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Urban Living Lab for Local Regeneration

Beyond Participation in Large-scale
Social Housing Estates

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Abbreviations

ENoLL	European Network of Living Labs
ENSUF	ERA-NET Smart Urban Futures
ESF	European Social Fund
ULL	Urban Living Lab(s)
PRASS	Plan régional d'affectation du sol
SHP	Social housing provider

Chapter 1
Introduction: Framing Living Labs in Large-Scale Social Housing Estates in Europe

Nele Aernouts, Francesca Cognetti, and Elena Maranghi

Abstract Today, Living Labs are increasingly promoted as innovative tools to deal with urban regeneration in Europe. In this contribution, we look at their potential in the context of the regeneration of large-scale social housing estates. Starting from the results of the research project SoHoLab (2017–2020) and building on the contributions of this book, we identify Living Labs as practices that are at the margin of key regeneration processes and actors but that nonetheless play an important, enabling role in triggering a more broadly supported approach to regeneration. We use the metaphor of the 'interstice' to identify Living Labs' role of mediating across different social, institutional, disciplinary, departmental, and policy realms. Nevertheless, caution is warranted. Living Labs should not be considered *the* approach towards the urban regeneration of marginalized areas; their potential lies precisely in their hybrid and constantly transforming character. In order to steer regeneration practices and policies that are actually more inclusive, they should be accompanied by a critical and self-reflexive research attitude.

Keywords Living labs · Large-scale social housing estates · Interstice

1.1 Why Opt for a Living Lab Approach in Large-Scale Social Housing Estates?

In the often-cited *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning*, authors Rittel and Webber (1973) highlight the so-called wicked problems in an increasingly differentiated and pluralistic society, which cannot be tackled trough 'optimal solutions' by planners, not even through 'solutions'. According to them, 'social problems are never

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solved. At best they are only re-solved—over and over again'. The most ambitious thing planners have left to do, they state, is 'to improve some characteristics of the world where people live'. These lines of thought immediately bring us to some challenges encountered in general theories of spatial planning regarding the regeneration of large-scale social housing estates.

The regeneration of large-scale social housing estates and the potential for mobilizing local knowledge and actors have received great attention in planning debates. In general, consensus exists on the need and importance of the involvement of inhabitants and other local stakeholders in planning processes. Nevertheless, doubts have been cast on the actual possibility of such involvement. France has probably the longest tradition of planning policies specifically focused on large-scale social housing estates. The *politique de la ville* has made the involvement of inhabitants one of its core principles for the rehabilitation of these neighbourhoods. According to studies on regeneration processes in this context (Donzelot 2013; Epstein 2014), one of the greatest obstacles to participation is the reluctance or inability of institutions and local politicians to share power with local lay people. Even if local people are well organized, they often remain 'on the margins of power' in participatory programmes (Carrel 2013; Van Beckhoven et al. 2005, p. 236). In that case, participation risks becoming a token, facilitating the approval of plans. Another frequently mentioned criticism is the difficulty of reaching a diversity of inhabitants in a de facto socially mixed population. It proves hard to include less-heard voices or to fully grasp points of view planners are not necessarily familiar with. This is related to the very nature of planning processes, which often fail to go beyond plans; quantitative data; and rational speech to include other types of expression, skills, and knowledge (Sandercock 2019). Finally, participation has been increasingly replaced by notions such as social activation and innovation, in which policymakers expect a more active and direct role of citizens in the transformation of their own environment (Cognetti, this volume). Such notions should be looked at with some suspicion in the case of large-scale social housing estates, where tenants often already deal with not feeling understood or heard, and where they often have been framed as passive recipients of urban welfare (Flint 2004). These different criticisms and sensibilities, which are in line with the very nature of politics and democracy, have made some authors speak of 'impossible participation' (Warin 1995).

