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► To cite this version:

Guillaume Gamache, Juliette Anglade, Romain Feche, Fabienne Barataud, Catherine Mignolet, et al.. Can living labs offer a pathway to support local agri-food sustainability transitions?. Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions, 2020, 37, pp.93-107. 10.1016/j.eist.2020.08.002 . hal-03143833

HAL Id: hal-03143833

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-03143833>

Submitted on 5 Sep 2022

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Title :

Can living labs offer a pathway to support local agri-food sustainability transitions?

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Declaration of interest : none

Funding : This work was supported by the Fondation de France and the Grand-Est Region. These funding sources weren't involved in the study design, in the collection, analysis, interpretation of data and the writing of the article.

1 Can living labs offer a pathway to support local agri-food sustainability transitions?

2
3 Abstract:

4 Living labs are defined as both an approach and an arena for supporting experimentation in
5 natural settings with a wide range of actors. In this article we explore the potential and limits
6 of living labs for analysing and supporting the local transition of agri-food systems. We base
7 on a bibliometric analysis and insights from our transdisciplinary research team's experience
8 with agroecological transition. It appears that living labs informed mainly by strategic
9 managerial and user-centric approaches benefiting the dissemination of (technological)
10 innovation, require certain changes in order to address sustainable development issues.
11 Citizen-centred living lab approaches are better suited to increase capacity building and
12 empowerment through action, iterative learning, and capitalization of experience. Faced with
13 the specific issues of local agri-food system transition, we propose to (re)-introduce the notion
14 of "commons" in order to support the collective territorial management of both material
15 resources (food, environment) and immaterial resources (values, ideas).

16 Keywords: living lab; sustainable transition; local agri-food system; commons; sustainability;
17 social experiment.

18
19 Highlights :

- 20 • Few researchers have addressed living labs in the context of agri-food sustainability
21 transitions.
- 22 • Living labs focused on product innovation with a market rationale are not conducive
23 to support sustainability transitions.
- 24 • Citizen-centric living labs are more suitable to support sustainability transition
25 particularly in urban context.
- 26 • The concept of commons appears relevant to guide living labs towards the transition
27 of sustainable local agri-food systems.

28 1. Introduction

29
30 Throughout the world, many collaborative initiatives are attempting to address sustainability
31 issues by promoting local, long-term transition processes involving multiple actors. These
32 new forms of governing transitions (like transition experiments and transdisciplinary
33 sustainability projects) are underpinned by the notion of experimentation in "real-life
34 settings" (Neuens et al., 2013). Among these approaches, living labs are promoted as catalysts
35 for innovation (Mulvenna et al., 2011). They are defined as "user-centred, open innovation
36 ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and
37 innovation processes in real life communities and settings" (European Network of Living
38 Labs website) and have received extensive political support, particularly as part of innovation
39 and regional development policies (European Commission, 2006). They are also of scientific
40 value, to foster interaction between science and society (Houllier, 2016).

42 This article investigates the characteristics of living lab approaches that support the
43 development of healthier and more sustainable local agri-food systems (Lamine et al., 2012).
44 Many studies have shown the negative environmental, social and economic consequences of
45 the dominant agro-industrial system. They have called for more sustainable models to be
46 invented as part of a truly inclusive societal project encompassing food and education,
47 knowledge transmission and science, justice and social equity, health, and so on (Francis et
48 al., 2003). Although eating constitutes a daily activity for each and every one of us (and is a
49 strong expression of culture, health, and know-how), citizens are often cognitively,
50 geographically and politically disconnected from the steering of agri-food systems (Colonna
51 et al., 2011). Yet health and environmental crises, high unemployment rates in rural areas, and
52 the difficulties experienced by new farmers to acquire agricultural land, all attest to how
53 deeply “territorialized” this issue is. The challenge of healthier and more sustainable farming
54 and food is therefore directly linked to local inhabitants’ participation in choosing and
55 building the future of their region. It also requires that all the actors concerned by this issue
56 (farmers, politicians, associations, etc.) adhere to the same approach. If this could be
57 achieved, living labs would offer a promising avenue to enable local inhabitants to be
58 involved in the production of their food.

59 Living labs can take on very different forms, particularly as regards goals, activities,
60 participants, and context (Habibipour, 2018; Steen and van Bueren, 2017). They are
61 presented not only as an approach but also as a concept, a method or a locus of
62 experimentation (Bergval & Stahlbrost, 2009). Several reviews of the literature on living labs
63 have been published over the past few years (Schuurman et al., 2015; Santonen, 2018;
64 Westerlund et al., 2018; Mcloughlin et al., 2018). They have sought to better define this
65 concept, as well as the way in which certain research communities (such as action design
66 research and innovation management) articulate it. Yet none of them relate to the
67 agroecological transition of agri-food systems. Thus, [the research questions of this article are](#):
68 how do living labs help or hinder the transition of agri-food systems in the territories? What
69 kind of transition do they design? Are there "types" of living labs best suited to this purpose?

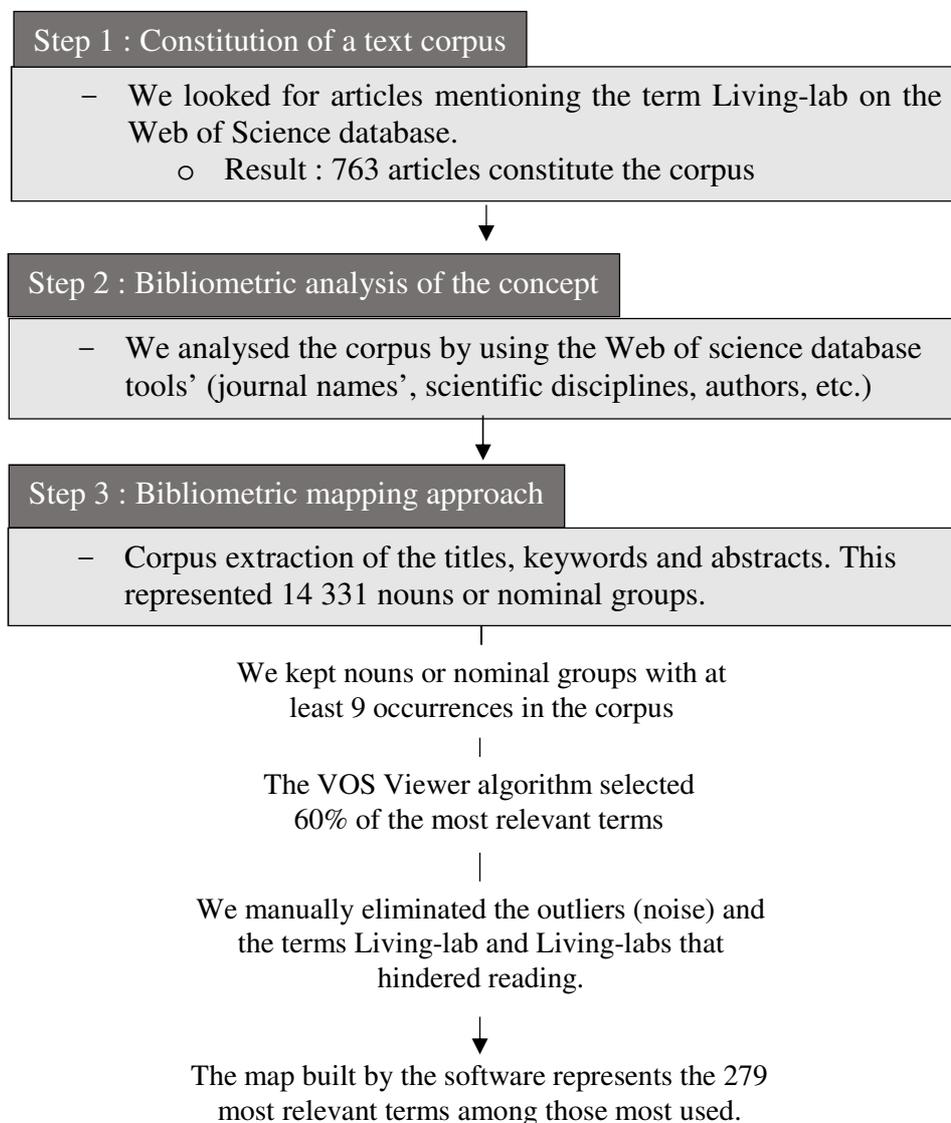
70 [In order to answer these questions, we compare](#) the existing literature on living labs with the
71 current challenges of territorialized agri-food systems transition. To do so, we conducted an
72 analysis of the scientific literature on living labs, based on a bibliometric analysis of the
73 articles referenced in the Web of Science database and an analysis of the spatial
74 representation of the terms used (bibliometric mapping approach). This is presented in the
75 [results](#) part of this article. Then, in the current literature on agri-food system transitions, we
76 selected key points that seemed to us to be relevant to a comparison of the results of our
77 bibliometric analysis. The last part of this article discusses the characteristics and
78 particularities of the development of living labs to support transitions towards healthier and
79 more sustainable local agri-food systems.

