We will work on country-based teams to begin designing a Living Lab



Designing Your Living Lab

Country:

Spain (Extremadura)

Let's define how your living lab will be established, activated, and sustained over time:

Focus / Challenge:

Reducing agricultural waste and finding new ways to reuse natural materials from farming in rural communities of Extremadura.

Context (Where? Why?):

Rural areas in Extremadura (like Cáceres province), where agriculture is a key economic activity (olive oil, tomatoes, livestock), but large amounts of organic waste are underused. (olive pits, tomato skins, crop leftovers, animal manure)

There is an opportunity to:

- Reduce waste
- Create local circular economy solutions
- Engage farmers, cooperatives, and municipalities

**Initial Living Lab
design example
in Spain**



1. ESTABLISH

Define & set up

What will you put in place to start?

✓ Select key actions:

- ☒ Define the challenge
- ☒ Identify stakeholders
- ☐ Map the context
- ☒ Design structure
- ☒ Select real-life environment
- ☐ Plan initial activities

🔥 Your main actions:

- 1 Define the challenge and scope:
 - Focus on reuse of agricultural by-products (e.g. olive residues, tomato waste) in selected municipalities such as Badajoz and Trujillo.
- 2 Identify and engage key stakeholders:
 - Local farmers and cooperatives
 - o Cooperativas Agro-alimentarias de Extremadura
 - o Fundación Global Nature (biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, and environmental education)
 - Regional government
 - o Junta de Extremadura
 - Local municipalities (Ayuntamientos de Badajoz y Trujillo)
 - Universidad de Extremadura (research support)
 - Local SMEs working on sustainability or bioeconomy
 - o Biogás Olivares de Extremadura (biogas production from agricultural residues)
 - o Nactac Group (develops natural extracts from plant-based raw materials)
 - o Innogestiona Ambiental (environmental consultancy on sustainability)
- 3 Select pilot locations and design initial structure
 - Choose 1–2 rural communities as testing environments
 - o Tres Arroyos
 - o Plasenzuela
 - Define roles:
 - o Farmers → provide materials and test solutions
 - o Researchers → support design and analysis
 - o SMEs & → know-how and technical innovation
 - o Municipality → facilitate coordination

Initial Living Lab design example in Spain



2. ANIMATE

Engage & experiment

How will you keep your living lab active?

✓ **Select key actions:**

☒ Facilitate co-creation

☒ Engage stakeholders

☒ Run experiments

☐ Collect feedback

☐ Adapt activities

☐ Build collaboration



Your main actions:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Organise co-creation workshops with stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bring together farmers, SMEs, and researchers- Identify possible uses for agricultural waste (e.g. composting, bio-products) |
| 2 | Run pilot experiments in real settings <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Test small-scale composting systems- Pilot reuse of organic waste in local farms |
| 3 | Maintain engagement and feedback loops <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Monthly meetings with participants- Collect feedback from farmers on feasibility and results- Adjust activities based on what works |

**Initial Living Lab
design example
in Spain**



3. OVERSEE

Monitor & improve

How will you ensure your living lab evolves?

✓ **Select key actions:**

- ☒ Monitor progress
- ☒ Analyse feedback
- ☒ Review results
- ☐ Facilitate learning & reflection
- ☐ Adapt & improve
- ☐ Coordinate stakeholders

🔥 **Your main actions:**

- 1 Monitor participation and pilot results
 - Track number of participants
 - Observe use and effectiveness of pilot solutions (source: co-creation)
- 2 Collect and analyse feedback
 - Gather input from farmers and SMEs
 - Identify barriers (cost, time, usability)
- 3 Adapt and improve the living lab activities
 - Adjust pilot approaches
 - Scale successful practices to other municipalities
 - Share results with regional actors

**Initial Living Lab
design example
in Spain**



REFLECTION

What is strongest in your living lab?

Strong local relevance and engagement of real stakeholders

- Farmers / Cooperatives → implementation & testing
- SMEs (Biogás, Natac, etc.) → innovation & solutions
- University → research & validation
- Public sector (Junta) → policy & support
- NGO (Global Nature) → engagement & sustainability

What still needs development?

Long-term sustainability and funding, as well as scaling beyond pilot communities

Your next step:

Organise the first co-creation workshop with identified stakeholders in a selected municipality

**Initial Living Lab
design example
in Spain**



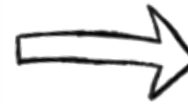
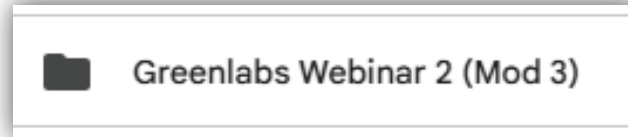
LET'S TAKE A 10-MINUTE BREAK



10:00

LET'S DO IT!

GROUP CO-CREATION TIME



Share... > ... > W.. > Greenlabs Webi...

