



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 31

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Not applicable

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#diagrams, #systems thinking, #design thinking, #reflexive monitoring, Living Labs

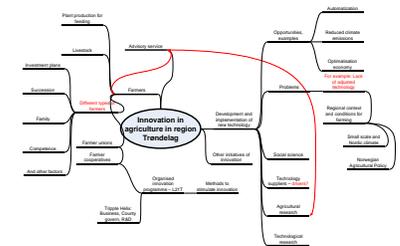
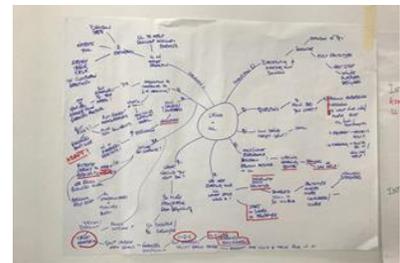
Using diagrams to help design and deliver Living Labs

The Living Lab concept is an inquiry process that builds on the principles of design thinking, systems thinking and reflexive monitoring. Design thinking helps to frame the development process. With systems thinking in practice, the process is extended through a process of co-creation with Living Lab partners that involves understanding contexts, inter-relationships, engaging with multiple perspectives and reflecting on boundary judgements. Consequently, each Lab is unique. Each Lab must be observed, understood and 'tailor-made' interventions must be designed and developed in conjunction with its many participants and stakeholders. This uniqueness also requires reflexive monitoring, where the performance of the Lab is regularly reviewed by participants and stakeholders, and learnings identified and acted upon. Design thinking, systems thinking, and reflexive monitoring can all benefit from the use of diagrams or other visual representations as communicative devices as can all stages in the inquiry process. In some cases, this can be a diagram produced by one or more participants for others to comment on but more often these are diagrams produced collectively on large sheets of paper by groups of participants working together. Thus, diagrams can help frame and focus the discussion. Co-creating it in real time enables everyone to contribute, while the final version provides an unfiltered record of the discussion at that point in time which can be reviewed or referred to at a later stage in the development of the Living Lab. In that sense most of these diagrams are works in progress for co-learning about and testing out ideas and proposals rather than a finalised output, although redrawn versions might be produced for more formal documents.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Diagrams can act as mediating objects in conversations between groups of people, whether produced by one member, or preferable, if created by all members of the group in a collective process. There are many forms and types of diagram and it is helpful to have agreed rules on how the diagram is produced and should look like. It is even more helpful if there is a theoretical framework underpinning the diagram. This is particularly the case with both systems thinking and design thinking as used in AgriLink, and can be an essential part of any participatory and action-oriented researcher's personal toolkit particularly as diagrams can include both rational thoughts and emotional feelings and where the participants are seen as co-researchers who have some stake in the conception, design, implementation and/or reporting of the research and some stake in implementing any outcomes or recommendations that arise from that research. Further details on the use of diagrams can be found in AgriLink's [Systems and complexity in agriculture Theory Primer](#) or in either of these two free online courses from The Open University:

- [Systems diagramming](#)
- [Mastering Systems Thinking in Practice](#)

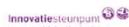


ABOUT AGRILINK

AgriLink is a multi-actor project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It brings together 16 partners from 13 countries, including universities, applied research institutes, advisors and consultants from public organisations, private SMEs, a farmer-based organisation and specialists in communication and distance learning.

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All the Practice Abstracts prepared by the AgriLink project in the EIP-AGRI common format can be found here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/agrilink-agricultural-knowledge-linking-farmers>