80

81 **2. Analysis method**

82

83 First, we carried out a bibliometric analysis to better identify and understand the different uses
 84 of living labs, so as to ascertain their suitability for supporting agri-food system transitions.
 85 We started by compiling a corpus of scientific articles, from 1969 till 2019, by searching for
 86 all articles in the Web of Science database that mentioned the term “living lab” in their title,
 87 abstract or keywords. This corpus is comprised of articles written in English only, and
 88 excludes grey literature. We then used the Web of Science website’s analytical tools to build a
 89 first representation of the landscape of the living lab concept.
 90 Second, we extracted the text of all titles, keywords and abstracts (where available) from the
 91 corpus, so as to map all the textual occurrences using the VOS Viewer software (Van Eck and
 92 Waltman, 2007). This type of cartographic representation for bibliometric analysis
 93 (Heersmink, 2011) seeks in particular to represent the frequency of occurrences of nominal
 94 groups within a corpus and the links that connect them. We built the map by following several
 95 analytical steps (Fig. 1).



128 Figure 1: Schematic representation of the method used for the bibliometric analysis

129 In parallel with this analysis, we have highlighted those characteristics in the literature on
 130 agri-food system transitions that we think are relevant to compare with the results of the
 131 Living Lab concept analysis. In doing so, we have based our analysis on a reading of the
 132 current literature on both living labs and agri-food system transition. We have also drawn on
 133 our own experience in the field of support for in agri-food system transitions and in the
 134 construction of a living lab to support healthy and sustainable food in a rural area (Coquil &
 135 al, 2018).

136 3. Results of the bibliometric analysis

137 3.1. WoS analysis: an evolution of the use of the term

138 Use of the term living lab in the literature is recent (Fig. 2). It has increased significantly since
 139 2006, when the European Network of Living Labs (ENOLL) was launched by the European
 140 Commission as part of its policy to improve competitiveness. Within a few years, this network
 141 has extended through several waves of labelling initiatives across Europe, growing from 20
 142 labelled living labs in 2007 to over 440 today, which has most certainly impacted the number
 143 of publications. Given this historical background, the vast majority of publications on the
 144 subject are now European (Table 1).

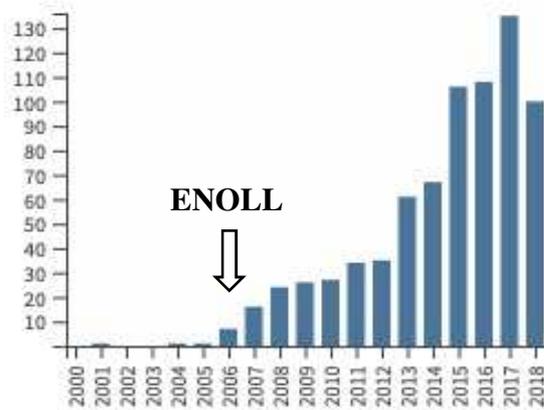


Figure 2: Evolution of the number of publications mentioning the term "living lab" over time

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 165
 166
 167

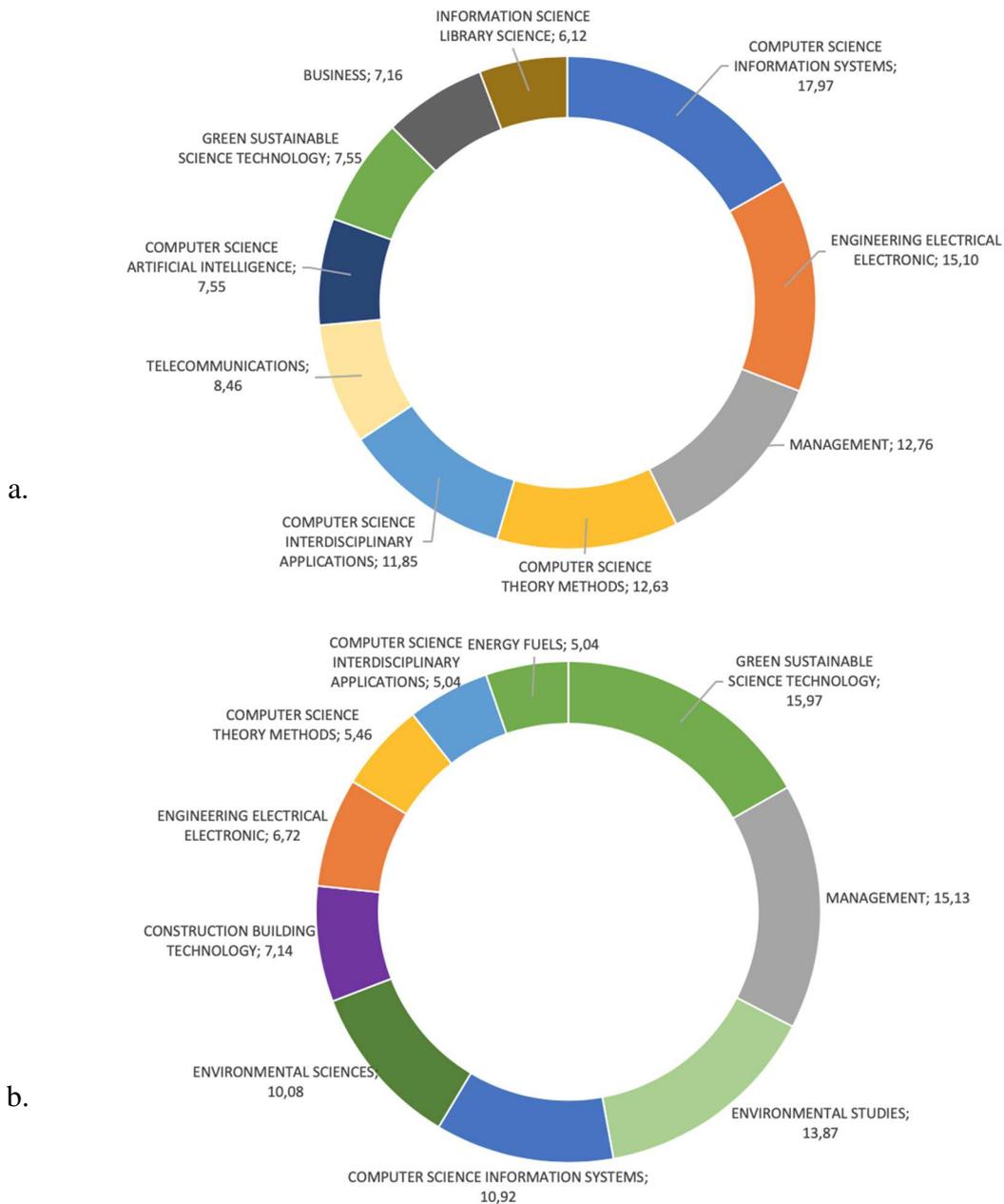
168 The term "living lab" is mainly used in disciplines related to computer science and new
 169 information and communication technology. The three journals that mention the term "living
 170 lab" the most are *Technology Innovation Management Review*, *Lecture Notes in Computer*