Type People Modified Source

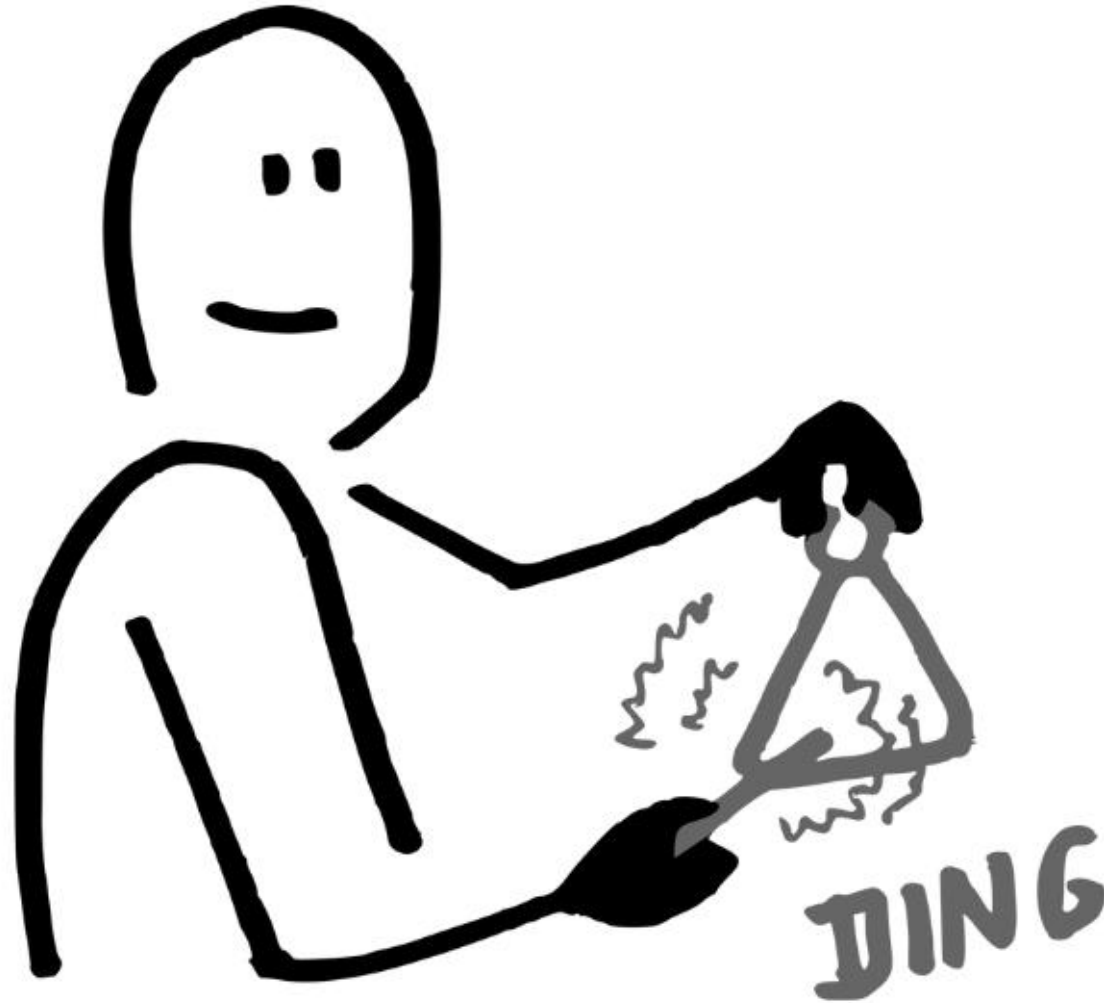
Name ↑	Date modified
France	Apr 20
Greece	Apr 20
Italy	Apr 20
Portugal	Apr 20
Serbia	Apr 20

Name ↑	Date modified
 Establish-Animate-Oversee.pdf	Apr 20
 example Living Lab Design.pdf	Apr 20
 instructions for Group Work.docx	9:00 AM
 template Living Lab Design SERBIA.docx	Apr 20



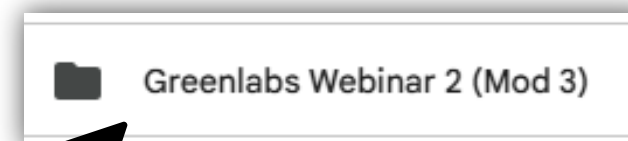
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11ViDvtISwuMfuFzENIHmPKPQmeG0kt05?usp=drive_link

SHOW US YOUR MASTERPIECE!





WHAT? DID YOU SAY HOMEWORK?



See you on the 7th of May!

PART 2

Facilitating Co-Creation in Living Labs:
Strategies, Tools and Engagement
Approaches for Designing,
Implementing and Monitoring Multi-
Actor Innovation in Real-World Settings





OBJECTIVES

CRITICALLY ANALYSE THE ROLE OF LIVING LABS IN THE GREEN AND CIRCULAR TRANSITION.

DESIGN AND PLAN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF A LIVING LAB FRAMEWORK ADAPTED TO A LOCAL CONTEXT.

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TOGETHER WE WILL DISCOVER:

How do we bring a Living Lab to life – engaging all actors, facilitating co-creation, and measuring lasting change in real-world settings?



SO TODAY IS ALL ABOUT:

Facilitating Co-Creation in Living Labs

Strategies, Methodologies & Practical Tools

Green Transformation | Circular Transition | Social Economy



Recap: What Is a Living Lab?



Real-World Settings

Developed in authentic contexts: schools, neighbourhoods, community gardens, cities. Not in simulated labs.



Multi-Actor Co-Creation

Civil society, public sector, businesses, NGOs, academia, and above all, the end user as co-creator.



Systemic Change

Seeking long-term behavioural change, not just testing innovations. Sustainable social transformation.

*The end users are not passive recipients –
they are co-designers, co-evaluators, co-decision-makers*

The Challenge: Complex Problems Require Collaborative Solutions



Green Transformation

Decarbonisation, renewable energy, sustainable mobility, energy efficiency in communities



Circular Transition

Reduce, reuse, repair. Zero-waste economy, circular business models, sharing platforms



Social Economy

Inclusion, equity, people-centred economic models, cooperative governance, community resilience

*Living Labs integrate all actors in real-world settings
to address these interconnected challenges*

The Living Lab Lifecycle: an iterative process of establishing, overseeing and animating



Establish

Define purpose and structure: Creating the conditions to start experimenting in a real context



Animate

Engage stakeholders and run activities: Keeping the living lab active, participatory, and evolving through continuous engagement and experimentation.



Oversee

Monitor, learn, and adapt: Ensuring continuous learning, coordination, and improvement of the living lab over time

An iterative cycle that brings Living Labs to life and true change to reality

Now it's time to
listen to you!

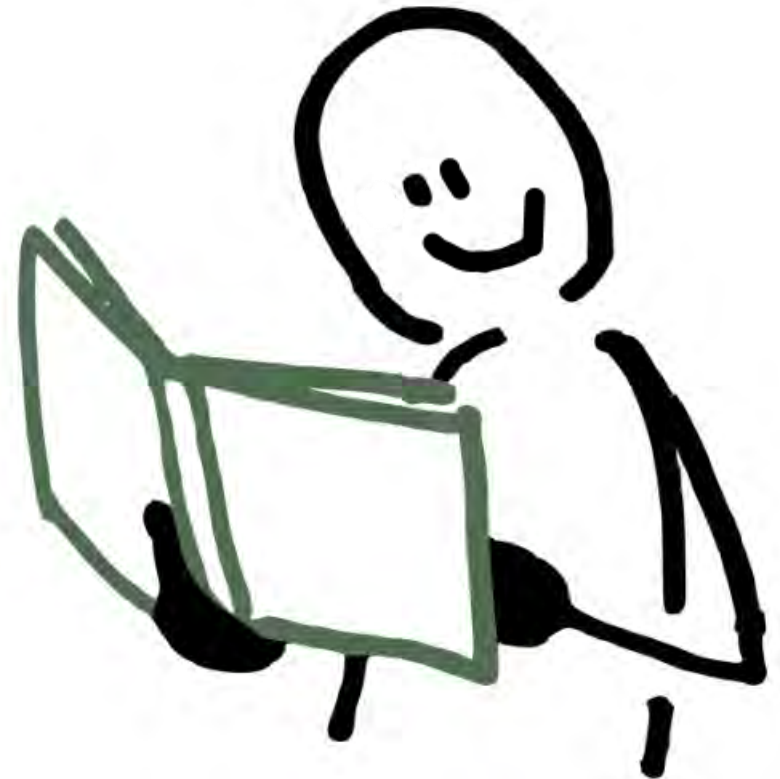


Today you will take home:

- ✓ A stakeholder engagement playbook
- ✓ Inspirational stories of real community change
- ✓ Strategies methodologies, practical tools, digital tools, and exercises for the:
 - Establishing / Designing phase
 - Animating / Implementation phase
 - Overseeing / Monitoring phase



Let's begin with a Stakeholder Engagement Playbook

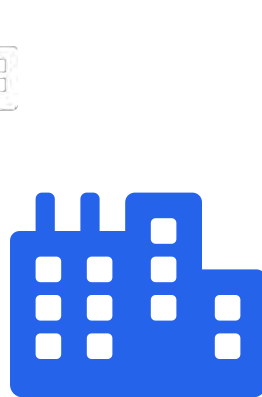


Stakeholder Engagement Playbook

How to reach, engage, and retain every actor in the Quadruple Helix



**Citizens &
End Users**



**Public
Sector**



**Private
Sector**



**Academia &
Research**

For each group: How to find them | How to hook them | What they gain | How to keep them

Group

Golden Rule

● Citizens & End Users



"If they feel studied, they leave. If they feel heard, they stay."

● Public Sector & Government



"Make them look good. If the LL makes their department shine, they will champion it."

● Private Sector & Industry



"Don't ask for money first. Ask for their expertise. Investment follows trust."

● Academia & Research



"If your LL generates publishable data, they will never leave."

● NGOs & Civil Society



"If they vouch for you, doors open. If they don't, nothing moves."



Citizens & End Users

The heart of every Living Lab

How to Find Them	How to Hook Them	What They Gain	How to Keep Them
Go where they ARE: markets, schools, parks, community centres, churches	Start with THEIR problem, not your project goals	Their voice shapes real decisions that affect their daily life	Close the feedback loop: show how their input changed the design
Partner with local associations & neighbourhood leaders they already trust	Use their language, literally and figuratively. No jargon.	New skills: digital literacy, design thinking, project management	Celebrate milestones together, publicly. Make them the heroes.
Use local media: community radio, WhatsApp groups, parish newsletters	Make the first interaction zero-commitment: a coffee chat, a walk	Social connection & sense of belonging to something meaningful	Offer flexible participation: evenings, weekends, online/offline
Door-to-door with a friendly face, not a clipboard	Show, don't tell: demo a quick prototype they can touch	Visible improvements in THEIR neighbourhood, school, or community	Create 'community champions' who recruit and mentor peers
Host a free community event first: food, music, conversation	Let them bring a friend. Peer invitation > formal invitation	Recognition as experts of their own lived experience	Never ghost them. Regular updates, even when there's no news.

Golden rule: They are CO-CREATORS, not subjects. If they feel studied, they leave. If they feel heard, they stay.



Public Sector & Government

Legitimacy, scale & policy impact

How to Find Them	How to Hook Them	What They Gain	How to Keep Them
Map the right department: sustainability, innovation, urban planning, social services	Speak their language: policy outcomes, citizen satisfaction, EU alignment	Evidence-based policy input from real citizen engagement	Produce reports they CAN USE: policy briefs, not academic papers
Target mid-level champions first, not the mayor. They DO the work.	Show evidence from other municipalities that did it and won	EU funding eligibility: Living Labs tick every Horizon box	Invite them to present results at conferences as co-authors
Attend municipal council meetings and open consultations	Offer to co-design a pilot they can showcase in their annual report	Innovative reputation without high political risk (it's a pilot!)	Make their participation visible to their superiors
Leverage EU project networks: they want partners for Horizon calls	Align to THEIR agenda (climate plan, SDGs, digital strategy)	Better public services at lower cost through co-design	Respect their timelines: elections, budget cycles, planning horizons
Find the civil servant who is frustrated with how things are done	Reduce their perceived risk: start small, measure everything	Direct channel to citizen needs, bypassing bureaucratic filters	Build institutional memory: document everything for staff turnover

Golden rule: Make them look good. If the Living Lab makes their department shine, they will champion it internally.



Private Sector & Industry

Innovation, market insight & resources

How to Find Them	How to Hook Them	What They Gain	How to Keep Them
Target CSR/sustainability leads and innovation managers, not sales	Lead with the business case: user insights, market validation, R&D	Direct access to real user feedback before market launch	Deliver quick wins: early prototypes, preliminary data, user quotes
Attend local chamber of commerce events and business fairs	Offer a real-world testing ground they couldn't build alone	Co-creation with future customers in authentic settings	Respect IP agreements from day one. Clarity prevents conflict.
Look for B-Corps, social enterprises, and cooperatives first	Show them the EU funding landscape and co-financing possibilities	ESG/sustainability credentials with measurable social impact	Share visibility: press releases, social media, award nominations
Use LinkedIn strategically: connect, share your vision, invite	Frame it as open innovation, not charity or CSR	Pre-competitive collaboration space with other innovators	Show ROI regularly: not just social, but economic value too
Ask your public sector partners who they already work with	Present a clear, time-bound commitment (not open-ended)	Talent pipeline: meet engaged students and researchers	Connect them to other Living Labs for scaling opportunities

Golden rule: Don't ask for money first. Ask for their expertise. Investment follows trust.



How to Find Them	How to Hook Them	What They Gain	How to Keep Them
Search university websites for researchers in sustainability, social innovation, design	Offer what they can't get in a lab: real-world data in authentic contexts	Real-world research environment that boosts publication impact	Co-publish results. Shared authorship = shared commitment.
Contact RDI offices and technology transfer departments	Co-author publications: your Living Lab = their case study	Transdisciplinary collaboration that funders increasingly demand	Involve them in conference presentations and EU project bids
Attend academic conferences and present your Living Lab as a research site	Position your LL as a living research infrastructure, not a one-off project	Student placement sites for experiential learning	Bridge the language gap: translate findings for community audiences
Offer thesis and internship opportunities: students are your bridge	Align with their funding cycles: H2020, Horizon Europe, national grants	Societal impact metrics for institutional rankings & accreditation	Respect academic calendars: semesters, exam periods, sabbaticals
Look for researchers who already publish on action research & PAR	Invite them to co-design the evaluation framework from the start	Long-term community partnerships for longitudinal studies	Create a research advisory board with rotating membership

Golden rule: Researchers need publications. If your Living Lab generates publishable data, they will never leave.



