

CULTURALITY

CULTURAL HERITAGE IN RURAL
REMOTE AREAS FOR CREATIVE
TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE for the Development of *Living Labs* in the *Culturality* Project



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METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE for the Development of *Living Labs* in the *Culturality* Project

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WHAT IS A LIVING LAB?

The Living Labs within the Culturality project are spaces where people from diverse backgrounds come together to collaborate, explore and learn collectively. Participants may differ in age, profession, experience, origin, education or gender, and work together to address ideas or complex problems through processes of experimentation and prototyping.

Participants are organised into interdisciplinary teams made up of one lead participant and several collaborators. The host organisation of the lab provides these teams with coordination, mediation, mentoring and guidance for documentation.



WHO PARTICIPATES AND HOW? ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles of the coordination, mediation
and mentoring teams

- **Coordination:** the coordinator should be involved throughout the entire process and maintain an overall understanding of it. They should understand how the lab operates, anticipate needs, plan resources, and organise both their team and the activities to be carried out.

- **Mediation:** the person responsible should be able to manage the internal dynamics of the lab in order to foster a collaborative ecosystem that extends beyond the project itself, including the prototyping phase. Mediation is understood as a key tool for helping to “depersonalise” the ideas of the lead participants and transform them into something collective. The mediator should explain the purpose and objectives of the process not only at the beginning, but also reinforce them in each session, while also resolving conflicts and supporting and caring for everyone involved in the process.
- **Mentoring:** the person responsible contributes their expertise and specialised knowledge. They provide guidance on technical, theoretical, ethical or philosophical matters, as well as on procedural issues, offering support to teams when they encounter specific problems. They also help overcome creative blocks or situations of excessive dispersion by providing an external perspective that supports decision-making on when to move forward or step back in the process.
- **Documentarian:** the documentarian is responsible for coordinating and ensuring that documentation is carried out properly. To do so, they record the process in a clear and continuous manner from the outset. They support and verify that the teams are also documenting their work appropriately, while providing an external perspective on the process by acting as an observer or participant-observer. They are also responsible for organising and systematising the information generated throughout the project.

Roles of the participant teams

There are two forms of participation:

1. As a lead participant

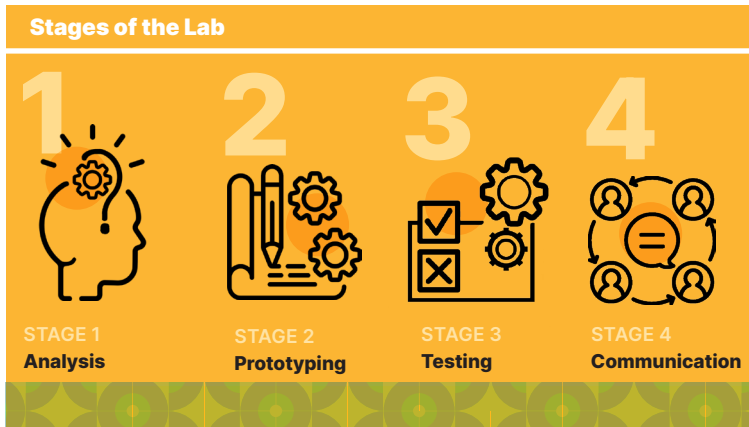
This is the person who proposes the idea from which the prototyping process will begin. They will take part throughout the lab, developing their idea together with the collaborators and accepting any new proposals or changes agreed collectively.

2. As a collaborator

This person joins one of the working teams developing the prototypes. They participate throughout the duration of the lab and, through their experience, training or skills, enrich the process by contributing ideas and different perspectives.

Two separate open calls are organised for the submission of ideas and the recruitment of collaborators:

- An initial open call aimed at those wishing to propose ideas. Participants present issues or challenges they would like to address. The lab team then selects those considered most relevant and feasible, taking into account criteria such as scalability, openness and transformative potential.
- Once the list of selected ideas has been published, a second open call is launched for collaborators. This call is open both to people who believe their skills or experience could contribute to the development of the proposals, and to those who simply wish to take part in the process because they find the idea engaging, inspiring or challenging.



The aim is to create teams of “strangers”. The fact that profiles appear to match from the outset is not always a priority; indeed, too much homogeneity within a team can lead to an overly rigid and less disruptive process. Diversity is often a greater guarantee of innovation than excessive specialisation.