Table 1: Table listing the countries most represented in the publication of articles on Living labs

Authors' countries	Records	% of 768 papers
Italy	100	13
Netherlands	81	11
Germany	76	10
Finland	69	9
Belgium	65	8
France	59	8
Spain	59	8
USA	50	7
Sweden	49	6
England	42	5
Other countries	118	12
29 articles (3.8%) did not contain sufficient data to be categorized		

171 *Science, and Information and Communication Technologies and the Knowledge Economy.*
 172 The Web of Sciences categories reveal the same trend (Fig.3a). The vast majority of the
 173 articles address topics related to artificial intelligence and digital technology, such as
 174 “computer science information systems”, “computer science theory methods”, and
 175 “telecommunications”. Less significantly, the articles also relate to topics such as
 176 “management” and “business”. Environmental issues are addressed through the lens of new
 177 technology, with a category titled “green sustainable science technology”.
 178

Figure 3: (a) 10 Web of Sciences categories most represented in the corpus between 1969 and 2018 and (b) for the years 2017-2018 more specifically.

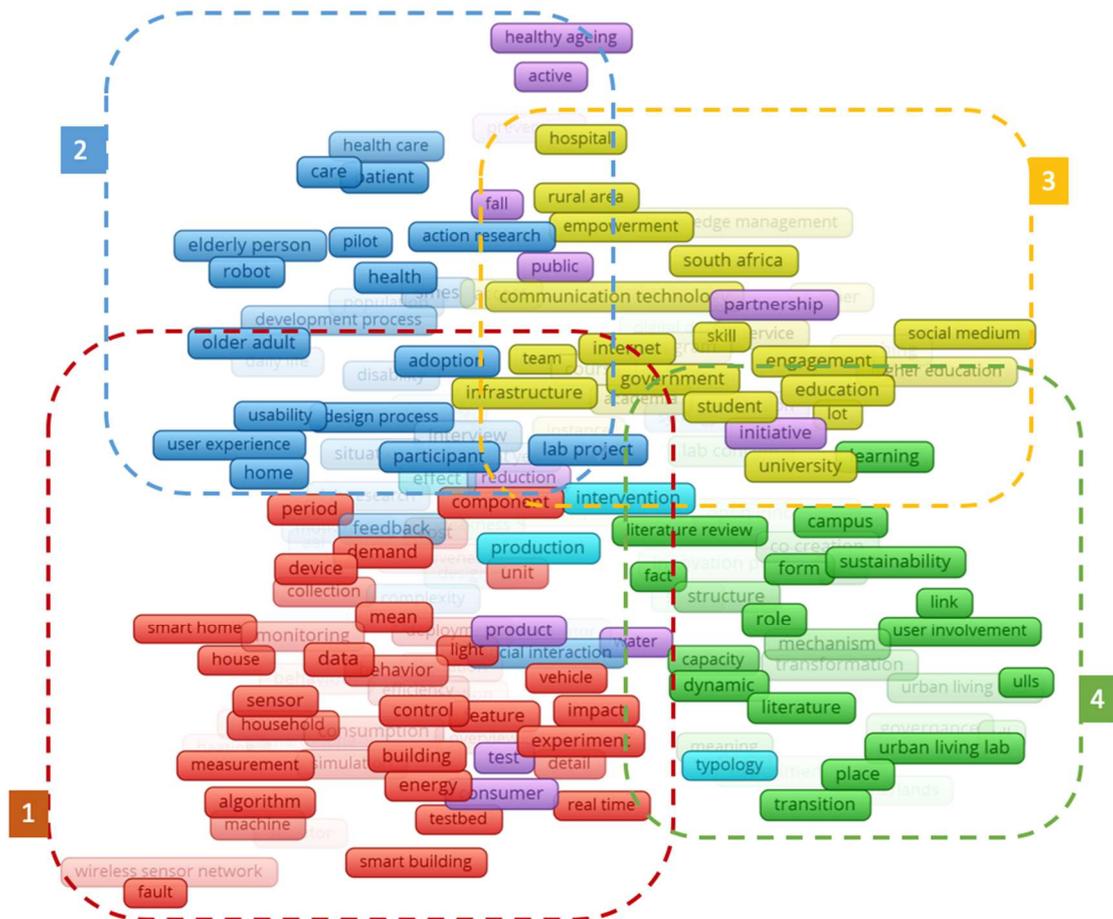


179 It is interesting to note that the themes addressed have evolved in recent years. In 2017 and
 180 2018 (Fig. 3b), there was a more homogeneous distribution of categories with an increase in

181 the number of publications related to environmental issues. We thus find categories such as
 182 “green sustainable science technology”, “environmental studies”, and “environmental
 183 sciences”. This seems to provide a useful marker of change in the focus in the living labs
 184 literature (and certainly in scientific literature more generally), with growing interest in
 185 sustainability issues.

186
 187
 188

3.2. Semantic cartographic analysis



189 Figure 4: Mapping of the terms in the titles/keywords/abstract of articles mentioning the term
 190 “living lab” (minimum 9 occurrences)
 191

192 This map (Fig.4) is based on the frequency of occurrence of the terms highlighting the main
 193 characteristics of the living lab concept. This mapping of the terms used has three dimensions:

- 194 (i) The words displayed on the map are those that stand out with the highest
 195 occurrence. A more detailed list is provided in the Appendix.
- 196 (ii) The relationship between the items is based on the number of articles in which the
 197 terms appear together. Thus, the closer two terms are spatially on the map, the
 198 more they are used together in the articles.

199 (iii) The colours identify clusters, that is, groups of words that tend to appear more
200 frequently together, thus highlighting rationales in the mobilization of the notion
201 of a living lab.

202 The text mapping shows five clusters (see Appendix) but four areas can be identified,
203 delimited by dotted lines. Area 1 mainly includes terms from the field of technology. Area 2
204 covers themes surrounding health. Areas 3 and 4, which are more closely intertwined,
205 encompass terms relating to education and sustainability transitions, respectively.

