Urban Living Labs
The seeding places to transform?

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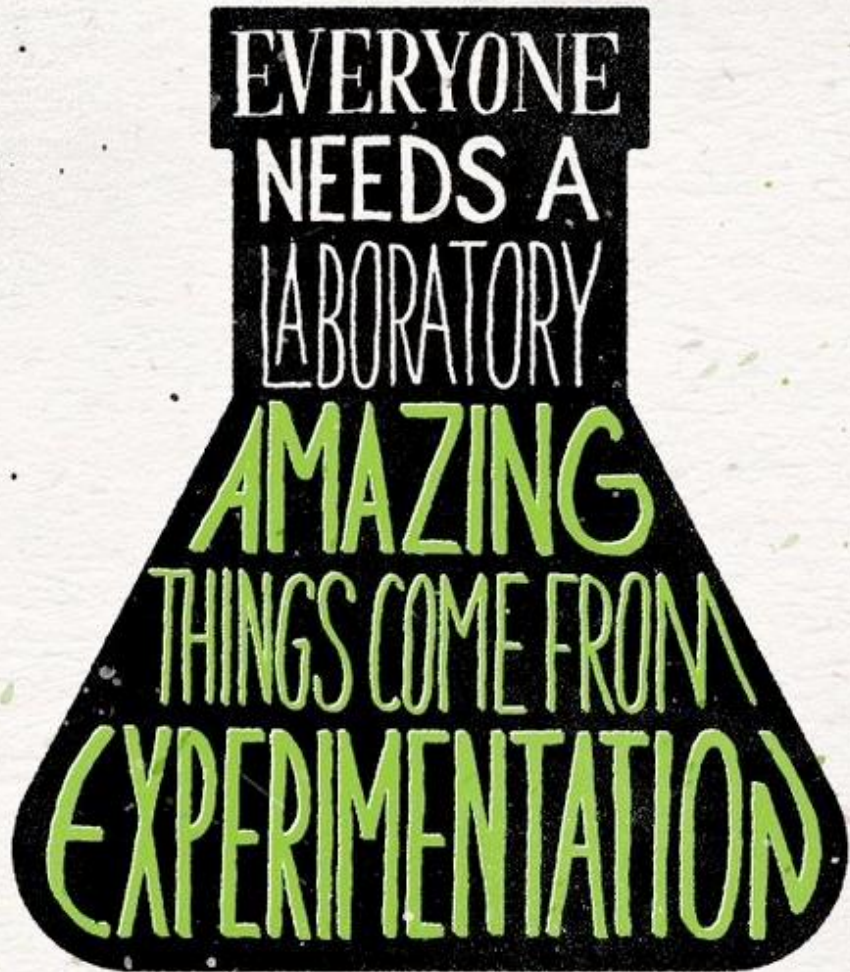**Rotterdam, Sept. 14th 2017**

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To transform … with a lab?

"Social innovation alone is not enough: we need transformative change to make a difference."

Avelino et al. (2017) *A Manifesto for Transformative Social Innovation*

"Transformative potential of *Urban Living Labs* will be realised by applying their lessons to places, organisations and policies."

Evans, J. (2017) *Urban Living Labs: Learning to transform*

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Urban Living Labs?

"Sites in cities devised to design, test and learn from social and technical innovation in real world settings."