Intertwined with these criticisms, theories of planning have been developed and promoted in relationship to the regeneration of large-scale social housing estates. For instance, Hall and Rowlands (2005) put forward the collaborative planning model by Healey (1997), who paid strong attention to the acquisition of various forms of knowledge through interdisciplinary research, to the relationship-building between inhabitants and other actors in the planning process, and to bridging policy domains. This model has been criticized for its focus on consensus and loose attention to power dimensions within planning processes. Arguably, this criticism might be more related to the fact that the complexity of the model wasn't fully captured. Nevertheless, over time new models have been created that instead rely on self-organized or antagonistic stances to planning (Aernouts et al. 2020b). Surely, the politicization of subjects through the development of counter-hegemonic narratives sounds more empowering

than a focus on consensus-building. However, self-organization or political formation might not always be evident in places where people are often struggling to make ends meet or where they have little confidence that their neighbourhood will actually improve. More generally, these 'ideal types' of planning have not necessarily made it to the table of policymakers or to daily practices of regeneration.

Hence, rather than starting from universal models of planning, in this book, we engage with experiential and reflexive ways of learning and engaging with planning in such spaces. By taking a Living Lab approach to urban regeneration in high-rise estates, we value cautious and modest interventions that can positively inform planning processes in these areas and hopefully induce change with regard to which subjects are heard and seen.

1.2   The Context of This Book

This book and its attempt to identify the potential of Living Lab approaches in large-scale social housing estates arose from the research project 'The regeneration of large-scale social housing estates through Living Labs' (SoHoLab). In this project, research units from the cities of Brussels (Belgium), Milan (Italy), and Paris (France) each focused on a particular case study to examine how regeneration processes in large-scale social housing estates could be better attuned to the needs and concerns of local inhabitants and organizations. While 'better' in this sentence related to the actual belief that improvement is possible in highly institutionalized planning processes, the research aim was deliberately left open, as we were interested in various forms of involvement—from direct participation in planning processes to more indirect forms of knowledge acquisition—and in different methods of establishing these forms. In this process, we wanted to understand how we could more effectively open up the policy design and implementation phases, especially for local inhabitants of social housing estates. As such, we were close to 'action research' and 'engaged planning research', where planners are highly intentional about their interest and the kind of change they wish to promote. This implies being aware of the web of social relationships in the world we acted within, and thus of the challenges such change entails.

In order to comply with this objective, the research units first developed an analysis of the existing planning contexts (Aernouts et al. 2020a) and a review of the most relevant methodological tools related to the Urban Living Lab approach and participatory approaches that have been applied to large-scale social housing estates (Aernouts et al. 2020b; Lefrançois 2021). These explorations went hand in hand with a study and activities in a Living Lab in each case, where each case was in a different stage. The three cases were all large-scale social housing estates but were embedded in different national contexts in terms of welfare and planning systems. This offered a threefold demonstration of the possible employment of Living Labs.

The first Living Lab was built on the existing experience of the university lab Mapping San Siro. The San Siro neighbourhood is one of the largest public housing

neighbourhoods of the city of Milan. It is not only characterized by a general lack of public intervention and investment but also by a wide spread of bottom-up initiatives promoted by local networks and inhabitants. Founded in 2013, Mapping San Siro was initiated with the aim of working within and together with the neighbourhood of San Siro in order to produce an experience based on knowledge-sharing between academia and civil society. This would be able to generate new representations of the neighbourhood and innovative ideas in order to promote change from within the neighbourhood. Since May 2014, the group has run a space in the neighbourhood thanks to an agreement with Aler (the regional agency for housing that owns and manages the neighbourhood) and the Lombardy Region in order to enhance processes of on-field coresearch, participatory planning, and networking between different local actors. The SoHoLab project helped foster and improve the existing university Lab by promoting pilot projects, stimulating dialogue and coresearch between the local and institutional levels, and stimulating and expanding self-reflection on the role of the Lab in and for the neighbourhood.

The aim of the second Lab, implemented in Greater Paris, was to nourish discussions in the two other contexts and better understand the effects of participation in the long run after the initial involvement. The French context is historically characterized by strong public interventions with regard to the renovation of large-scale social housing estates and the adoption of participatory tools. The research studied three rehabilitation projects in the Paris region, measuring the extent and forms of involvement of inhabitants after the design and achievement phase and reflecting on the device of participation. More specifically, it questioned whether their implication in sustainability issues changed the perception of inhabitants regarding their environment and their motivation towards achieving sustainable management. In addition to the retrospective study of former participatory approaches, a design studio was developed, reflecting on the tool of the Living Lab.