206
207 Approaches represented by the terms in Areas 1 and 2 seem to give particular importance to
208 “user experience”, examined primarily to study the usability of an interface. In that respect,
209 we find terms such as “user”, “control”, “demand”, “measurement”, etc. The user experience
210 approach involves investigating the interaction between a user and a device through an
211 analysis of uses. Individuals are involved in the process to enhance their experience using a
212 prototype that designers will alter, based on feedback. The distinction between designers and
213 users therefore still applies. Hence, terms such as “acceptance” are used.

214
215 These approaches also focus on specific objects with a strong interest in “new technology”
216 (data, algorithms, wireless sensor network, etc.) and health, particularly that of the elderly
217 (older adults, elderly, senior citizen). Finally, the question of sustainability is addressed here
218 through the lens of “product development” (electric vehicle, smart home, etc.). The approach
219 targets an object or a category of users and is therefore not systemic.

220
221 With regard to “real life settings”, the terms used refer to physically delimited environments.
222 They are “ambient assisted living” devices, which mobilize data on objects ranging from
223 vehicles to the home, and are equipped to study certain uses. Moreover, a specific segment of
224 the population is selected to take part in the design.

225
226 This type of living lab can be linked to open innovation theories (Chersbrough, 2003), a set of
227 theories striving to stretch the boundaries of research and development processes beyond
228 companies, so as to enrich and improve their innovation capacity through collaboration
229 between various stakeholders. For companies, the aim is both to benefit from knowledge,
230 methods and resources from outside the company, and to better exploit the innovations
231 produced. On the map, we find terms such as “customer”, “consumer”, “product”, and the
232 designation of certain actors, such as “industry”. These living lab initiatives seem to be more
233 geared towards the market economy and the development of product innovation, particularly
234 related to new technology.

235
236 In the living lab landscape, it seems to us that this type of living-lab is characterized by a
237 user-centric (Schliwa & Mc Cormick, 2016), techno-centric and market-oriented approach.
238 The question of transitions in agri-food systems is not raised. One can however imagine that
239 this kind of Living lab could participate in this type of approach but through a product design
240 aspect, a technological innovation oriented towards consumer uses.

241

242 Areas 2 and 3 are associated more with a set of terms related to sustainability issues
243 (sustainability, sustainability development, transition). User involvement is referred to with
244 terms such as “user involvement”, “co-creation”, “creativity”, “involvement”, and
245 “empowerment”. These terms suggest a different type of involvement from that which users
246 usually have, one that is based more on creativity and concerned with skills development and
247 emancipation. The term “user-driven” shows that the “user” enacts and steers the innovation
248 process. The user is no longer simply a user but also an actor. Yet the absence of terms such
249 as citizens or people to denote users raises questions. In reality, this is a limitation of the
250 algorithms of the VOS Viewer software, which sorts results that exclude generic terms,
251 “citizen” being one such term. Looking at our corpus, we can see that the term “citizen”
252 occurred 216 times, and the term “people” 190 times.

253
254 The distinction between users, citizens or people seems blurred and interchangeable. The term
255 “people” seems to be used either very generically (for example, “the real needs of people
256 living in cities”) or to denote a category of individuals (for instance, “elderly people”). The
257 term “citizen”, however, seems to refer more to the active position of inhabitants in their
258 involvement in urban living labs. We thus find expressions such as “citizen-initiated
259 grassroots project”, “engaging with local citizens to co-create”, and “including the citizens as
260 active agents”.

261
262 As regards real-life environments, these approaches seem to address sustainability issues on
263 the scale of the city (cities, smart cities). The emergence of the term “urban” living lab makes
264 it necessary to distinguish it from the generic term. Moreover, it is important to note the
265 presence of terms surrounding place, such as “place” or “local community”, which show the
266 contextualization of these approaches on the scale of a territory.

267
268 There is also a wide variety of actors mentioned (government, municipality, university,
269 company). This reflects multi-partner and transdisciplinary projects raising questions around
270 governance, cooperation and the role of actors (“cooperation”, “governance”, “involvement”).

271
272 With regard to the approach adopted, the term “experimentation” is again used, suggesting a
273 scientific approach aimed at “understanding”. The term “definition” suggests forms of
274 characterization and therefore also of temporal and spatial delimitation of reality. At stake,
275 however, are “mechanisms” of “transformation” and “dynamics” that need to be not only
276 described, but also explored and created (“co-creation”). The development of “initiatives” that
277 adopt a “vision” in order to change a problematic situation could serve this purpose. This
278 directly echoes transition management theories promoting experimentation as a form of
279 transition governance (see theoretical framework).

280
281 In relation to sustainable transition, there is a family of words surrounding university and
282 education, particularly in Area 3. These living labs developed on university campuses offer a
283 teaching tool to challenge and stimulate students’ creativity in finding solutions to design
284 more sustainable lifestyles based on real cases (problem-learning and open-ended cases).
285 Nevertheless, the absence of specific terms related to the types of knowledge (academic,

286 experiential, etc.) or to the modalities and processes of learning (social, collaborative,
287 organizational learning, etc.) that support transitions (Mierlo and Beers, 2018), suggests that
288 pioneering research must be carried out in living labs.

289

290 Areas two and three present a different involvement of actors in the design process, both in
291 terms of the diversity of actors involved (government, citizen) and in terms of their place and
292 role (more co-creation). The level of scale is also different since the living lab in this case can
293 be at the level of a neighbourhood, a campus or a city.

294

295 These two living lab streams, which we can summarize according to Schliwa & McCormick's
296 distinction (2016) between User-centred or Citizen-centred living labs, relate to very different
297 methods, purposes and infrastructures (between a fully equipped house or a neighbourhood,
298 for example). The first analytical results presented show that the citizen-centred trend came
299 after the user-centred trend (Fig. 3). In our opinion, this is an evolution of the term living lab,
300 which is intended to support cities in their capacity to innovate in order to meet the challenges
301 of sustainability.

302

303 However, at this stage of analysis, we note an absence of concern around the issues of agri-
304 food transition. Moreover, the concern of the Citizen-centred living-lab for cities raises
305 questions on the place of rurality and of support for transition in these territories whose
306 resources and constraints are very different.

307

308 **4. Identifying the interfaces between living labs and agri-food transition** 309 **theories**

310 *4.1. Supporting the transition of agri-food systems on a territorial scale*

311 Rethinking the development of healthier and more sustainable agri-food systems requires us
312 to build new ways for “*people to organize themselves in space and time in order to obtain*
313 *and consume their food*” (Malassis, 1994). This transition requires a profound overhaul of the
314 way we produce, process, distribute and consume on a territorial scale (Duru, 2014). To allow
315 for such a paradigm shift, several authors highlight the need to develop systemic approaches
316 (McCormick et al., 2013; Wittmayer et al., 2014). In the literature we identify four
317 dimensions concerning support for the transition of territories towards healthier and more
318 sustainable agri-food systems, which seem to us relevant to the living-lab approach. By
319 transition towards territorialized agri-food systems, we mean a process aimed at reconnecting
320 agriculture, food, environment and health at the scale of a territory, based on its specific
321 resources and constraints (Lamine & al. 2012). This approach to agri-food systems is opposed
322 to the development of the agro-industrial regime based on the intensification, specialization
323 and massification of production, the liberalization of trade, a diffusionist knowledge regime
324 (Aggeri and Hatchuel, 2003) and a financialization of the system (Clapp, 2014).