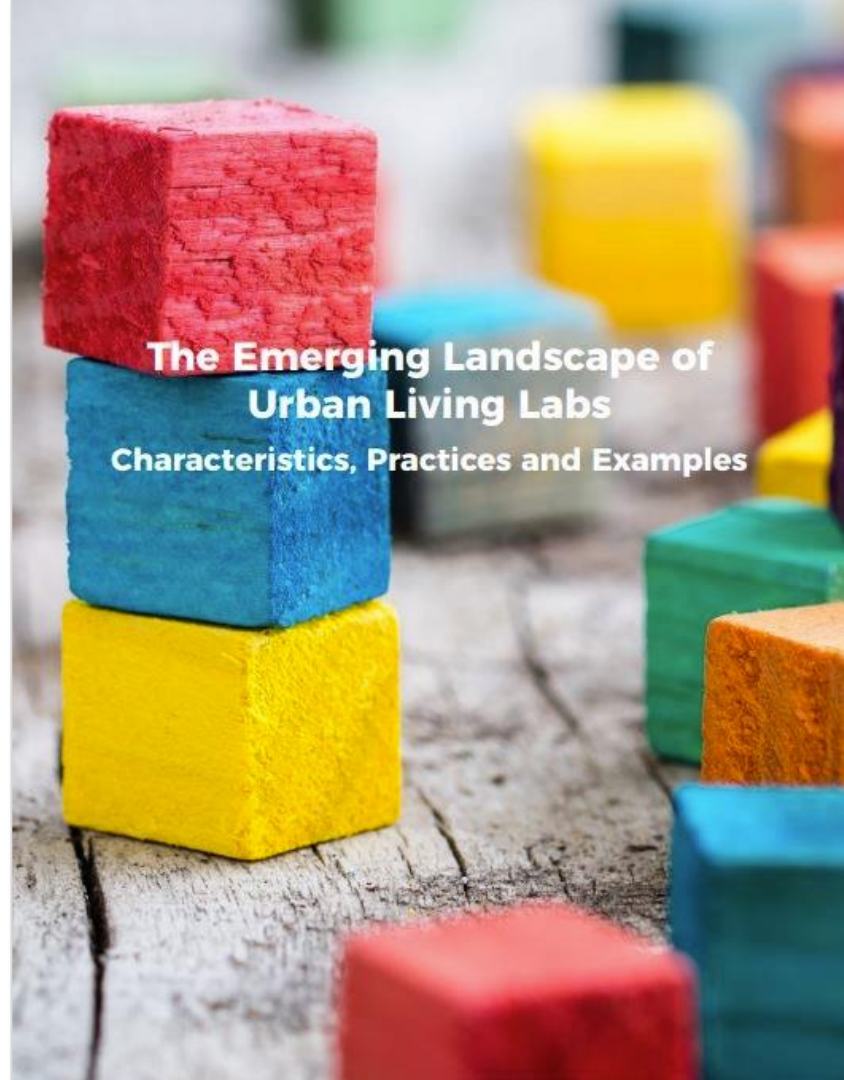Geographical embeddedness | Experimentation & learning | Participation & user involvement | Leadership & ownership

Voytenko, Y., McCormick, K., Evans, J., & Schliwa, G. (2016). Urban living labs for sustainability and low carbon cities in Europe: Towards a research agenda. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 123, 45-54.
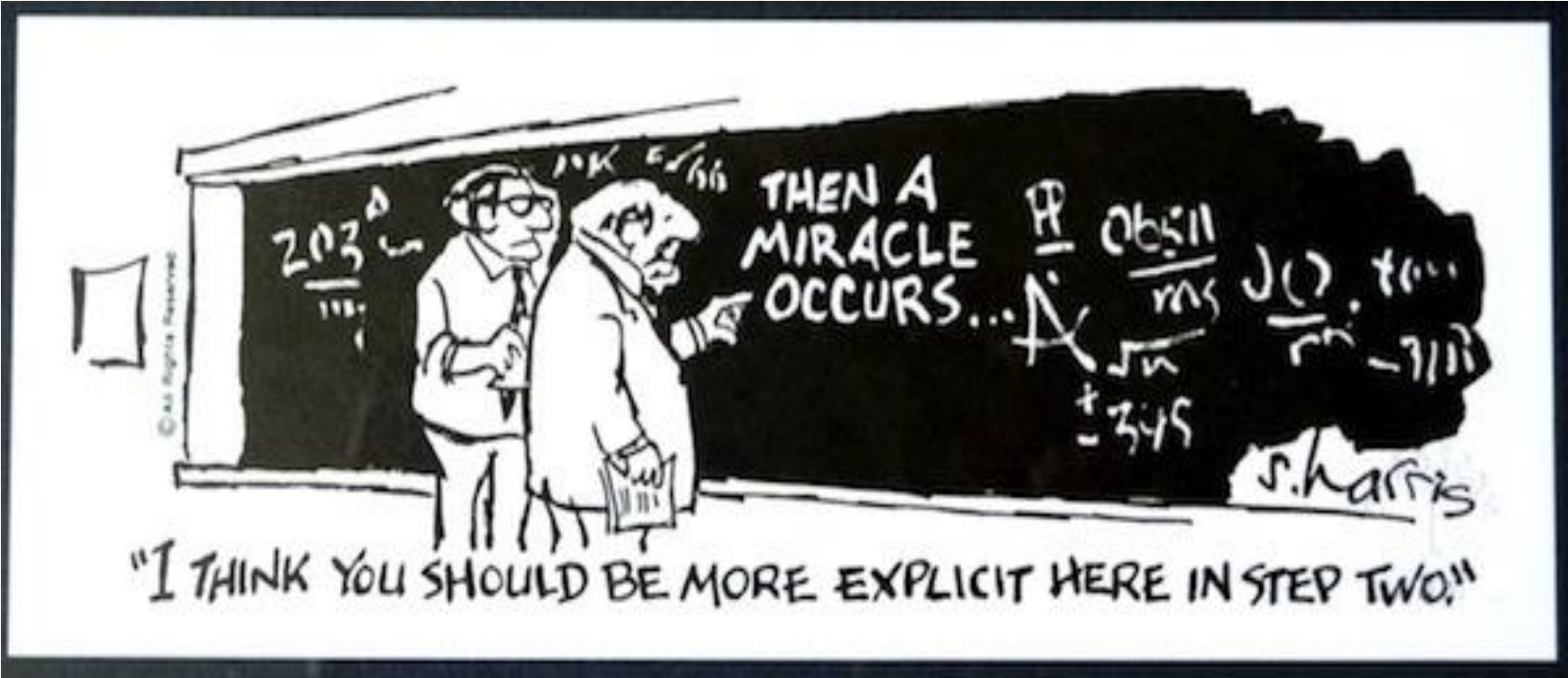
Background