Technical mentors or external experts

The role of the specialised mentor is independent from the coordination team. Once the ideas have been selected, a list of external specialists can be drawn up in order to anticipate and respond to any specific technical needs that may arise. Their participation is limited to a few hours, during which they work with the teams to help resolve particular issues.

Example:

If an idea requires the development of a mobile application and the working group does not include members with IT expertise,

a professional with the relevant skills should be brought in to contribute to the development of the prototype on a temporary basis (preferably with an hourly budget agreed in advance).

STAGES OF THE LAB. PHASES OF THE LIVING LAB

Once the teams have been formed through the open calls for ideas and collaborators, the workflow within the lab should be organised into four phases, which are outlined and described below:

Defining the problem

An idea is put under pressure in order to explore its potential and, through a collaborative and immersive research process, possible developments are examined. Faced with a specific problem, the aim is to find targeted solutions. An individual (or a group) proposes an idea that responds to a particular need. This idea is then shared with others who bring different forms of knowledge, backgrounds and interests. It is questioned, broken down, reconstructed and may evolve into a different approach, while still deriving from the original concept. It is the working group, within the specific setting of the lab, that tests the multiple possible solutions to the problem being addressed.

Prototyping

Ideas are turned into a prototype: a rapid, low-cost and small-scale test. Through experimentation (based on trial and error)

the characteristics of a product, service, device, organisation, methodology or practice are defined within a fluid environment of shared knowledge. The aim of prototyping is to create a partial representation, in the form of an object or procedure, that is sufficiently developed and concrete to be tested, evaluated and refined.

And what can be prototyped? Practically anything can be prototyped: objects, infrastructures, devices, services, organisations, practices, processes or methodologies. The only requirement is that they can be developed as scalable processes or objects within a limited timeframe and space (the lab).

Testing

Prototypes are then validated. It is necessary to assess whether they can be put into practice, whether they make sense, whether they are viable, functional and scalable, and whether they respond to the need for which they were conceived. They should be validated with the group, community, space or audience for whom they are intended.

This process makes it possible to listen to potential users, identify problems or shortcomings, and resolve them quickly by incorporating the concerns and feedback of those affected by the challenge being addressed. All of this helps to avoid unnecessary effort and costs.

Prototypes are developed at a small scale precisely in order to anticipate potential impacts should difficulties arise. For

this reason, prototyping is always beneficial: if it works, it can be replicated; and if it does not, valuable time, money and complications will have been avoided.

This workflow is designed to allow teams to step back at any point, return to the problem-definition phase and begin prototyping again.

Communication

Finally, if we are talking about the collaborative production of knowledge, that knowledge must necessarily be accessible, open and understandable to different kinds of audiences. In this way, anyone will be able to reproduce and replicate the process.

In the case of ideas that, by agreement within each team, are intended to be patented or developed into market products, it is also essential to know how to communicate and position them effectively.

The challenge, therefore, lies in being able to communicate the results of the prototype (both positive and negative) to different audiences and potential users. This matters because innovation is not simply about showcasing success or presenting a one-sided view of what innovation means: innovation also involves making mistakes many times until, through those lessons, a pioneering design, a revolutionary product, a technological breakthrough or a disruptive idea finally emerges.

Important note: The lab should include a dedicated physical space for wellbeing and support, referred to as the “**care space**”. In a

context where a considerable number of people, who do not know each other, are required to collaborate and coexist intensively for several hours within a more or less confined environment, situations of stress are inevitable.

For this reason, it is essential to pay attention to emotional wellbeing throughout the entire process, taking into account the diversity of personalities, rhythms and ways of interacting and communicating. The “care space” plays a key role in easing any tensions that may arise. It is a quiet area, separate from the rest of the activities and dedicated exclusively to this purpose, where participants can sit for a while and have a coffee or tea; in short, disconnect and recharge. Any participant may use this space during the lab sessions and, if they wish, receive support from the coordination team.

The prototyping workshop should conclude with an event open to the public, providing an opportunity to share the results achieved. The event may end with a collective celebration, for which it is recommended to allocate part of the overall budget.