325

4.1.1. Fostering alternatives to the dominant model

326 The dominant agro-industrial regime steers action in a certain direction. It has the particularity
327 of being very stable, as it is supported by a set of rules that are at once cognitive (belief
328 systems, principles of action, objectives, etc.), regulatory (laws, regulations, etc.) and
329 normative (values, behavioural norms) (Geels, 2004; Stassart, 2008). However, its structural
330 stability is now being weakened by environmental and economic crises in the farming sector,
331 as well as health scandals (Raoult-Wack, 2001; Beck, 2001). Initiatives described as “niches”
332 are thus emerging outside this regime, under the impetus of actors who need to create
333 alternatives to a system that no longer matches their vision of the future. The literature on
334 transitions has produced numerous conceptual propositions on the creation and development
335 of innovation niches (like strategic niche management and transition management), with
336 applications at city, neighbourhood and community levels (Wittmayer et al., 2014). In the
337 case of agri-food systems, examples of such innovation niches have spawned a corpus of
338 research around Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). These include initiatives like the
339 creation of informal networks of local farmers, and the development of other forms of social
340 organization between producers and consumers (community-supported agriculture, markets,
341 etc.) (Lamine et al., 2012)

342 The transition process involves complex and multidimensional interactions between the
343 micro, meso and macro levels. Transforming the dominant regime becomes possible when the
344 tensions and pressures between the different levels trigger the emergence of other
345 possibilities. The development of localized agri-food systems therefore involves a
346 confrontation/adjustment relationship between the alternative innovations that emerge at local
347 level and the dominant global agro-industrial model, where places of production, processing
348 and consumption are disconnected. It may be difficult, for example, to articulate short supply
349 chains that favour direct contact between producers and consumers, and long supply chains
350 that increase the number of intermediaries. There may also be a tension between the
351 legitimacy of institutional actors from public policy (with its resources, constraints and ways
352 of operating) and the legitimacy of citizens who come together to create new forms of
353 cooperation around food. This presents two challenges for support initiatives.

354 First, the emergence of alternatives needs to be facilitated and the proliferation of initiatives
355 encouraged. Some authors in the literature advocate a horizontal approach that multiplies
356 points of contact with the dominant regime (Elzen et al., 2012; Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010)
357 and connects locally grounded initiatives to encourage the sharing of experiences and the
358 spread of new ideas. This approach contrasts with the vision of dissemination and
359 generalization of the innovations produced.

360 Second, agri-food system transition does not take place outside the dominant system. There
361 are many stumbling blocks between the niche and the dominant system that need to be
362 addressed during the design process. The emergence of niches requires adaptation/adjustment
363 by both dominant and alternative actors, and even more so in the transition of agri-food
364 systems, which requires the involvement of a large number of very different actors (since we
365 all eat, everyone is concerned). It is therefore relevant to equip the design process so that it

366 allows this relationship to become part of a reflexive process in which the stakeholders can
367 identify the various adjustments required (Ingram, 2015).

368 In living-labs, there are proposals to conceptualize this link between niche and dominant
369 regime. Initially, the triple helix model strongly mobilized in the user-centric living-lab model
370 stemming from open innovation theories seems interesting insofar as it seeks to enrich the
371 design process through the participation of other actors. However, in the case of agri-food
372 systems, the difficulty of applying such a model seems to lie more in the number of actors to
373 involve in the design process. Whether citizens, politicians, businesses or farmers, the forms
374 of involvement can vary widely, which requires flexibility in the design process. This is a
375 criticism that has been levelled at the "transition management" or "strategic niche
376 management" models, frequently adopted by citizen-centred living labs. These models
377 involve streamlined and organized transition, which is contrary to a design process based on
378 learning and building as you go along.

379 4.1.2. Steering initiatives embedded in their context

380 The transition towards territorialized agri-food systems implies building the transition process
381 around the creative capacity of the people living in a territory. This is a situated approach
382 where what matters most is to create the frameworks for people to explore new paths outside
383 the dominant system, by confronting the tangible limits of reality. It is characterized by a
384 vision of transition involving a transformation of the relationship between people and their
385 environment. For example, for farmers transforming their practices, this particularly means
386 shifting from a process based on controlling living organisms through the use of inputs, to one
387 that relies on and works with these organisms (Cayre et al., 2018; Chevassus au Louis, 2000).
388 Embedding the transition process in a territory therefore involves enabling its actors to rebuild
389 new meaning around the environment in which they live. "In a nutshell, place-explicit
390 transition experiments can connect a sense of change (transformation) with a sense of place
391 by co-creating new practices and new relations between people and place and by allowing the
392 co-design or (re)establishment of places with symbolic meaning" (Frantzeskaki et al., 2018).
393 Anglade et al. (2018, 2019) have thus shown the importance of grounding initiatives
394 supporting agro-ecological transitions in the local environment so as to create situations
395 conducive to critical thinking and sharing of experiences, to encourage the development of
396 more autonomous systems of thought and practices. They found that providing spaces of
397 dialogue for actors to share their respective sensorial experiences could foster genuine
398 experience-sharing and allow these actors to overcome pre-established categories. It could
399 thus enable them to transform the operative and epistemic premises underpinning
400 conventional farming practices. More generally, the recent major shift towards eco-centric
401 approaches in environmental education (Barrable, 2019) has highlighted the central role of
402 place and outdoor teaching, with regular contact with nature, in reviving a sense of wonder
403 and attachment in order to foster responsible behaviour.

404 Bergval and Stahlbrost (2009) argue that living labs can be seen as both (i) an “approach”
405 with a certain methodology that aims to involve end-users and connect many different actors,
406 and (ii) a “milieu” made up of an environment created or selected to place the innovation
407 process as close as possible to real-life situations. “Lab refers to the intentional
408 experimentation as it is done in a laboratory, while living refers to the fact that this is
409 conducted in a real-life setting in contrast to an artificially created space” (Schliwa, 2013).
410 Living labs are therefore presumably geographically or institutionally bounded spaces where
411 stakeholders conduct experimentation for socio-technical innovation together”. Generally,
412 “experiments are conducted, monitored, and conducted again with improvements from the
413 previous round, in order to generate useful knowledge in a real-life setting” (ibid: 15).

414 In this sense, the living-lab approach seems interesting for integrating the design process in
415 the territory. However, as we have seen, the notion of experimentation "in a real-life context"
416 can involve very different realities. Frequently launched in the field of new technology, living
417 labs allow for the design and testing of prototypes, while enriching the design process by
418 immersing it in the daily life of communities of users (Bergvall-Kåreborn et al., 2009) By
419 contrast, the challenge with citizen-centric living labs is to propose innovations adapted to the
420 particularities of the area in which they are located. This notion of borders can however be
421 called into question when looking at the transition of agri-food systems, as rethinking the
422 organization of the agri-food system from a territory (e.g. a city) may require the involvement
423 of actors outside the territory. Therefore, the most relevant boundary to define the living lab
424 here may not be spatial. Defining the boundaries of the living lab by the network of actors that
425 compose it seems more interesting to us. It would allow even more flexibility in the transition
426 process and, from a methodological point of view, the analysis of the networks of actors can
427 equip the actors in their action.