Examine the governance of sustainability transitions through *urban living labs (ULL)*.

- **Design**: research on the ways in which ULL are designed across different urban contexts.

- **Practices**: research on how, by whom and with what impact ULL are put into practice.

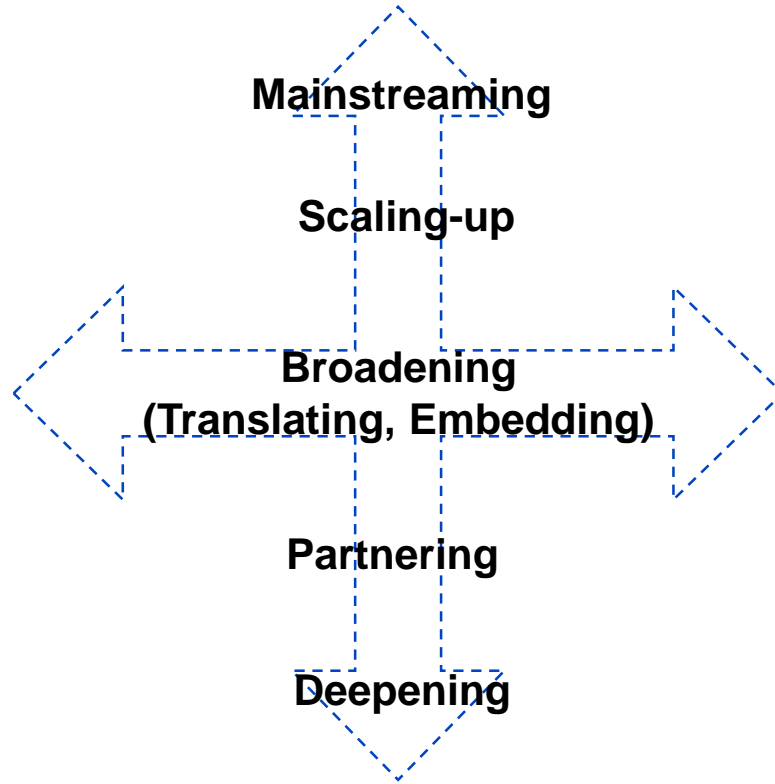- **Processes**: research on the processes through which ULL create a broader impact.

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The Emerging Landscape of Urban Living Labs
Characteristics, Practices and Examples

The challenge to create change

"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

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Processes

Transformation of societal structures ("Regime changes")

Mainstreaming

Scaling-up

Replication of innovative projects in a different context.

Broadening (Translating, Embedding)

Connect and integrate with other projects, actors, actively embedd in city networks, spatial context.

Partnering

Deepening

Detailed experimenting and learning with new socio-technical configurations and social innovations.

Based on work by van den Bosch, 2011; Gorissen et al. 2017

Diffusion strategies from ULL

- Embedding, Translating, Scaling

- 4 in-depth ULL case analyses (NL/SWE).

- Observed ULL strategies to spread out.

- Exemplary practices to implement.