The third Living Lab experiment, in the Brussels Capital Region, consisted of a 3-year research engagement in the Peterbos neighbourhood, one of the largest social housing estates at the periphery of Brussels. The Brussels Capital Region is marked by relatively low levels of social housing (9%) but has developed several programmes to increase the offer and set high standards for renovation. The aim of the Living Lab was to bridge the gap between extra-local planning processes and social dynamics on the site in order to move towards an integrated approach to neighbourhood regeneration. The site under research was a high-rise social housing estate consisting of 1,400 apartments, managed by two social housing companies. The project aimed to gather in-depth knowledge on daily life in the neighbourhood, its management, and extra-local policies and measures in order to understand if and how these aspects can be better aligned. These 'hidden' layers of socio-spatial, urban, and institutional information were unravelled through an ethnographic research project on the site and on the spatial, institutional, and associative dynamics of the planning process and their respective impact on the site.

The discussions and exchanges between the different research units enabled the researchers to develop shared reflections regarding the promotion of Living Labs in the context of processes of regeneration in our cities. These outcomes were merged

into a concluding report (Maranghi 2020) and into suggestions and recommendations for policymakers and practitioners involved in the regeneration of housing estates or other neighbourhoods (Ryckewaert 2020).

1.3 The Meaning and Potential of Living Labs in Social Housing Estates

Living Labs emerge in, among other things, EU programmes that aim for applied and policy-relevant research where an impact on-site or on the subject studied is expected during the course of the project. Hence, a direct (policy) impact is expected, as opposed to investments in 'fundamental' research, where separate trajectories are needed to implement solutions in wider society after the conclusion of the fundamental research stage. Such applied research usually enables the inclusion of a wide range of knowledge and action partners from private entities as well as civil society, next to academic research institutions.

While the inherent diversity and experimental nature of Living Labs makes it impossible to narrow them down to just one approach to urbanism, in this introduction, we would like to look at some dimensions Living Labs (could) address in the context of the regeneration of social housing estates. In this respect, there is one returning theme throughout the SoHoLab research and in the contributions in this book: the Living Lab as an 'interstice'. Of the various concepts used to grasp the Living Lab characteristics in our research and in this book—such as 'cross-boundary arena' (Concilio 2016, in Cognetti, this volume); enabling space (Cognetti, this volume); third place (Wachter, this volume); intermediary or third party (Boni, this volume); threshold space (Fava, this volume); interstitial or marginal space (Allemeersch, this volume); grey area, third place, or liminal space (Lefrançois, this volume); a 'layered professionality' (Grassi, this volume); and *mixité* (Vigano et al., this volume)—the 'interstice' most accurately grasps the inherent experimental and connective character of the Living Lab at different levels.

The notion of the 'interstice' is derived from anatomy, in which interstices are fluid-filled areas that surround cells or parts of an organ. They form a connective tissue that creates structural continuity between nervous systems and other tissues. Architects refer to them as leftover gaps between a building's walls, which are neither 'inside' nor 'outside' a building. In sociology, interstitial spaces are understood as spaces with a selective opening (Rémy 2015), where forms of 'micro-interaction' (Furnari 2014) or 'hybridization' happen that can help construct collective competences (Rémy 2015). The 'interstice' therefore seems an adequate metaphor for a practice that lies outside or at the margin of the direct workings of the system it interacts with but that nonetheless plays a substantial, enabling role in this system. Having discerned this common thread regarding the development of Living Labs in large-scale estates, the question remains as to which friction 'cells' and 'nervous

systems' can be connected through the interstice. Based on the findings of this book and the SoHoLab project, we highlight three frictions where Living Labs can make a difference in the context of regeneration processes.

