

# Case: Exit LL Rotterdam

## Obstacles and challenges prompting a Living Lab to leave the project



20 December 2023

### Case description

- The **Rotterdam Boulevard Zuid Living Lab** is a collaborative initiative aiming at the exploration and implementation of innovative solutions for **promoting healthy diets** in Rotterdam.
- The neighborhood is notoriously known for its **unbalanced food offer** leaning towards fast food. Here, 57% of the adult people (4,5000) are overweight (compared to 50% nationally) and 21% are severely obese (compared to 15% national)
- The Living Lab **focuses on engaging and empowering vulnerable groups**, such as low-income households and ethnic minorities, but also young adults and seniors, who can benefit from adopting healthier to do so, representatives from the municipalities have linked up with **local consortia and stakeholders**. dietary habits
- The municipality has decided to first **approach the local population** and shop owners as a testing ground.

### Take-home lessons

- **Driving Forces assessment:** This example illustrates that LLs are frequently exposed to higher level driving forces and trends such as *poverty, inflation, racism and even international conflicts* affecting social cohesion in neighborhoods. In the case of Rotterdam, the neighborhood figures on obesity in comparison with national statistics are quite telling. It certainly is worth accessing facts and figures from relevant departments and sources. Here, recent and frequent timelines are important to establish links with the concrete case/community.
- **Impact management:** Even – or especially – small-scale impacts, e.g. of municipal planning (here a tram stop construction), but also the planning of public events, the designation of urban parks, the cutting of trees or the locations of weekly food markets can directly affect the well-being of people, their daily activities and decisions. LL should hold account of these impacts, *offer transparency* and examine how directly these are related to the driving forces
- **Trust building:** LLs – especially if associated with a municipality – can be perceived as an extension of governmental bodies and hence as yet another political instrument. Much depends on the credibility of the Living Lab staff, their ability to build trust with key *community figures* or to engage in bottom-up processes in which local people are taking the lead when developing, e.g. *a vision for the community*. While continuity and a long-term perspective is of utmost importance, frictions and mismatches should be tackled at short-term.
- **Research embedding:** when local communities are (over-)exposed to research activities it is important to make use of existing results, avoid repetitions/redundancies, to seek synergies (e.g. hair salon & healthy food provision targeting at mothers) and to offer rewards.
- **Research design:** while engaging in targeted interventions, municipality staff should not play a key/decisive/explicit role when implementing core (academic) research activities as this might put pressure and interfere with the notion of community trust.

## Discussion

- Caroline mentions that in their LLs the approach is to set up/find community groups and then to enter a discussion with them (on food). Also connecting with key figures in the community that have an interest in (healthy) food and can take on a promoting role through the groups. She also recognizes the issue of LL being overwhelmed with researchers and other external parties, and shares the question on how to deal with this.
- Jana shares the perception that hat FEAST is taken a much more low-threshold approach than PLAN'EAT – in terms of research requests. To overcome the issue of LL becoming “over-researched” or pressured into certain activities, her approach is to an offer to combine needs of the target group, e.g. hair salon/manicure and provision of good/healthy food and kids’ activities if you want to target ‘single mothers in remote areas’. In this way it can be appealing to the wider interest field of the target group.
- Caroline also thinks that engaging a community in co-design processes and research is more useful if you cater the project towards the needs of the community.
- Dirk: in the case of Rotterdam, offering extra meeting space and opportunities addressing the construction work could have been a combining approach
- Geoffrey mentions that transparency is very important; addressing marginal groups it is important to develop a vision for the community; a reward system is needed to keep them engaged.
- Micky asks what to do if there is no extra money available: probably money to offer for cooperation > e.g. cooking events o Geoffrey shares the example of Transition Super Labs, a novel concept that goes beyond the traditional LL and operates on a much larger scale.

## Attendees

Anthony Fardet,	PLAN'EAT kids
Jana Kirschner,	Brussels Policy Lab (PLAN'EAT)
Caroline Welch,	LL Good Food Oxfordshire
Chiara Ferravante,	Tuscany LL
Federica Manca,	Tuscany LL
Susana Campos,	LL Alto Minho
Katerina Riviou,	Open School Lab Athens
Geoffrey Kwala,	Uganda Permaculture Consortium
Micky Hickersberger,	LL Weinviertel
Michael Hainitz,	LEADER Region
Chirara Chirilli,	UNISG
Merel Dubbeldam,	SusMetro
Dirk Wascher,	SusMetro

## Further reading/Annex

- Case Rotterdam: see workshop slides [here](#)
- About [Transition Super Labs](#) and some cases implementing the TSLs: [Link](#)
- Publication: [Healthy Food is Moving Up the Dutch Urban Agenda](#)

## Next CoP events

24 January 2024

7 February 2024

21 February 2024

Send your case to [copfeast@gmail.com](mailto:copfeast@gmail.com)!

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