428 4.1.3. Developing a new governance of the agri-food system

429 In the literature on transitions, questions surrounding roles and relationships between actors
430 have mostly been addressed by research currents working on the governance of transitions
431 within innovation niches (Frantzeskaki et al., 2012; Grin et al., 2010; Loorbach, 2010;
432 Meadowcroft, 2009). The development of niche innovations within the framework of agri-
433 food systems lends particular importance to the relationship and cooperation between local
434 actors. This has led to propositions to change agri-food governance systems, such as food
435 policy councils, which open the gates to governance by citizens on several scales. It thus
436 implies a new distribution of roles, and new forms of sharing and cooperation (mutual
437 support, trust, etc.). The literature highlights the diversity of actors involved in the transition
438 process at local level (policymakers, firms, social movements and civil society) and the
439 diversity of roles they can take on (such as “regime actor” or “niche actor”, for example)
440 (Wittmayer, 2016). Cross-boundary work between fields of knowledge has been identified as
441 a key process in the transformation of relationships between actors during transitions (Ingram,
442 2018).

443 Setting a transition in motion on a local scale induces not only a new definition/distribution of
444 roles, but also the (re)construction of their articulation (Elzen et al., 2012, Grin). It requires
445 the involvement of multiple actors at very different levels. The establishment of reflexive
446 governance of transition (Mardsen, 2013) has been suggested to take up these challenges.

447
448 Living-labs notably centred on sustainability offer methodological tools to think about
449 governance, particularly in line with Transition Management theories. They are interesting
450 insofar as they are opposed to the top-down project-based logic that is gaining prevalence in
451 the conception of the governance of food systems (Territorialized Food Project, European
452 Leader funding). However, the difficulty remains to envisage a form of governance that
453 allows for the involvement of widely diverse actors at different scales and with different types
454 of engagement, on the basis of co-creation. Keeping the design process "in touch" with the
455 territory and its inhabitants is a real challenge if the living lab is not to be turned into a mere
456 partnership project.

457 4.1.4. Supporting individual empowerment

458 A transition is a story that is woven over time through individuals' interactions and the
459 complexity of their environment (Abbott, 2001). This seems important to us, as it highlights
460 the experiential dimension of transitions. While a transition can be seen as a process with an
461 ultimate goal (the desire for a more sustainable model, etc.), within an open-ended
462 perspective, the forms it can take are the product of a construction process. Transition should
463 therefore be seen as a reflexive process in which the experience of situations and the
464 unfolding of events need to be prioritized (Elzen et al., 2012).

465 For the individuals who experience it, transition is similar to a destabilization of the
466 frameworks usually mobilized by individuals to act. This constitutes a paradigm shift that
467 requires new ways of being, thinking, and acting. Coquil (2014) formalized the
468 transformation in terms of action, objectives, knowledge, values, professional norms and tools
469 required by farmers engaged in an agro-ecological transition. He analysed this transition as a
470 change of professional world (Coquil et al., 2017). He adapted the concept of step-by-step
471 design (Coquil et al., 2014), to facilitate the acquisition of experience in transitions in the
472 making. This concept seeks to empower individuals by allowing them to grasp the full
473 complexity of the situation as it develops, so that they are able to make choices and
474 reconfigure the resources of their action. In the dominant model, farmers have become largely
475 stripped of their decision-making autonomy, with external diagnoses and ready-made
476 solutions produced by AKIS actors (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System). The
477 aim here is not to study the appropriation of an innovation designed without the users, but to
478 allow the subject to build up the resources they need for their own action. This fundamental
479 distinction is informed by design science theories, which have shown that innovation cannot
480 be grasped independently of the historical and cultural context in which it is steeped (Wisner,
481 1985 ; Temple et al., 2011).

482

483 This developmental dimension of transition shows the extent to which transition is a
484 knowledge-intensive process. Whether individually or collectively, the transition to healthier
485 and more sustainable agri-food systems requires new ways to facilitate experiential learning
486 and thus to empower subjects by restoring their ability to act on their environment.

487

488 Transition towards agri-food systems aims moreover to empower actors to transform their
489 environment. It allows citizens to negotiate the rules of governance of their agri-food systems,
490 and to participate in decision making on the direction to choose (El Bilali & al. 2018).
491 Transition of agri-food systems is thus accompanied by a political issue of citizen
492 empowerment. In this respect, the citizen-centric living-lab is an interesting tool to allow the
493 involvement of actors who are currently not necessarily integrated into the decision-making
494 process.

495

496 *4.2. Living lab, a multifaceted and fuzzy notion*

497 To sum up, we find concerns in the literature on transitions in agri-food systems that echo the
498 proposals formulated in the literature on living labs and more specifically in the citizen-
499 centred living lab stream. However, the implementation of living labs to support the transition
500 of agri-food systems also requires adjustments in view of the divergences in the response to
501 these issues (summarized in Table 2).

Table 2 : Analysis of the living lab concept in relation to issues surrounding support for the agri-food transition

Key characteristics	Transition des systems agri-alimentaires	Comparison with the characteristics of user-centric living labs (UCLL)	Comparison with the characteristics of citizen-centric living labs (CCLL)
Developing alternatives to the dominant model	<p>The transition process = complex and multidimensional interactions; involves confrontation /adjustment between the alternative innovations at local level and the dominant global agro-industrial model; The emergence of alternatives needs to be facilitated and the proliferation of initiatives encouraged; The interactions between these levels requires adaptation/adjustments by the actors of the dominant regime as well as the alternative actors; This has to be equipped in order to make this relationship part of a reflexive process.</p>	<p>No relationship between scales is reported.</p> <p>The Triple Helix model allows the involvement of a diversity of actors and a wide diversity of actors in the case of agri-food system transitions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are terms relating to a greater plurality of actors (university, policy maker, local community) - Is part of transition management theories criticized specifically for a rationalized and organized view of transition, which is in opposition to the process of design along the way.
An initiative grounded in its context	<p>This transition involves a transformation of the relationship between people and their environment; It is necessary to encourage the development of more autonomous systems of thought and practices; A “sense of place” must be recreated.</p>	<p>The laboratory is spatially delimited (the house, the vehicle) and is situated on a very small scale.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A contextualized approach in a larger space, particularly in cities (urban living labs); - An approach aimed at both product and social innovation; - The boundaries of the living lab geographically delimit the space of experimentation, which is not necessarily relevant for the transition of agri-food systems.
Supporting the transformation	<p>Setting a transition in motion on a local scale induces not only a new definition/distribution of roles, but also the (re)construction of their articulation</p>	<p>A relationship between actors marked by a distinction between</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A wide variety of actors: academics,

<p>of relationships between actors</p>	<p>It requires the involvement of multiple actors at very different levels and the establishment of reflexive governance of transition.</p>	<p>designers and users.</p>	<p>government actors, policy makers, students;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An experimental approach based on co-creation; - Governance and involvement of inhabitants are addressed; - Difficulties remain in conceiving of a form of governance that allows for the involvement of widely diverse actors, in different ways and on different scales, based on a principle of co-creation.
<p>Supporting individual empowerment</p>	<p>Transition should therefore be seen as a reflexive process in which the experience of situations and the unfolding of events need to be prioritized; the acquisition of experience in transitions-in-the-making must be facilitated; experiential learning must be facilitated, so that subjects are empowered as their ability to act on their environment is restored; enable citizens to negotiate the rules in the governance of their agri-food systems, and to participate in decision making on its orientation.</p>	<p>These approaches focus on the appropriation or adoption of a technology by individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empowerment/creativity/user involvement are a set of terms that reflect an approach aimed at empowering actors; - Learning is core cited.