1.3.1 Inhabitants Versus Institutions: Creating Spaces for Micro-interaction

In places like large-scale social housing, the traditional relationships of political representation, the routine mechanisms of governance, and social cohesion are deeply compromised. Living Labs could work to 'mend' these relationships. They could function as metaphorical and physical platforms, where the interaction—even if conflictive—among different actors leads to the transformation of local practices of governance, spaces, relationships, etc. This is particularly relevant in contexts where institutions have progressively lost their connection with the areas in which they operate and hence the effectiveness of their activities. On the one hand, Living Labs could stimulate institutional learning (de Leonardis 2001; Donolo 1997) with regard to urban regeneration (Ostanel 2017). On the other hand, the learning process is wider and includes other actors that live and operate in the area, such as third-sector organizations, inhabitants, NGOs, etc. They can help foster interaction among institutions and local actors belonging to civil society, for instance, by bringing together different forms of knowledge, values, cultural belongings, and power positions.

In this sense, Living Labs could be, first, interpreted as relational fields, in which relationships of trust and cooperation can be strengthened and can enrich spatial capital. Second, they are fluid and incremental contexts within which actors can change their positions, roles, and points of view over time through different kinds of possible interactions (cooperative, conflictive, etc.). Through relationality, a 'mutual learning path […] is generated through the recognition of a field where different voices and interests can be negotiated, where conflict can be seen not as a barrier' (Padovani 2016, p. 40) but as a first step towards communication. Third, they are contexts able to produce new knowledge as a result of the construction of bridges between social worlds. This aspect implies that all forms of knowledge are legitimate within the platform. Through the participation in these processes, actors are induced to negotiate their own values, roles, and understandings, and therefore they are enabled to build new ones, based on the relationships with other actors involved. What makes it possible to qualify Living Labs in this way is both the space given to mutual learning and the possibility to scale up and introduce these learnings in ordinary practices (both institutional and local ones).

As such, Living Labs can serve as local planning platforms in which it is not just possible to experiment with 'best practices' in the interaction between citizens and local organizations but also to effectively test new forms of governance and of collaboration between local institutions and the grassroots. Here, they can both contribute to a shifting governance culture at the institutional level (Mosseray et al.

2021) and enhance local consciousness at the neighbourhood level, essential for implementing more empowering regeneration processes that more accurately reflect local conditions and needs.

1.3.2 Social Versus Technical Disciplines and Departments: Bridging Approaches, Cultures, and Practices

The regeneration of contemporary cities cannot be limited to one discipline. In order to develop accurate understandings of ordinary life in our cities, and of large-scale social housing estates, in particular, disciplines such as architecture, planning, anthropology, and geography need to contaminate one another (Cellamare 2016; Cognetti and Fava 2017). This should not only be limited to triggering interdisciplinary approaches but also entail including knowledge of local inhabitants and workers in territorial analyses and planning approaches.

First, interaction and contamination among spatially oriented and socially oriented approaches is highly relevant, especially in sites where governance actions are designed mostly independently from one another. As Cognetti and Fava (2017) have pointed out, socially oriented and spatially oriented disciplines display different attitudes towards the city: the first are usually more effective when it comes to accessing a deeper understanding of certain phenomena, while the latter are more effective in producing activities and change. In the case of the SoHoLab project, the different research units combined these perspectives during the entire duration of the project. A long-lasting interdisciplinary collaboration allowed the units to reinforce the effectiveness of the research-action dimension. Second, Living Labs can be used to explore different languages and 'nonacademic' disciplines such as art, theatre, performance, video-making, narrative journalism, etc. These languages are especially important regarding the possibility of communicating more effectively with dwellers and with citizens more broadly, stimulating a deeper kind of participation. Such participation is not just related to the expression of an opinion but also to the emergence of personal stories, perceptions, feelings, etc., which are very important for understanding how space is lived (Rifaad and Aernouts 2022; Sandercock and Attili 2010). Third, Living Labs can combine 'expert' knowledge with local knowledge. This aspect is linked to the concept of 'situating' (Cognetti, this volume), which enables the researcher to engage in an intensive and long 'engaged ethnography' (Aernouts et al. 2020b) in the field. The researcher's contribution is crucial in different phases, from the understanding of the local context, to the implementation of activities, to the evaluation of research and activities promoted. In this respect, Lave and Wenger (1991) speak of 'situated learning': learning that takes place through relationships between people, which is connected to authentic, informal, and often unintended contextual learning (Maranghi, this volume).