CROSS-CUTTING DOCUMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Documentation is a **cross-cutting and continuous activity** that should take place **throughout the entire project process**, and not only at the end. Its purpose is to record, in a clear and systematic way, how the lab develops, what decisions are made, who participates, according to which criteria, and what kinds of learning

emerge throughout the process. Documentation is essential both for internal evaluation and for the future improvement and possible replication of the model.

Documentation is understood as **part of the experimentation process itself**, rather than as a task carried out afterwards. Value is given not only to the results, but also to the interactions, decisions and tensions that emerge during the development of the lab.

The use of tools such as the Lab Cube encourages **reflection within the teams** themselves, while the perspective of the documentarian provides an external layer of analysis. The combination of internal records and external observations allows for a situated reading that is consistent with real contexts and with the collective learning approach characteristic of Living Labs.

Basic documentation tools

- **Workbook (analogue or digital)**

A tool used directly by the documentarian. It serves to record field observations, group dynamics, incidents, informal decisions and reflections throughout the entire process.

- **Record of agreements at the end of each session (brief minutes))**

A brief document produced at the end of each session, recording the agreements reached, the decisions taken and the next steps. It may be prepared collaboratively, but its correct completion should be supervised by the documentarian.

- **Lab Cube documentation device for the laboratory (see appendix)**

A tool used by the participant teams to document their own working process phase by phase.

The documentarian **does not document on behalf of the teams**, but is responsible for explaining how the device works, answering questions, ensuring that all teams are using it, and verifying that every phase of the process is properly documented.

The final documentation of the project results from the combination of the material produced by the teams through the Lab Cube and the records and observations made by the documentarian.

WHAT IS THE LAB CUBE?

It is a documentation and reflection device that accompanies the entire lab process.

It is not a final output or an evaluation tool, but rather a living working tool:

- things are written down, drawn, crossed out and revisited,
- work is carried out in phases,
- it allows for contradictions, changes of direction and reformulations.

Documentation forms part of the experimental process itself; it is not something done only at the end.

General guidelines for use:

- It is not necessary to complete every side in full.
- Responses are provisional and may change.
- Previous sides can be revisited whenever necessary.
- There are no right or wrong answers.



Face 1 · Team

It serves to establish the starting point: the idea as it currently stands and the team supporting it. This face makes it possible to identify the people involved and analyse their profiles, particularly their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the idea. It also helps determine the technical, methodological or support needs the team may have, identifying both the resources already in place and those that may still be missing.

Face 2 · Problem Definition

This face functions as the team's strategic compass.

Its purpose is not only to analyse the idea, but also to guide possible directions for development based on the team's actual starting point.

It allows the team to position itself at a central point, representing

the here and now of both the team and the idea, and to observe which elements come from the past and shape the idea, which future scenarios present challenges and opportunities, and which factors are more or less open to influence.

The whole should be understood as a tool for orientation rather than a fixed checklist. Lines should be drawn across it as possible pathways or routes that the project could follow.

This face helps visualise which directions are worth pursuing, which should be strengthened, and which require caution.

The use of colour coding is recommended so that the result remains clear and does not become a confusing diagram. When developed carefully, this face becomes a genuine compass for the process.

Face 3 · Reframing

It serves to reformulate the idea on the basis of what has been learned during the problem-definition phase.

Face 4 · Prototyping

This face is intended to move from reflection to action. The prototype must be viable, scalable and capable of being tested during the lab. If it is not, then it cannot be considered a prototype.

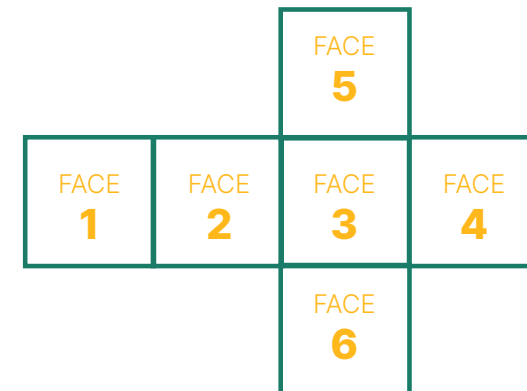
Face 5 · Testing

This face is designed to bring the prototype into contact with reality. It makes it possible to verify its validity and assess whether the idea is feasible, scalable or sustainable.

Face 6 · Communication

This face is intended to translate the process and the proposal for different audiences.

Manufacturing the cube



Lab Cube.