NGOs & Civil Society Organisations

Trust, access & community bridge

How to Find Them	How to Hook Them	What They Gain	How to Keep Them
Map local NGOs: environment, social inclusion, youth, elderly, migration	Show how the project amplifies THEIR mission, not replaces it	Amplified voice: their advocacy backed by research evidence	Compensate them fairly. Volunteer fatigue is real.
Check municipal registers of associations and volunteer platforms	Offer shared infrastructure: space, tools, visibility, training	Access to EU networks, funding streams, and policy channels	Feature them as equal partners in all communications
Visit community gardens, repair cafes, food banks, cultural centres	Respect their expertise: they know the community better than you	Capacity building: new methodologies, digital tools, evaluation skills	Share data and results in formats THEY can use for fundraising
Partner with umbrella organisations and national NGO federations	Co-design the engagement approach with them, not for them	Strengthened community ties through visible, tangible projects	Adapt to their capacity: they're often understaffed and overstretched
Attend local solidarity events and volunteering fairs	Be honest about budget: can you compensate their time?	Legitimacy as innovation partners, not just service providers	Build personal relationships. NGOs run on trust, not contracts.

Golden rule: NGOs are the community's trust infrastructure. If they vouch for you, doors open. If they don't, nothing moves.

Universal Engagement Principles

Apply these across ALL stakeholder groups

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|---|--|
| 01 | Lead with listening, not presenting | — | Your first meeting should be 80% listening. Understand their world before explaining yours. |
| 02 | Make the first step ridiculously easy | — | A coffee. A 20-minute call. A site visit. Lower the barrier to say yes. |
| 03 | Show impact early and often | — | A prototype in week 3 beats a report in month 6. Tangible beats theoretical. |
| 04 | Create shared ownership | — | Co-branded outputs. Shared decision-making. Their logo next to yours. |
| 05 | Communicate on THEIR channel | — | WhatsApp for citizens. Policy briefs for government. LinkedIn for industry. Papers for academia. |
| 06 | Build redundancy into relationships | — | Never depend on one champion. Build connections across the organisation so the project survives staff changes. |
-

COFFEE TIME ! LET'S TAKE 15 MINUTES



15:00

Let's continue with some Strategies, Methodologies & Practical Tools for Co-creation and Active Collaboration in the Establishing and Designing phase



Design Thinking

Research User's Needs: empathy allows us to set aside our own assumptions

EMPATHIZE
↓



↗ Brainstorm,
Think outside the box

Challenge assumptions and create ideas: we see alternative ways to see the problem and identify innovative solutions

IDEATE
↓



DEFINE
↑

State User's Needs and Problems: once we state the problem, we turn it into a How might we...? Approach



POV: user+need+insight
X needs to X because X.



PROTOTYPE
↑



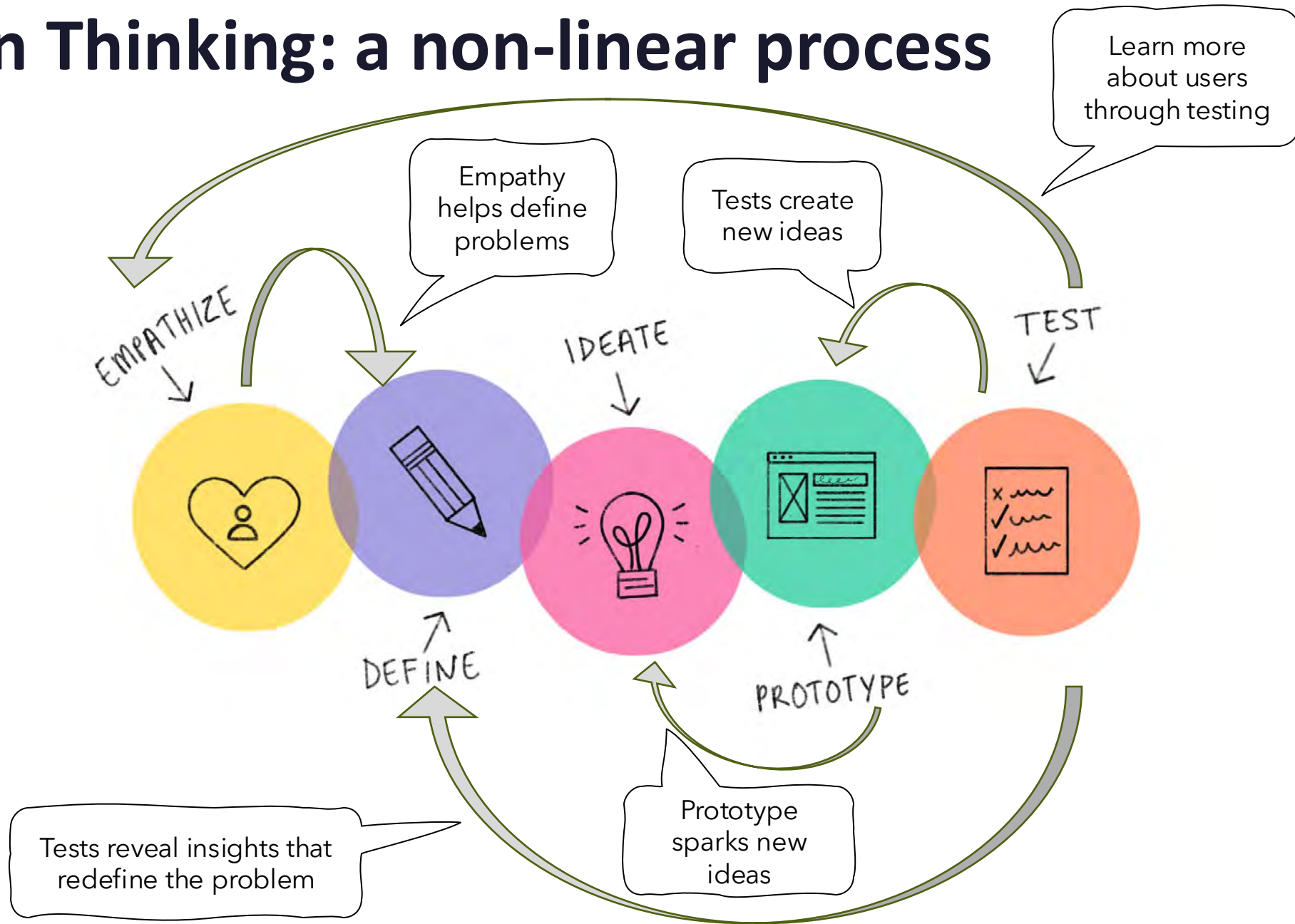
Try the solutions out: prototypes are tested with real users to evaluate if they solve the problem

TEST
↓

Start to Create Solutions: an experiential phase in which we identify the best possible solution.