The interaction among disciplines, nonacademic languages, and nonexpert knowl-
edge not only enriches the action-research path but also helps enhance the under-
standing of the partiality of strictly disciplinary or sectorial points of view in respect
of complex problems or situations (Maranghi, this volume). It opens up the planning
field to uncertainty, doubt (Aernouts et al. 2020b), and self-reflection. It highlights
the relevance of time associated with change and of ethical responsibility related to
the presence—as researchers and practitioners—in the field. It is vital to maintain this
kind of attitude, which associates a research-action framework (oriented to change
and intervention) with deep self-reflection, which is especially and inherently part
of the anthropological discipline.

1.3.3 Outside Versus Inside Views: Bringing Together Local Conceptions of and External Competency in Space

During the 1990s, many European large-scale social housing estates were subject to
different programmes and policies aimed at their regeneration. Implemented urban
policies included integrated physical and socio-economic interventions and acting in
service of a wide and multiscalar change in the neighbourhood considered. After this
period of integrated urban policies, resources currently allocated to the urban regen-
eration of large-scale social housing estates have become scarce in many areas. Often,
different tools are applied independently from one another. Social housing estates
are usually governed by multiple authorities who might each develop renovation and
regeneration plans, social inclusion projects, and/or other actions and programmes
in the neighbourhood. Typically, the renovation of homes is the responsibility of the
local social housing landlord, while public space is managed and refurbished by the
municipality. Separate renovation projects could target different buildings or even
different aspects, such as the building envelope, the technical installations, or home
interiors. Given the multiple actors, programmes, and tools, as well as the limited
means to develop large-scale regeneration plans, coherence between these diverse
types of intervention is often lacking.

These different interventions, each with their own temporality, create insecurity
and uncertainty among inhabitants. For many local actors, it remains unclear which
direction the transformation of the neighbourhood will take. Furthermore, this
partial approach makes it more difficult to consider inhabitants' social practices,
uses, and forms of appropriation that are often deemed inappropriate or illegal in
a more positive light. With respect to this appropriation, the boundaries between
public and private could be seen differently in light of the individual's desire to find
a little privacy, both in- and outside the home. This implies that housing should
be thought of beyond the physical boundaries of its walls, integrating 'secondary
spaces' (Rémy 1999) in which individuals can give free rein to their need for
intimacy and express their identity.

In that sense, a Living Lab can be the place where other ways of thinking about architecture and urban planning in relationship to the social housing question can be experimented with. In addition, a Living Lab can stimulate the development of a joint and overarching vision, or at least a framework that enables giving a perspective to inhabitants in order to situate different projects and identify priorities. Moreover, it is crucial to involve local actors and networks in the co-construction of this shared perspective concerning the most urgent field of intervention and the integration of different activities (social, economic, etc.). A shared vision furthermore allows to ensure connection and integration among different fields (spatial, social, economic, etc.), which is possible only when the Living Lab is able to involve different actors in the co-construction of a planning vision. Finally, in large-scale social housing estates that were designed and conceived under one master plan or a combination of complementary execution plans, it is crucial to safeguard the spatial and architectural coherence of the ensemble over time.

As was the case in the SoHoLab project, the frictions above also show the potential of the 'interstice' as a separate funding stream that is not financed by the partners directly involved in the regeneration process. The question remains then how such Living Lab practices can receive a more permanent anchoring or 'place', taking into account that their value lies in exactly their 'outside' or 'marginal' position.

