

Co-creation with the end user

Co-creation of the living lab products and services with an end user is a key feature of living labs. Co-creation refers to the involvement of end users and other relevant stakeholders at all stages, from design to testing and evaluation.

End users are the stakeholders whose needs are addressed by the innovations developed within the living labs. They may vary per living lab project and can be citizens, yet also transport companies, public authorities, mobility operators and/or retailers.

Depending on the objective and applicability of the innovation, end users are preferably involved in all phases and works of ideation, co-design, validation, testing and evaluation.

Description

Co-creation with the envisaged end users has many benefits. Not the least to assure the product owner that the theoretical concepts and the finally tested innovation respond to an actual market need. The following benefits were listed by the analyzed living labs:

- Co-creation with end users integrates first-hand opinion and product requirements. As a result, the innovation has a better fit for purpose and can expect to benefit from a higher acceptance rate and roll out perspectives.
- Product and service developers gain access to end user's data and feedback, which further accelerates the uptake and acceptance of innovations.
- Stakeholders could go through the innovation iteration cycles earlier, making the path from idea to market and market acceptance faster and more efficient.

Co-creation practices help to create shared meanings and vocabulary and an atmosphere that encourages collaboration, trust, and openness. This is considered of particular relevance in a multi stakeholder sector such as urban mobility. In this regard, a living lab provides the ideal setting.

Next to a testing site, providing a co-creation facilitator that can listen and understand the stakeholders needs, objectives and sensitivities allows for a more efficient co-creation process. The living lab facilitator can bring together teams and individuals from the key stakeholders. The facilitator plans the co-creation activities, supporting learning and synergies.

Co-creation workshops provide a participatory way of engaging stakeholders, including end users, and offer a neutral environment where experts, product/service developers and end users are equal participants. A user-centric approach is recommended to increase the likelihood of a later take up and scaling of the solutions. Each co-creation process has its own dynamics, yet several stages can be identified, such as (1):

Ideation to design an initial set of workshops organized with the relevant stakeholders (e.g., public authorities, industry, research, end users) would allow to co-define the precise focus. Upfront insights

on the present market and end users' needs collected through a survey and/or qualitative interviews might form a good basis of discussion.

Open call and selection: If the focus and objectives are clear, but the product/service has not yet been defined, an open call and selection might be the means to set up such (a) pilot team(s). Information sessions, interviews and pitching session help living labs stakeholders to jointly initiate the co-creation within the design phase.

Validation and testing in an experimentation phase: following a kick-off event that brings together teams and key stakeholders, the experimentation phase can be formed around dedicated co-creation workshops, prototype testing sessions, (in)formal progress meetups and testing of the co-created pilots.

Learnings and evaluation: in addition to more technical evaluations on the actual functioning of the products and services, surveys and interviews to evaluate the pilots from the end users' perspective are crucial. The latter will allow to also understand the actual opportunity for upscaling.

The feedback collected from the piloting teams, collaboration partners and testing participants will enable the group of stakeholders (including end users) to decide on the need for a new cycle and/or whether the services are ready for the market (2).

References

(1) Adapted from Pocket Book for Agile Piloting, facilitating co-creative experimentation, Forum Virium Helsinki, Authors: Kaisa Spilling and Janne Rinne, 2020

(2) City lab, Deliverable 3.1 Practical guidelines for establishing and running a city logistics living laboratory, Nina Nesterova and Hans Quak (TNO), October 2015