Design Thinking: a non-linear process



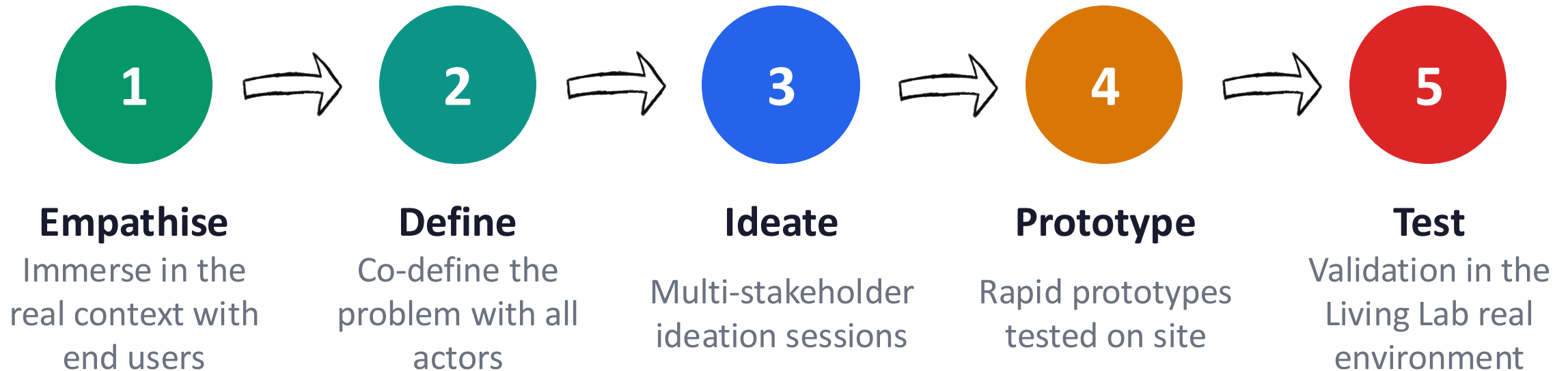
Design for Humanity



INTERACTION DESIGN
FOUNDATION

Human-Design Thinking in Living Labs

Adapting Design Thinking to multi-actor co-creation in real-world environments



The key difference in Living Labs

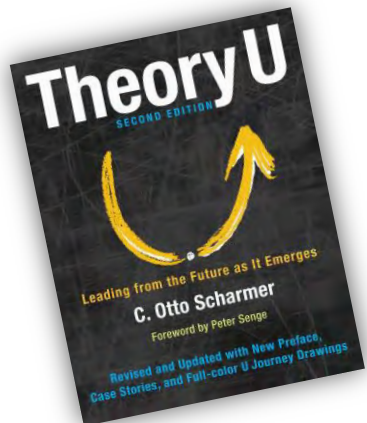
Each phase is executed **WITH** users and actors, not **FOR** them. The real-world setting provides immediate and authentic feedback that cannot be obtained in a controlled laboratory.

Beyond Design Thinking

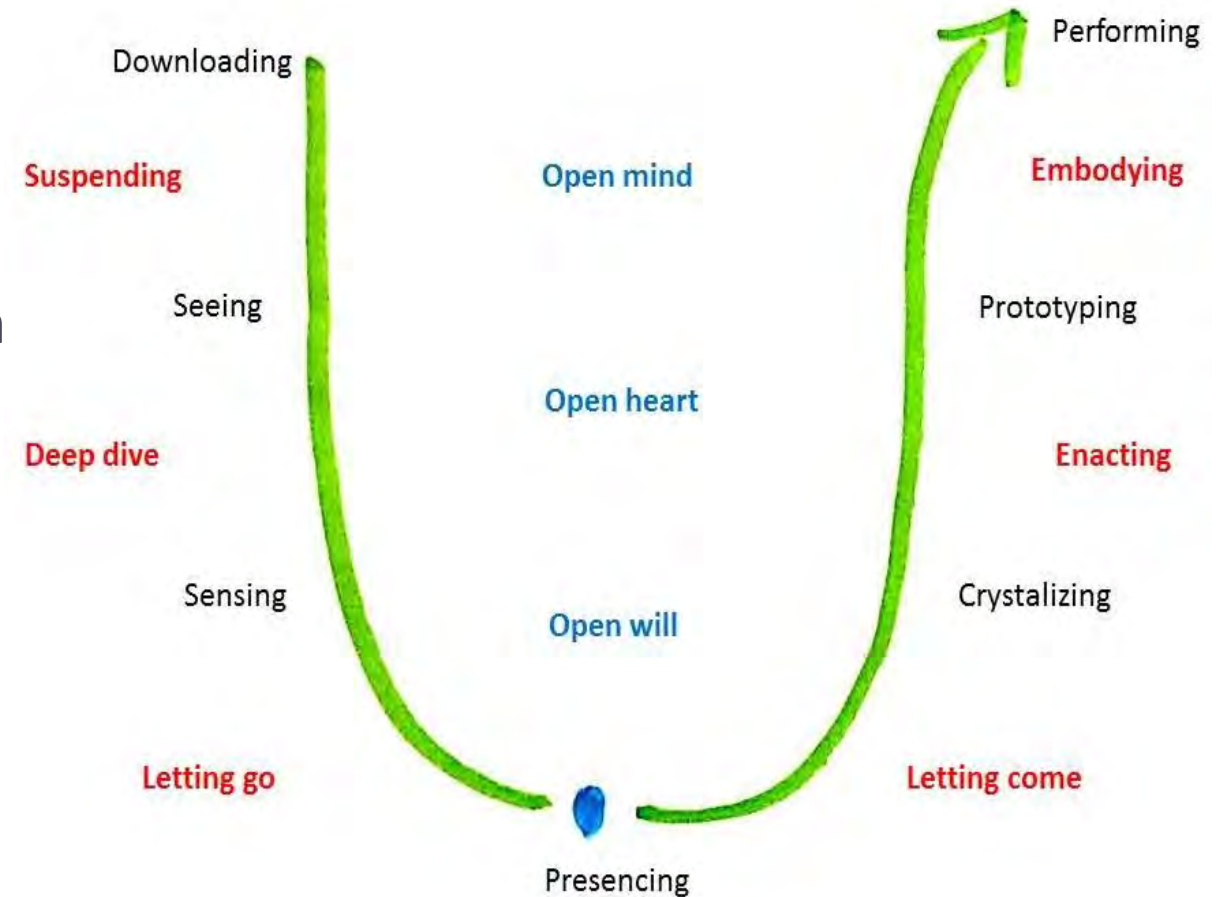
Complementary methodologies for co-creation in Living Labs

Theory U

change management and leadership framework that describes how individuals, teams, and organisations can address complex challenges by shifting the inner place from which they operate. Ideal for systemic transformation.