1.4   The Book

This book tries to capture the nature of Living Labs in the regeneration of large-scale social housing estates as well as the practices in the field that can nourish and be nourished by new perspectives and tools developed by them. It is divided into three main chapters. It was developed on the basis of the SoHoLab project's reflection on Living Labs but also integrates perspectives and considerations produced by other researchers and professionals encountered by the SoHoLab team during the project or who were involved in the final cycle of online seminars organized in 2020 (SoHoLab 2020). This means that, in the spirit of defining the Living Lab as an open, interdisciplinary (or even transdisciplinary and not exclusively disciplinary), hybrid platform, not all contributions included refer explicitly to or have specifically used the Living Lab methodology. However, it is our opinion as editors that all contributions offer insights into and suggestions on how to adapt and shape the Living Lab, defined as in 'interstice' in the diverse meanings articulated above. Such a perspective helps one not to get 'trapped' in the tool but rather to employ it in relation to the characteristics of every single social housing estate.

The first chapter of this volume focuses on the Living Lab, exploring its potential for testing new forms of urban governance. The two other chapters open up different perspectives and methodologies that could contribute to and reinforce the adaptation of Living Labs in large-scale social housing estates. While the second chapter starts from a reflection on the research relationships with inhabitants, the last one moves to a reflection on the space of housing estates.

In her opening chapter, Francesca Cognetti argues that, under the right conditions, Living Labs can act as enabling and situated spaces counteracting the failure of certain participatory approaches to planning. She highlights that participation, and Living Labs in extension, has increasingly become a technical issue, often marked by pre-packaged formats and the support of technological tools. This entails the risk of downplaying its political significance. According to her, 'socially oriented' Living Labs can serve as platforms where processes of colearning take place and new forms of governance and interaction can be tested. As such, they can become an important field for defining and experimenting with new planning practices.

In his essay, Serge Wachter explores the darker side of Living Lab approaches. Based on a literature review of Urban Living Labs and EU guidelines regarding transition, he conceptualizes the Living Lab as a new model of governance used to experiment with sustainability solutions. As is the case with the concept of governance, this comes with several criticisms. In contrast to their high visibility and media coverage, Living Labs are often tools for tactical urbanism, developed at the margins of urban planning and only very moderately affecting the living conditions in our cities. In this sense, they do not address the radical urgency of climate change. When applied in so-called disadvantaged or sensitive areas, their impact might be stronger, yet can also be more disturbing. Indeed, according to Wachter, they are typical forms of remote governance, allocating duties and responsibilities to the private sector, local authorities, and/or underprivileged inhabitants. For the latter, Urban Living Labs can become expressions of governmentality, in which they are seemingly empowered to adopt goals of sustainability. As such, goals of social justice and sustainability are mixed with one another 'in a confusing fashion'. Should we even speak of 'bio-living labs', as Wachter boldly suggests? Be that as it may, the contribution reads as a warning for anyone involved in Living Labs to not uncritically adopt and impose the sustainability goals of the EU agenda.

In her contribution, Alice Boni offers some counterweight to the former contribution. She compares two experiences of 'local labs' in similar areas to discuss whether institutional leverage can help transfer Living Labs from a local to a regional or national level. According to the author, a policy transfer is possible, as long as there is a willingness on the part of the institutions to adopt a reflexive, open, and dialogical approach in the contexts in which they intervene.

Similarly, in the last contribution of the first part, Francesca Cognetti and Elena Maranghi discuss policy transfer in the context of Living Labs, but to the local level instead. The contribution investigates how a Living Lab can promote a more effective inclusion of inhabitants and local groups in urban policies. The authors underline the role of codesign as an interesting tool to not only promote urban change but also stimulate the empowerment of individuals and local communities.

The second part of the book is dedicated to reflecting on the social relations that are researched, built, and dissolved as part of research and action in large-scale social housing estates. Here, it is discussed what Living Labs can and do entail, starting from a perspective developed during a long-term stay in the neighbourhood. Researchers, artists, architects, and urbanists engage in this context and try to understand the environment of others. Although, as shown, ethnography and anthropology might

be disciplines that come close to adopting an 'internal perspective' (Grassi, this volume), it remains impossible to assign it to individuals or to a single method. It is rather socially constructed, apprehended, invented, and carried out collaboratively (Fava, this volume). Therefore, researchers are bound to both remain with and release their disciplinary background and to attempt to inhabit the research relationships and spaces they aim to understand (Fava, this volume).

