RESEARCH TOPICS AND EMERGING TRENDS EMPHASISING KEY SETTINGS FOR DURABLE LIVING LABS

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Living Labs have become essential instruments for urban innovation, fostering co-creation, stakeholder collaboration, and real-world experimentation across various domains, including mobility, digitalisation, economy, healthcare, under the smart city paradigm. While these initiatives offer significant potential for participatory governance and digital transformation, their long-term sustainability remains uncertain. Some Living Labs evolve into enduring institutions, while others cease operations after a limited period, raising important questions about the governance, financial and institutional conditions that influence their durability.

This study explores the factors that shape the longevity of Living Labs through a bibliometric and thematic analysis of the literature, focusing on their organisational structures, governance models and sources of funding. By examining selected cases, the study assesses the lifespan of these initiatives, their financing mechanisms, and the actors driving their development, whether from academic, public or private sectors. Furthermore, we analyse the thematic focus of Living Labs to understand how sectoral priorities influence their resilience. The findings reveal patterns of success and failure, offering insights into why some Living Labs persist while others dissolve.

By identifying the key governance and financial mechanisms that contribute to the sustainability of Living Labs, this study provides a deeper understanding of their role in urban innovation. The results offer valuable guidance for policymakers, urban planners and researchers seeking to design more adaptive, long-lasting Living Labs that effectively support collaborative and sustainable urban development.

Keywords: Living Labs, (participatory) governance, urban innovation, sustainability, smart city