[Tool: Social Presencing Theater](#)



Beyond Design Thinking

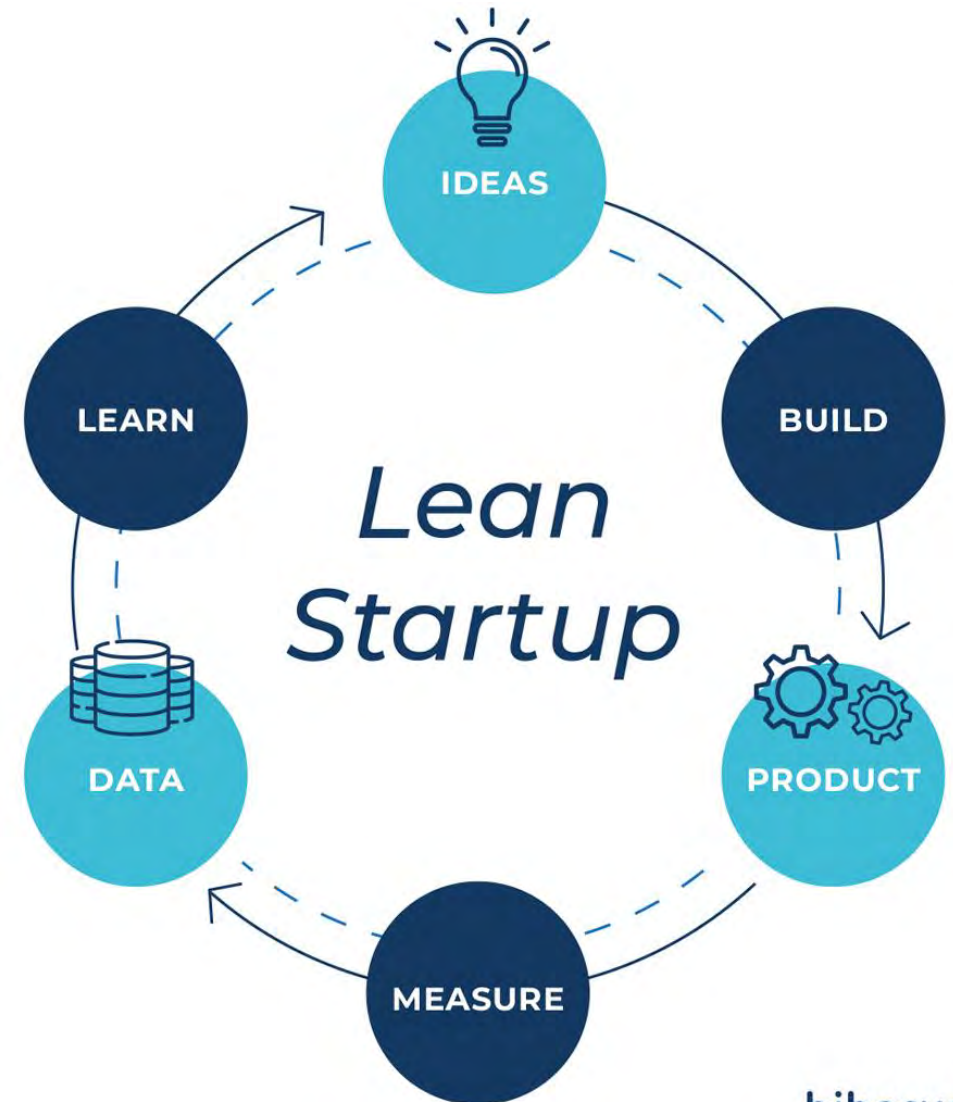
Complementary methodologies for co-creation in Living Labs

Lean Startup - Adapted

Build-Measure-Learn in rapid cycles. Validation with real users in weeks. For LL we make sure all actors are involved in the whole process, from design to feedback



[Tool: Lean Canvas, MVP Testing](#)



hiberus

Beyond Design Thinking

Complementary methodologies for co-creation in Living Labs

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participants are co-researchers.
Iterative action-reflection
cycles in community.



Tools: [Photovoice](#), [Community Mapping](#)



The goal is not just to understand a problem
but to solve it — with the people most affected by it

Beyond Design Thinking

Complementary methodologies for co-creation in Living Labs

Art of Hosting

Global leadership practice used to facilitate group dialogue and co-create solutions for complex challenges. It is about facilitating conversations that matter. World Cafe, Open Space Technology, Circle Practice.



[Tool: artofhosting.org](http://artofhosting.org)

Digital Tools for Co-Design

Ready-to-use platforms for your Living Lab

Tool	Category	Use in Living Labs	URL
Miro / Mural	Visual Collaboration	Collaborative whiteboards for brainstorming, actor mapping, journey maps	miro.com / mural.co
Decidim	Citizen Participation	Open-source digital democratic participation platform. Ideal for participatory governance	decidim.org
Mentimeter / Slido	Live Engagement	Live polls, word clouds, interactive Q&A during face-to-face sessions	mentimeter.com
Kumu	Systems Mapping	Systems & relationship mapping between actors. Complex network visualisation	kumu.io
Figma / FigJam	Prototyping	Collaborative prototyping and real-time design workshops	figma.com
Loomio	Governance	Asynchronous collaborative decision-making. Ideal for diverse, distributed groups	loomio.com

Let's see how public
administration, private
organisations, and citizens can
work together, even in big cities