Strategies	Embedding		Translating		Scaling	
	Transformative place making	**Activating network partners**	**Replication of lab structure**	**Education and training**	**Stimulating entrepreneurial growth**	**Narratives of acceleration**
Exemplary Practices	• Integrating lab in press tours of city marketing agency; providing space for local sustainability initiatives and community meetings. • Create social incentives by allocating resource savings from lab experiments to local infrastructure (e.g. a school building)	• Actively demonstrating lab effects on social integration, knowledge exchange and creative city-making to the city administration and further partners. • Practicing new local collaboration between STPLN, Malmö University and the waste water utility, for implementing upcycling stations.	• Establishing an international learning network on how to replicate Blue Economy Experiments in ULL elsewhere. • Observational visits and "how to do it" meetings have initiated Spin-offs of bicycle kitchen in other Swedish cities and other countries.	• Implementing Lab studies in educational curricula of local knowledge institutions. • Training of coordinators to set up and run "co-labs"; collaborative spin-offs that replicate one of the lab innovations under university supervision.	• Supporting business models of circular economy start-ups. Flexible growth in container units and other decentralized locations. • Active partnering with European business accelerator initiative to identify and upscale profitable business models.	• Continuously produce and discuss stories about alternative futures in line with the goals of the Ull • Conducting a series of community meetings and setting the Lab activities into a "bigger narrative".
ULL	Blue City Lab 010, Concept House Lab Malmo Innovation Platform	Malmo Innovation Platform, Stpln Lab	Blue City Lab 010, Stpln Lab	Blue City Lab 010, Concept House Lab, Malmo Innovation Platform	Blue City Lab 010, Concept House Lab,	Blue City Lab 010, Concept House Lab, Stpln Lab
Exemplary quotes	*"Part of the concept is that we do everything in this iconic building. That helped these companies to be on the radar, which also helps them finding investors and clients to grow."* **BlueCity Lab, Lab founder**	*"Another spin off from STPLN is the upcycling station (...), which is now developed in a new collaboration between STPLN, Malmö University and the water utility VASYD."* **Stpln Lab, Lab Designer & Senior Researcher**	*"The STPLN organizational model is easy to be transferred to any geographical context, if there is an interest of actors, supporting infrastructure and access to initial funding."* **Stpln Lab, Lab Designer & Senior Researcher**	*"In all our building related programs at the University of Applied Science, active work of students in the ULL is a regular part of the curriculum."* **Concept House Village Lab, Academic initiator / Lab manager**	*"For impact you need scale and for scale, you need a solid business model. So we really try to be an incubator that focuses on scale."* **BlueCity Lab, Lab founder**	*"(...) the habit of a radical story-telling culture to continuously produce and discuss stories about alternative futures is a means to achieve these forms of more active participation."* **Malmö Innovation Platform, Lab initiator, Senior Researcher**

Strategies of Living Labs to transform ("Embedding")

- Establishing ULL as part of a new place identity, labs as symbolic sites of change in the city.

- Creating visibility and narratives of sustainability and innovation in an iconic building.

> *"The spread would be through both the building and also the economic idea. The space itself, it's part of the transformation."*

> *"Part of the concept is that we do everything in this iconic building. That helped these companies to be on the radar, which also helps them finding investors and clients."*

Strategies of Living Labs to transform ("Translating")

- Integrating lab based education into the curricula of local knowledge institutions.

- Training of coordinators to replicate the lab itself or one of the lab innovations as a spin-off in other contexts

"First, second, third and fourth year students are every year engaged in this project. I think there is a very beautiful and successful curriculum design now."

"The impact on education was good, for instance, in all our University of Applied Science programs on building technologies, it is now a regular part of the bachelor curriculum. "

Strategies of Living Labs to transform ("Scaling")

- Scaling in the form of entrepreneurial growth beyond the boundaries of the Lab.

- Generate and discuss narratives of accelerating towards alternative futures. Setting the lab activities into a "bigger picture".

"First, we are going to grow in containers. And then we will grow together with other entrepreneurs. That would not be exactly BlueCity Lab but some new form of collaboration again."

"They will scale up elsewhere and maybe triple or quadruple their production and still stay in BlueCity with their office and for demonstration and a bit of lab and experiment."

Reflections – ULL: places to transform?

- ULL do not necessarily aim at transformative change on larger scale and often do not provide the resources for scaling/replicating.

- Scaling is not always perceived as something that should be achieved – grassroots often prefer small and local.

- Impact of ULL is hard to assess in real time – seeds of change might eventually lead to transformation. New ways of capturing *mainstreaming* needed.

Reflections – ULL: places to transform?

- From user driven technology optimization to social transformation.

- Avoiding *"LabWashing"* – Instead: enabling learning with open outcomes.

- Reconsider understanding of success / <u>failure</u>

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