5. Discussion: How could living labs sustain the transition of local agri-food systems?

5.1. *A renewal of experimentation modalities*

The living lab concept strongly embraces the notion of experimentation as a way to support sustainability transitions. But this notion is caught between two meanings. On the one hand, there is user-centric experimentation which, although it takes place in “real-life settings”, is monitored, measured and largely controlled, just as it would be in a laboratory. It only partially challenges the diffusionist relationship between those who design to gain knowledge and those who participate in the experiment. Here, the process is enriched with users’ knowledge to improve the object designed, following an iterative process.

A broader conception, on the other hand, posits the laboratory as a place to experiment and learn through an iterative and generative process of the “prob-and-learn” or “learning-by-doing” type. Ansell and Bartenberger (2016) call this generative experimentation. This second approach, more present in citizen-centric living labs, seems better suited to agri-food systems. It supports the production of contextualized, actionable knowledge to contribute to inhabitants’ empowerment and the concrete transformation of territories. This means building representations of the complexity of the issues at stake through action and insightful reflexive self-evaluation by the actors leading the initiatives. Experimentation thus becomes an approach to the governance of transitions towards greater sustainability “that entails a multi-actor collaboratively and creatively trialling new ways of organizing, doing, relating and in this way, generating alternative (forms of) innovative solutions with the potential to address contemporary urban challenges” (Frantzeskaki et al., 2018, p.1045). This position, which is based on an abductive approach, is rooted in pragmatist theories (Dewey, 1910). “The notion of urban living lab in other words, offers an interpretive frame that can be used to make sense of what happens and to offer guidance for action” (Karvonen and Van Heur, 2014).

We believe that to support transitions of territories towards healthier and more sustainable agri-food systems, experimentation needs to foster the emergence and survival of breakthrough innovations vis-à-vis the dominant agro-industrial model. The living lab approach, however, does not seem to guarantee this. Some innovations, although bottom-up and striving for sustainability (for example through the use of new technology), remain essentially for-profit, prioritizing private profits for companies without really challenging the status quo and entrenched economic and social inequalities (Chatterton, 2016). Moreover, as we have shown, the living lab concept as a whole is strongly influenced by notions surrounding new ICT, management and entrepreneurship. This raises doubts as to whether such models can actually move away from the dominant agro-industrial model, towards a greater adaptability of socio-ecosystems. The field of agro-ecological transition is caught in a twofold epistemic and political tension: on the one hand there are approaches to the production of knowledge based on the capitalization and sharing of experience-based

knowledge developed through contact with the communities seeking to strengthen the capacities of farmers and other rural actors, and on the other hand there are approaches revolving around the encapsulation of knowledge in technical artefacts. This includes so-called “precision” or digital farming, the deployment of which relies on the development of smart tools, mainly by large cereal cooperatives. These decision-making tools are able to quickly generate optimized and streamlined solutions (based on which criteria?) thanks to an ever-growing data collection and processing capacity (for example adjusting nitrogen fertilization using drones). But behind the promise of humans “augmented” with forms of encapsulation of knowledge, emerges the whole question of the relationship between power and knowledge in the control of these systems. Various non-profit alternative farming networks are advocating for small-scale and autonomous farming, in opposition to the technological vision of agroecology that makes farmers captive and dependent on expensive technology and mechanisms of external appropriation of data and knowledge (Fressoli et al., 2015). In our opinion, living labs can support local communities’ capacity to invent and experiment with more sustainable lifestyles, provided that the notion of commons central to experimentation is given greater importance.

5.2. *Building communities, experimenting with what brings us together*

According to us, supporting transitions towards healthier and more sustainable agri-food systems calls for a paradigm shift with a new focus on the territory and “caring for it”. The notion of “commons”, which has been the subject of a significant literature especially since Ostrom's work (Ostrom et al., 1994), seems to carry interesting conceptual and methodological tools for the development of sustainable living-labs. The idea is to think of food as a common good and not as a commodity (Vivero-Pol, 2017) For Chatterton & Pickerill (2010): “the commons (fields, village greens and forests) are geographical entities governed by those who depend on them – the commoners. However, the term refers to much more than simple bounded territories: it also encompasses physical attributes of air, water, soil and plants, as well as socially reproduced goods such as knowledge, languages, codes and information. The shared attribute is that these entities are collectively owned and managed. [...] It is something that is perpetually made and remade, created, eroded and defended.” In this way, is called common, what a society institutes as the result of its collective action. Commons are therefore understood as the fruit of human activity.

The commons have a social and political dimension in the sense that they allow collective action to be rethought. Citizens become legitimate actors in the governance of common resources. The cultivation of shared gardens, the introduction of a local currency carried by citizens or the creation of a ‘Zone to be protected’, all exemplified collective actions, management and sharing of what belongs to all. This collective approach to transition highlights the transformative capacity of local communities coming together around material and immaterial elements to experiment together with concrete responses to the problems they identify. Ezio Manzini (2005) refers to these as creative communities, groups of people who “cooperate to invent, improve and manage innovative solutions to develop new lifestyles” that are more sustainable (Jégou and Manzini, 2008). Through action on and the transformation of

their territory, these communities participate in the (re)construction of a “consciousness of place” (Magnaghi, 2017). Territory finds meaning through the practices that develop therein.

In terms of regional planning, this promotes shared governance involving inhabitants in the broad sense of the term (citizens, local officials, civil society organizations, etc.), to create design arenas allowing local communities to experiment with more sustainable lifestyles, drawing on the resources that their territory has to offer. This calls for a new division of roles between the actors. As we have seen, citizen-centric living labs are characterized by cross-organizational collaboration where actors from society, academia, industry and politics meet. These new forms of transdisciplinary experimentation transform the traditional relationships between knowledge and power. It is no longer possible to distinguish the designer from the user, and different forms of knowledge co-exist. Each actor provides the community with their own skills and particularities. But this is not straightforward and requires specific project management tools.

To achieve this, the continuous development of common values within a living lab project is important, so as to ensure consistency across all parties’ actions and the evolution of their representations and knowledge. We distinguish here between two principles of action. Based on common values and a common will, the aim is to gain momentum to leave a situation that has become uncomfortable, but concrete implementation remains to be enacted through collective action, shaped by the unexpected developments of the project and the particularities of the environment. This proposition is based on the assumption that it is in change and tooling of change that the purposes and common objects are defined and redefined. This approach differs from more traditional and institutional teleological project management, which seeks first to establish desired outcomes, based on a diagnosis striving for objectivity, and then to determine the scope and to programme the modalities, places, and timeframes of action, before transforming reality.

We argue that, on the contrary, confrontation with reality is a source of learning which fosters the production of actionable knowledge in an environment, and requires open, step-by-step project management (Coquil, 2014). This approach revolves around knowledge acquisition by the actors involved, which determines and (re)orients the project’s progress along the way. Step-by-step design also strives for collective learning and the collective transformation of frames of reference, norms and values, by opening spaces for the actors to express themselves and share their experiences. The aim, with shared governance of transitions, is to leverage intersubjectivity to create shared meaning. Each person’s role develops, becomes distinctive from that of the others, becomes more specific, and evolves. Such organizational and collaborative learning allows each person to act, taking into account the actions of others (what they bring to the project, what skills and values they have, etc.) (Béguin, 2010). Despite the collective’s heterogeneity and variability (with different investments), step-by-step design allows the actors to work together. The knowledge produced during the design process is therefore situated (each actor develops his perception of the environment and the issues at stake, based on his investment in the project) and grounded in an environment. This type of open-ended approach raises the question of the role of public policy in these projects, as well

as its modes of funding and its evaluation methodologies and human (and not object) centered criteria.