Curitiba: government and citizens together for sustainability



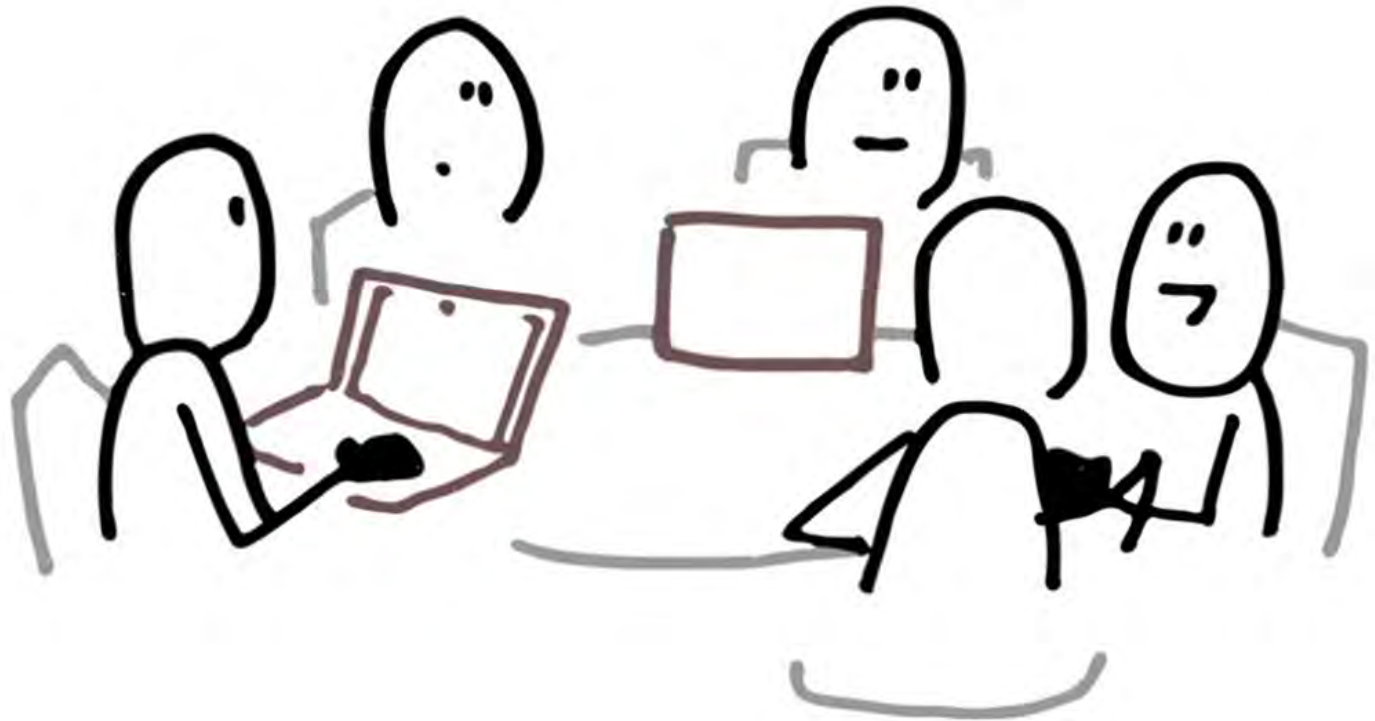
LET'S TAKE A 5-MINUTE BREAK



05:00

Let's dive in some Strategies and Methods for the Animating and Implementing phase

2. Animate



Facilitation Strategies

The facilitator as 'architect of participation', not as process leader



Create Psychological Safety

Co-created group norms | Check-in rounds | 'No bad ideas' in practice, not just words



Balance the Voices

1-2-4-All technique (Liberating Structures) | Round Robin | Dot Voting for democratic prioritisation



Make Thinking Visible

Graphic Recording | Post-its + clustering | Collaborative Journey Mapping on walls



Iterate with Real Feedback

Weekly sprints with users | Regular retrospectives | Paper prototypes before digital

Liberating Structures: Your Essential Kit

33 facilitation microstructures, free and field-tested | liberatingstructures.com



Structure	Time	How It Works	Best For
1-2-4-All	12 min	Solo reflection > pairs > quartets > plenary. Includes all voices.	<i>Generating ideas, diverse perspectives</i>
Troika Consulting	15 min	Groups of 3: one presents a challenge, two consult. Rotate 3x.	<i>Unblocking problems, fresh feedback</i>
15% Solutions	20 min	What can you do NOW with existing resources? Immediate action.	<i>Moving from ideas to concrete action</i>
Wicked Questions	25 min	Formulate paradoxes the group faces. 'How can we X and Y?'	<i>Navigating complexity, multi-actor LLs</i>
UX Fishbowl	30 min	End users share experience in centre; stakeholders listen.	<i>Empathising with users, design phase</i>

Long-Term Behavioural Change

Frameworks that go beyond testing an innovation

COM-B Model

(Michie et al., UCL)

- C** **Capability**
Do they have the skills and knowledge needed?
- O** **Opportunity**
Does the physical and social environment enable it?
- M** **Motivation**
Is there intrinsic and extrinsic motivation?
- B** **Behaviour**
Only if C + O + M are present = sustainable change



Nudge Theory + Social Norms

(Thaler & Sunstein)

Green defaults

Set the sustainable option as the default choice

Visible feedback

Community dashboards showing collective progress

Social norms

'80% of your neighbours already recycle' - belonging effect

Gamification

Points, community challenges, shared rewards



To end with, together, let's dive in some Monitoring and Overseeing Strategies and Tools



Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Formative (during) + Summative (at end) + Impact (long-term)

PROCESS | Formative

How is co-creation going?

Indicators:

No. of sessions | Participant diversity | Satisfaction | Active participation level

Tools:

Post-session surveys, participant observation

OUTCOMES | Summative

What has been achieved?

Indicators:

Prototypes tested | Solutions adopted | Measurable behaviour change | Co-ownership

Tools:

Pre/post surveys, quantitative KPIs

IMPACT | Long-term

Is there sustainable transformation?

Indicators:

Sustained behavioural change (6-12 months) | Model replication | Policies influenced | Systemic change

Tools:

Longitudinal studies, Most Significant Change

Monitoring & Evaluation Tools

Free or low-cost resources for your Living Lab

KoboToolbox

Data

Offline/online data collection. Mobile surveys for fieldwork. Open source.

kobotoolbox.org

SurveyMonkey / Typeform

Surveys

Satisfaction surveys, pre/post evaluation, NPS adapted to social impact.

typeform.com

Airtable

Tracking

Visual database for tracking activities, participants, milestones.

airtable.com

Looker Studio / Power BI

Visualisation

Visual impact dashboards. Shareable with stakeholders and funders.

lookerstudio.google.com

Most Significant Change

Qualitative

Participatory qualitative methodology. All choose the most relevant change stories.

<https://mande.co.uk/welcome/>

SenseMaker

Narratives

Captures micro-narratives from participants. Analyses systemic change patterns.

[Sensemaker App](#)

Your Living Lab Toolkit

Resources ready to download and apply

Guides and Manuals

ENoLL Living Lab Methodology Handbook → enoll.org



Nesta DIY Toolkit → diytoolkit.org



IDEO Human-Centered Design Kit → designkit.org



U-Lab (MIT) free MOOC → u-lab.mit.edu



Your Living Lab Toolkit

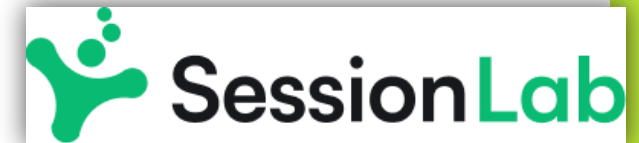
Resources ready to download and apply

Facilitation

Liberating Structures App ➞ liberatingstructures.com



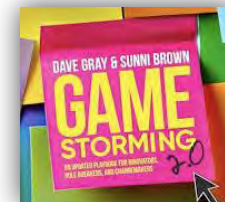
SessionLab (workshop planner) ➞ sessionlab.com