In the introduction of this second part, Ferdinando Fava discusses how the anthropological tradition can help us understand the relevance of interactions within Living Labs in large-scale social housing estates from an epistemological point of view. According to Fava, 'social bonds' should be the primary characteristic of a Living Lab. The potential space of the anthropologist, and the Living Lab in extension, is the threshold between in- and outsider that makes understanding through dialogical construction possible by virtue of an 'in-betweenness'. Inhabiting a place, through anthropology or by occupying a physical space in a social housing estate (as in the case of the SoHoLab) then becomes synonymous with inhabiting a research relationship and with trying to establish social bonds with concrete people that make up the place.

In this respect, Paolo Grassi, in the second chapter of this part, speaks about the frustrations that accompany such research relationships. According to Grassi, loving, hating, and failing are inextricably intertwined with fieldwork. Here, he draws a parallel between ethnographic fieldwork and the experimental character of Living Labs in planning. He denounces the rhetoric of success and empowerment within planning literature and practice. According to him, similar to Living Lab experiments applied in the physical sciences, remaining in place and accepting failures and frustrations are key. Indeed, they force planners to come up with newer and better explanations for the same phenomenon over and over again.

A third author who attempts to capture his own role in the context of the transformation of a social estate is Simon Allemeersch. He describes his experience in an atelier developed in an empty apartment of a high-rise social housing estate subject to demolition in Ghent (Belgium). According to him, the estate could be considered a 'broken institution', where the necessary formal order left the building. In this context, his atelier functioned as an interstitial space, not only welcoming inhabitants but also all kinds of actors, students, journalists, and social workers interested in the space. Here, the formal and informal, in- and outside came together and communicated with one another, helping him to decipher both.

In her contribution, Elena Maranghi puts social professionals and activists working in the territory of San Siro centre stage. She explains how the Mapping San Siro project, and later on the SoHoLab project in the Milan neighbourhood, stimulated the formation of a network among these actors. Over time, the lab helped them overcome conflicts and collectively build up knowledge. It pushed them to become a 'community of planning', strengthening their voice and agency with regard to local policies.

While the second part focuses on the relationships between 'people' developed as part of a Living Lab, the third part focuses on the characteristics of 'space' in

large-scale social housing estates. It proposes possible forms of analysis and interventions that aspire to be capable of integrating 'the spatial' and 'the social'. Developed within the rationalist planning paradigm of modernist and functionalist urban design, following the principles of the Athens Charter (Mumford 2000), large-scale social housing estates have specific spatial forms that often makes them easily distinguishable from other neighbourhoods, especially medieval cities or city extensions dominated by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century development paradigms. This spatial form has been subject to lengthy debates and interpretations in architectural and planning theory. Yet, in the meanwhile, they have been inhabited and have played an important role in guaranteeing the right to housing for a very long time. Highbrow discussions regarding the adequateness of the spatial form have therefore become partially irrelevant. In this part, we want to highlight that Living Labs can play a role, capturing or informing various interpretations and understandings of the use of space.

In the first contribution to this third part, Lucia Capanema revisits the notion of the 'ghetto' in relationship to mobility, understood as a combination of motility, accessibility, and porosity. In the ghetto, immigrants and marginal populations are said to be stuck, as opposed to elites, who have the right to privileged centres. While a quantitative survey in the neighbourhood of San Siro, Milan, shows that inhabitants of these estates feel reasonably good in their neighbourhood and feel relatively well served by public transportation, a qualitative study highlights that mobility problems can be deeper and are not necessarily visible. As such, the author doubts whether inhabitants of social housing estates can enjoy destinations 'in their fullness'. An analysis of mobility, access, and porosity can inform new initiatives and interpretations of the meaning and value of space in these estates.