5.3. Experimenting following a contextualized approach designed to empower

The living lab approach allows citizens to (re)build their relationship with their environment and its significant to themselves by being centred on the commons, and by enabling each actor concerned to act at their own level. This notion of contextualization features in citizen-centric living labs especially through the empowerment of citizens. However, this concept can refer to very different realities. The concept of empowerment often suffers from a managerial influence by trying to apply managerial principles to it (Paturel, 2012). Based on this rationale, empowerment would thus consist in developing the resources of an abstract individual in order to apply management frameworks to the initiative and allow for the development of a programmatic approach. According to this definition, the participation of individuals is reduced in the expression of their needs that are only a reflection of the domination mechanisms of the dominant regime. Users can only marginally change the solutions proposed by the designers.

However, this desire for empowerment is still interesting if it aims to enable citizens to develop a critical awareness and a capacity to transform their environment (Le Bossé, 2003). Thus, we believe that one of the priorities for living labs seeking to support transitions of agri-food systems should be to foster autonomous thinking, so as to enable them to act in complex and uncertain environments. It should also be to support transformative learning (Dirkx, 1998), to move towards a more democratic society and allow for individual self-actualization. Ultimately, the goal should be to enable inhabitants of a territory to build their own understanding of agri-food issues and to influence the future of their territory. To aim for empowerment, the living-lab can not be confined to the involvement of people in the action but it must also support the acquisition of experience, by taking distance and reflection on the action taken, as a meaning-making process. Living labs therefore need to build knowledge that is actionable by and for citizens, to allow them to experience their territory through action, and to develop an “awareness of place” so that commons can be built around farming and food.

5.4. The utopia of horizontal project development

Any alternative initiative is immersed in the dominant regime (Pickerill & Chatterton, 2006). There is always a relationship materially or immaterially (institutional organizations, etc.), between these two scales, which is complex and makes radical changes difficult. In this way, we can doubt about the real capacity of local alternatives to challenge the model in place. This is a legitimate fear, given how strongly new technology, management or business, for instance, are endorsed by living labs, even those striving for more sustainable lifestyles.

Yet, while most living labs rather align with a reformist vision of change, commons-based approaches are closer to utopia as understood by Thomas Moore (Chatterton, 2016; Dahle,

2007; Wright, 2010). They aim to create examples of possible futures based on new forms of cooperation and governance of a territory's resources. Thus, developing an approach articulated around the notion of commons offers new forms of powerful and democratic confrontation by granting real importance to restoring inhabitants' control over the transformation of their territories. On the one hand, by placing "doing" at the core of experimentation, these common-based living-lab open up the possibilities to envision other futures. As Carolan wrote (2015 ; p.13), "*to know something differently and see things in a new light we have to do something different*". On the other hand, they foster the involvement of new citizens, making cooperation not exclusive. Citizens should be able to invest themselves according to different forms (e.g. in "doing", in "creating", in "carrying projects", or in the "emergence of ideas") and be able to move from one posture to another according to their possibilities of involvement.

Moreover, the challenge for living labs endeavouring to transition territories towards healthier and more sustainable agri-food systems is thus to foster the emergence and networking of such "utopias". Whereas some living labs are calling for up-scaling niche innovations, it seems to us that commons-based living labs offer another perspective, endeavouring to connect different initiatives united by a common goal. This allows for the sharing of resources, knowledge, know-how and experience, gradually strengthening the dynamics. This more horizontal approach fits with an effort to multiply connections with the dominant regime in order to influence it (Elzen et al., 2012) – an idea that seems to be echoed in Paul Chatterton and Pickerill's words about the LILAC living lab (2010): "Drawing on the language of the multi-level perspective (MLP), the Lilac case points towards a transition process less interested in breakthrough, but more in break-out. Daily practices and discourses at Lilac are not simply about scaling-up to influence the mainstream; there is a desire to work beyond niche and mainstream". These initiatives thus make it possible to concretely transform living practices and ways of inhabiting the Earth, through their creative approaches to solidarity, sharing, the use of resources, and so on.

5. Conclusion: A call for common living labs

In view of the political and scientific enthusiasm for the living lab concept, the bibliometric analysis afforded a more precise view of the dimensions it encompasses. Like Schliwa and McCormick (2016), we found a clear distinction between user-centred and citizen-centred living labs. It seems to us that the latter approach is better suited to supporting territories' transitions towards localized agri-food systems. In particular, it allows for using experimentation as a form of **governing** transitions, grounding the latter in co-creation between diverse actors. However, the grip of technology and management (which also impacts the political sphere) on this concept casts doubt on its ability to influence the dominant agro-industrial model. This is why we propose an approach centred on the construction, management and sharing of commons, which we call CLL: Common Living Lab. This non-profit approach promotes experimentation where the production of knowledge is grounded in an environment and supports the acquisition of experience and individual empowerment to act on the future of a territory.

This commons of transitions towards greater sustainability is not only about creating new forms of social organization, but also about building new relationships with the environment that are more responsible and respectful.

In order to achieve a harmonious and sustainable co-evolution of socio-ecosystems, the challenge is to include non-humans – land, water, plants, animals – as subjects in their own right and no longer as mere objects of shared experimentation/experience. Thus the polysemy of the term “living” will take on its full meaning, evoking both not only places of living but also life more directly, that which lives, that which is alive.

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Appendix:

Details of the clusters (20 most frequently cited terms) shown on the map.

Cluster 1	
Terms	Occurrences
Data	187
Experiment	125
Building	121
Sensor	82
Impact	67
Performance	65

Device	60
Algorithm	48
Energy	45
Component	44
Demand	44
Behavior	43
Monitoring	43
Control	40
Consumption	39
Feature	39
Behaviour	34
Pattern	33
Mean	32
Unit	32

Cluster 2	
Terms	Occurrences
Role	145
Sustainability	86
Place	79
Literature	77
Learning	70
Co Creation	60
Experimentation	59
Form	59
Campus	58
Innovation Process	53
Structure	47
Understanding	43
Transition	41
Mechanism	40
Dynamic	39
Implication	36
Transformation	36
Cooperation	34
Urban Living Lab	32
Definition	31

Cluster 3	
Terms	Occurrences
Participant	79
Home	75
Health	52
Interview	48
Adoption	47
Robot	45
Acceptance	39
Feedback	39
Task	38
Older Adult	36
Care	35
Research Project	32
Response	32
Situation	31
Elderly Person	30
Smes	30
Lab Project	28
Professional	28
Complexity	27
Motivation	25

Cluster 4	
Terms	Occurrences
University	135
Student	96
Infrastructure	83
Education	70
Government	57
Internet	52
Program	46
Engagement	45
Teaching	38
Communication Technology	36
Gap	34
South Africa	33

Cost	32
Entreprise	32
School	32
Web	31
Access	30
Course	30
Intervention	28
Skill	26

Cluster 5	
Terms	Occurrences
Product	100
Initiative	88
Partnership	54
Effect	50
Consumer	40
Patient	35
Test	33
Production	32
Subject	31
Difference	28
Vision	25
Site	24
Innovative solution	18
Respect	15
Reduction	14
Risk	14
Cluster	13
Independent living	13
Policy maker	13
Prevention	13