Hyper Island Toolbox ➞ toolbox.hyperisland.com



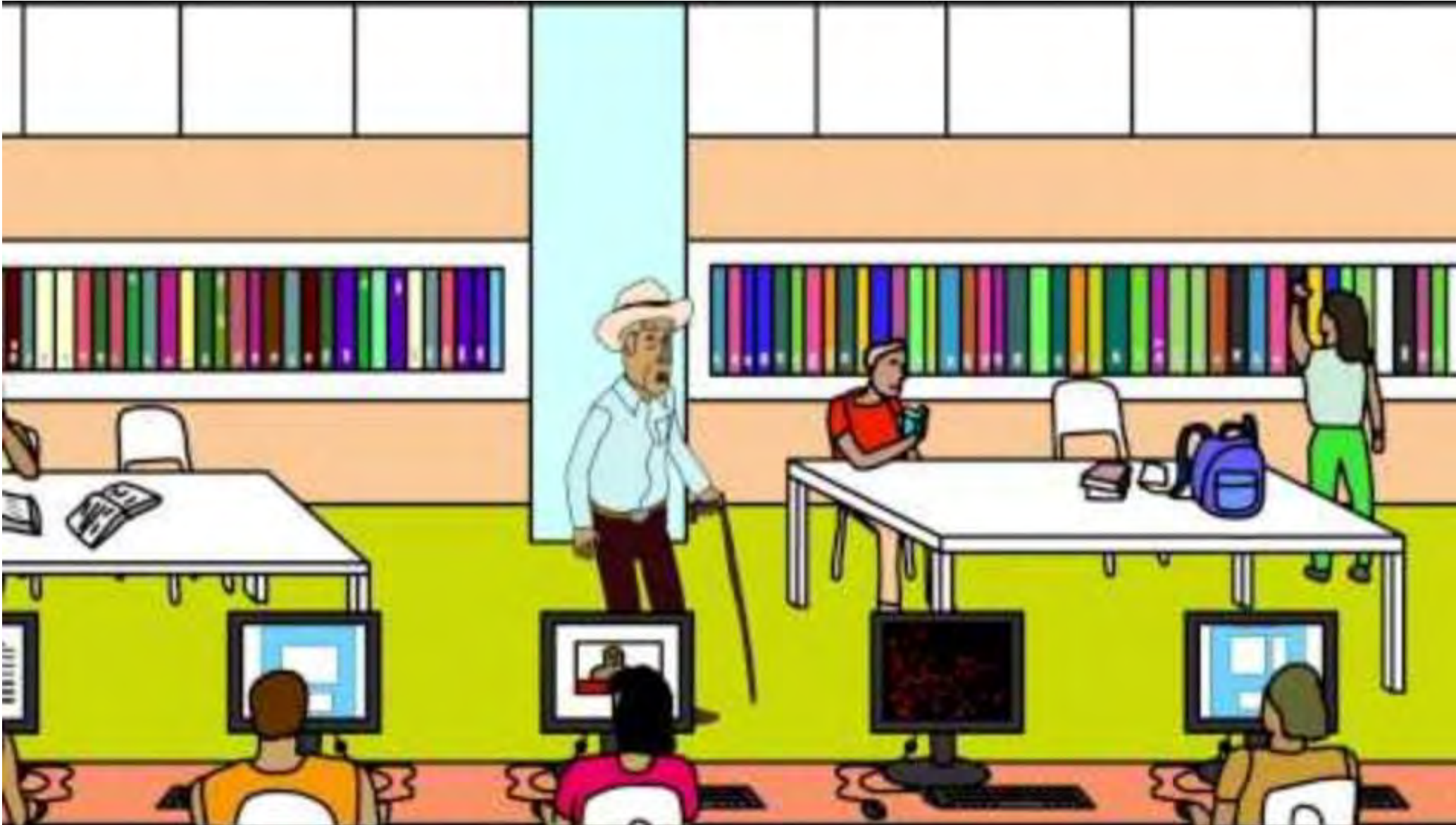
Gamestorming ➞ gamestorming.com





A city that transformed
from within, from the
worst to the best!

Medellín: when citizens influence and work for true change





SHORT FINAL ASSESSMENT

MODULE 3

Establishing, animating and overseeing a Living Lab for the green and circular transition

10 questions • 40 points • Suggested time: 20–25 minutes

Questions 1–6: select one best answer. Questions 7–10: answer briefly.

Suggested pass mark: 28/40 (70%).

Question 1

core concepts

Which definition best describes a Living Lab?

A. A controlled research laboratory

B. A user-centred open innovation ecosystem where stakeholders co-create and test solutions in real-life settings

C. A consultation exercise conducted after a solution is designed

D. A temporary policy-writing committee

Question 2

core concepts

Which three elements are central to a Living Lab?

A. Funding, regulation and technology

B. Real-life context, multi-stakeholder participation and iterative experimentation

C. Planning, procurement and reporting

D. Research, communication and dissemination

Question 3

core concepts

Which groups form the Quadruple Helix used in the course?

A. Citizens/users, academia, private sector and public sector

B. Citizens, banks, media and suppliers

C. Public sector, consultants, auditors and investors

D. Academia, regulators, media and courts

Question 4

core concepts

Which sequence best represents the Living Lab lifecycle?

A. Establish → Animate → Oversee

B. Research → Procure → Standardise

C. Plan → Control → Close

D. Design → Sell → Report

Question 5

core concepts

What is the role of end-users in a genuine Living Lab?

A. Receive the final solution

B. Provide data only

C. Act as co-creators throughout ideation, testing and evaluation

D. Participate only in the final evaluation

Question 6

core concepts

Why is the Living Lab process iterative?

A. Because plans should never be documented

B. Because testing generates feedback and learning that can change the solution and lead to further experimentation

C. Because stakeholders should change after every activity

D. Because evaluation is optional

Question 7

lifecycle

Give ONE key action for each Living Lab phase: Establish, Animate and Oversee.

ESTABLISH — _____

ANIMATE — _____

OVERSEE — _____

Question 8

co-creation

**A team designs a solution first and only then asks citizens whether they like it.
What is wrong with this approach?**

Explain your answer using the course concept of co-creation.

Question 9

monitoring

Give TWO indicators for monitoring a Living Lab pilot.

1 process/formative indicator: _____

1 outcome/summative indicator: _____

Briefly explain what each indicator tells you.

Question 10

scenario

Mini Living Lab Design Challenge

A neighbourhood wants to reduce food waste and increase reuse of materials.

Propose TWO stakeholders and their contributions; ONE real-life co-creation/test activity; and ONE way feedback would improve the pilot.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
PARTICIPATION!**

GREEN LABS PROJECT

The GREEN LABS project aims to support and stimulate the green transition by promoting innovation and greening of VET systems through internationalization, exchange of practices, and knowledge sharing among partners, in accordance with the Osnabrück Declaration of 2020 on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience.

