

## LIVING LAB XCHANGE

## CONTINUITY OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING LABS

## WHY

NWO, Topsector Logistics and TKI Dinalog have set-up sustainable living labs in 2020 with the intention of lasting eco-systems where fundamental and applied research are combined with experimental solutions. The ambition is therefore that the living lab communities will continue their work after the formal timing agreed with NWO. The living labs should become an important part of the research infrastructure for the logistics sector in the years to come.

## Ecosystem

The ecosystem of the living labs consists of research institutes, industry partners and sometimes also government. The partners of the living labs should be able to see the value of working together in this setting. On the one hand new concepts and ideas should reach the industry or government and realise value. The other way around should also be true, government and industry can raise issues and barriers they experience, but also provide data and insights for the research institutes.

## WHAT

The challenge for the sustainable living labs is to achieve continuity in their ecosystem. They need to find a way to keep the partners involved and realise a program of activities where research is meeting business practice. This means that the living lab is not only a funded research project, but an entity in itself, able to address new research topics and questions and make new knowledge applicable in everyday business practice.

## HOW

Continuity of the living lab ecosystem requires that there is a solid organisation. Not only the organisation of the research itself or the field labs is important. It is equally important to look at the connection between the partners within the ecosystem and to other living labs. The interaction between research and industry needs to be organised within the ecosystem as a continuous process. Continuity in research can be secured by addressing research questions in a timely manner and match with additional required funding. So the link with potential contributors is an important link. The industry partners will only participate if they see potential value for their own business, keeping in mind that investing in research is not always possible for companies in the logistics sector. The challenge here is to find a 'business' model for industry participation.



## AUTHOR

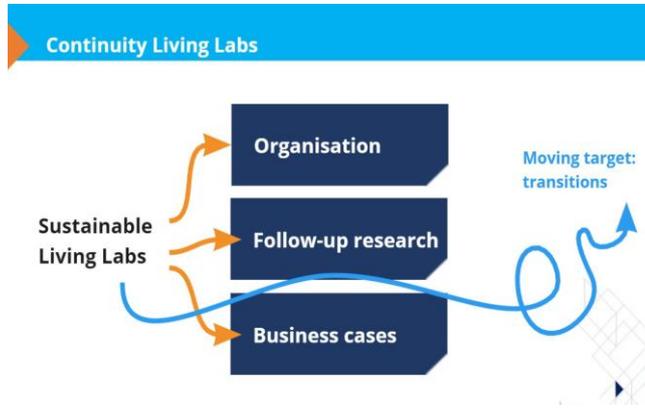
Bas van Bree, TKI Dinalog  
bree@dinalog.nl



**TKI DINALOG**  
Dutch Institute for Advanced Logistics

**RESULT**

During the Living Lab XChange on January 19th 2021, experience and insights were shared between partners within the existing living labs. The following summarises the suggestions/ ideas to achieve continuity within a living lab, with focus on the organisation itself, the research agenda and business value.



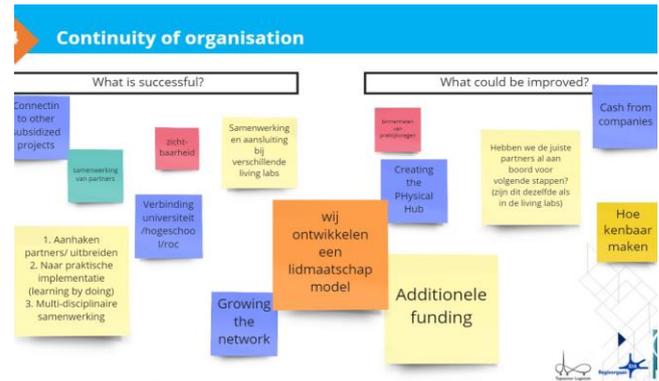
Different strategies for continuity – Miro breakout session XChange

**Organisation**

- It is important to define roles within the consortium, so that it is clear who is responsible for the management of the living lab.
- It is valuable to invest in the connection between research institutes on all levels (WO/HBO/ MBO) and to other living labs
- Partners need to realise that the organisation itself with focus on continuity takes time. This is somewhat different from a 'traditional' research project.
- The management coordination of a living lab might be funded by introducing a subscription model, otherwise management needs to be part of each research proposal, which makes it uncertain over longer period of time.
- The living lab needs to be open for new 'members', because every new topic might require new expertise.

**Research**

- Some living labs start with a clear predefined set of research questions which are addressed by the researchers. This makes it difficult to take up new directions for research.
- On the other hand, researchers also need to keep in mind that they are working towards publications. Flexibility in terms of taking up new research questions makes this challenging.
- Living labs are also looking for structural funding for research and commitment from funding agencies to ensure a continuous program.



Example of solutions - Miro board breakout session Xchange

**Business value**

- Industry partners need to recognise the research to be connected to their actual problems. Researchers need to be aware of these issues so that they keep the value and opportunities for validation in mind.
- Companies and governments are willing to invest, but in many cases large amounts of money are not available. It helps if in kind contribution can be used to attract additional funding.
- Intermediate results of research and experiments need to be shared with the potential end user to show progress.
- The value for business does not only concern the research, but also meeting other companies and getting insights in trends and developments affecting their business.

**TAKE AWAYS**

- Have an inspiring start with your community
- Commit to a shared vision
- Connect your researchers to a practical problem at the industry partners - see and feel what is going on
- Think about the living lab as a self supporting entity
- Connect to your environment - funding agencies, policy makers, other living labs
- Learn by doing - mistakes lead to valuable insights

**CONCLUSION**

A living lab approach is not new, but it turns out to be still quite difficult to think outside the (funded) project scope. Building up an ecosystem takes time. Funding should provide for this time and effort. The connection between research and industry/ government (end users) is very valuable. Still the objectives can be very different. The existing living labs seem to be growing in number of participants, by adding new research questions, assigning students, and thus providing new insights.

The research programme Sustainable Living Labs is co-financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Taskforce for Applied Research (SIA) and the Top Sector Logistics and the programme is monitored regarding progress and development by TM DIALOG.