In their presentation of their analysis and master plan of the high-rise estate of Peterbos, Brussels (Belgium), Paola Vigano, Betrand Plewinski, Guillaume Vanneste, and Nicolas Willemet also do not shy away from interpreting large-scale social housing estates as 'enclaves for the poorest' or as spaces where 'the misery in the world' is concentrated. The bold expressions used for capturing large-scale social estates are somewhat in contrast to their sensitive reading of the hilly landscape, mundane infrastructures, and housing patrimony in the area. They do highlight the necessity for accompanying physical interventions by other forms of reform, such as social and economic interventions. They put forward four themes that connect both: a reinterpretation of modern heritage; the 'project of ground', activating ground floor spaces; a societal and ecological transition and public space as a space of emancipation and diversity. Building on these themes through 'the urban project', the authors offer new imaginaries to the area.

Contrary to these conceptual and political readings of the areas, the last two contributions start from an ethnographic analysis of the use of public spaces and shops in high-rise estates. In the third contribution, Jeanne Mosseray and Nele Aernouts highlight that in contemporary urbanism, and in European city renewal programmes such as the Neighbourhood Contracts more specifically, spatial interventions are often justified through social intentions, relying on older conceptions of community and social cohesion. The authors deconstruct such goals in the redesign of the ground

floors in the same high-rise estate of Peterbos. Based on an ethnographic analysis of the actual use, occupation, and appropriation of the existing shops, they question the aim of architects, urbanists, social workers, and administrators to activate the ground floors in order to make the neighbourhood more vibrant. According to them, an ethnographic reading could help counter notions such as 'activation' and 'appropriation' and contribute to make more informed decisions on spaces.

By studying the use of public spaces in high-rise estates in the city of Fresnes, close to Paris, in the fourth contribution of this last part, Dominique Lefrançois criticizes participatory planning processes for turning a 'blind eye' to actually existing social practices that somehow already 'shape' large-scale social housing estates. She argues that these do not succeed in grasping other attempts of inhabitants to express opinions and viewpoints, for instance, by sending letters, signing petitions, and writing to the press. She questions whether, rather than focusing on inhabitants, Living Labs should instead focus on those actors conceiving and managing these spaces in order to improve the quality of their service. She furthermore criticizes the imposition of ecological imperatives on the areas examined, which are not in line with actual sustainable practices in the area and do not make an effort to start from actual practices in the area. She argues that in order to enable Living Labs to put themselves forward as spaces for ecological experimentation, challenging accepted ideas and offering visions going beyond the city/nature opposition, basic principles of ethnology should be taught in architecture schools.

1.5 Conclusion

The chapters expose strengths and weaknesses of the notion of the Living Lab and its implications when upscaling. Underlying scepticism about the notion is apparent, especially when seen in the light of European policies, subsidies, and funding programmes calling for the mobilization of citizens and local authorities in relationship to the adaptation of cities and regions to climate change. Here, the Living Lab becomes synonymous with the EU's entrepreneurial approach to the urgency, where local authorities and inhabitants are tempted to adopt 'innovative' strategies and answers to problems in order to increase their competitiveness and international appeal.

If anything, the added value of the Living Lab approach in planning processes seems more apparent when it is critically adopted by interdisciplinary research teams. Here, Living Labs can enable the bridging of knowledge and different social and professional worlds. They can help call on planning institutions to invest in large-scale social housing estates or encourage local voices to emerge and to be heard. A long-term presence and an embeddedness in the existing network of planning and local actors is key to their success. This shows that EU policies also have the potential to be 'appropriated' to locally steer more inclusive planning processes, especially in the highly institutionalized contexts of social housing estates. However, in order for a more permanent anchoring or 'place-taking' to happen, noninstrumental and

open research trajectories in urban regeneration projects should be supported locally, beyond and in addition to the contracting out of master planning and participation trajectories to professionals.

In this introduction, we have argued that the innovative and experimental approach of Living Labs might help develop more fine-tuned answers to 'wicked' problems in urban planning. Building on the contributions in this volume, we suggest that 'innovation' and 'experimentation' should go along with a careful reading of large-scale social housing estates and with strengthening the accountability of those responsible for their management and renovation.

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