

# **SOCIAL INNOVATION ACCELERATION IN CITIES**

Innovation that brings value to everyone



SEiSMiC's legacy...

***Starting the SIAC Network;  
conclusions, answers and future steps  
in Europe***

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## Preamble

Dear reader,

We proudly present this report, written in assignment of Platform31 the Dutch coordinator for the transnational European project [SEiSMiC](#), connected to JPI Urban Europe. We look back at our journey of the last years and happily share our experiences with you. We hope it brings you insights you can use in your own line of work or inspire you to contribute to the evolving world of social innovative (SI) action so that we, all of us, work together on an evermore social innovation friendly ecosystem.

The main conclusion after 2,5 years of work for us is, that there is **no level playing field** for citizens when it comes to start, grow and sustain SI solutions. Another important conclusion we draw is, that in order to nourish SI solutions it is necessary **to create a SI-friendly ecosystem** meaning that at least the 7 thresholds we defined are solved. Read about them in chapter 3. Further we came to the insight that one of the main conditions for a SI-friendly ecosystem is the **local co-creation and defining of most urgently felt problems** in which all groups; citizens, city policy-makers, researchers and private companies participate. To participate equally is the only way to really share responsibility. As long as political decisions concerning the local problems are not created with citizens, there will be no change possible.

We tell you how SIAC came into being in chapter 3 and in chapter 4 we tell you what findings we gathered being a social innovation ourselves. In chapter 7, very short, you will find a list of what we produced so far. In chapter 6 we dive into the world of European networks and programs and share what we experienced and give some ideas of what could help social innovation at the European level. A number of important projects and programs on social innovation will end next year (TRANSIT, SI-DRIVE). As is common practice with the ending of the projects, related networks and results will eventually disappear. So new networks are created again, not by citizens, but by institutions. **It seems a good moment in time to evaluate what kind of action at European level is helpful for social innovation. And to harvest and maintain and evaluate what is already found.** To mention something: do we need huge budgets, conferences, challenges and reports, or flexibility and a lot of small budgets? The Dutch presidency of the EU promoted social innovation; the question is how to sustain such a temporary boost in the long term, and how to create ownership by citizens of this movement.

Governmental action regarding social innovation at this moment is policy driven. So the awareness is there, but we question whether the current situation is an ideal situation. We see that small (silo)steps are taken by local government, we already saw steps taken in the private sector in certain (digital) fields. The chasm between citizens and scientists is still quite large, but SEiSMiC in particular tries to bridge the gap step by step. Still a lot of work needs to be done for SI solutions to become a real force, a real economical and political counterweight.

This is a report written by two citizens, our own experience in the field of social innovation was our starting-point. We connected that experience to that of other innovative practitioners, free-thinkers from universities and policy-makers from cities.

Arjan Biemans & Erna Bosschart

The Netherlands 27-09-2016

## 1 Introduction: What is the SIAC Network?

SIAC is a trans national working and learning network started within the SEiSMiC project, at the end of 2014. SIAC stands for *Social Innovation Acceleration in Cities*. The network is founded by us, two Dutch citizens, Arjan Biemans and Erna Bosschart. We are working voluntarily, in the field of social innovation. By supporting social innovators we learned amongst other things that *in order for social innovation to become a real societal and economical strength it is necessary to establish a social innovation friendly ecosystem*. For that to occur, all groups within society need to define and co-create locally results for most urgently felt problems. People, Private, Public and Research need to cooperate and to create new relations, to effectively identify urgent issues and work together on solving them.

Our desire is to create and facilitate local infrastructures within European cities open for all citizens, that will accelerate social innovative solutions for the big societal challenges we face today. **We build upon the approach and work together with the Sociale InnovatieFabriek (the Social Innovation Factory) from Flanders.**

An European network, because we want to exchange knowledge transnationally about SI innovations itself, learn from each others and at the same time organize research on the scalability, (cultural) transferability, impact of these solutions and the processes that are involved.

Our mission is

*To boost social innovations by offering the innovators locally, place-based, the support they need to thrive  
and by doing so to build local networks that will grow to be self-enabling  
so social innovative solutions become structural solutions  
and thus create an SI-friendly ecosystem*

### **Regarding the approach we share within the network:**

Within the network we use a number of principles regarding the approach to support and boost social innovation:

- A congruent approach: social innovation means, ultimately, everybody has relevant knowledge, so acceleration of social innovation should be open to everybody and all ideas;
- Non-linear approach: the creation of new knowledge, relations and perspectives is central and the focus is not on products, technique and competition;
- Cross sector approach: to create value in society, efforts should contribute to different areas of life;
- A structural approach: the local networks should become self-enabling over time;
- An open approach with reciprocity: the support is available for everyone; in return beneficiaries contribute their knowledge/time to new beneficiaries of the local network. ;

## **Reinventing parts of society: Citizens Living Labs**

Government is at the moment not serving society by putting her representative reason, (sectoral) policy approaches, existing paradigms, institutional checks and balances systems, etc. above the participative reason. Participatory democracy needs real space for new and different ideas to merge and make co-creation possible. In order to realize this we need place-based centers, in cities, where everyone is welcome regardless the topic of their social innovative concept. They are in need of structural specific support regarding their concepts in order to evolve them into sustainable projects. See Annex 4 to read more about these Citizens Living Labs.

Further in these place-based centers various groups need to co-create on a structural basis in equality; People, Public, Private and Research. In our opinion participants from these groups come together annually and together decide on an agenda for the city of most urgent problems that need to be solved. Each group can then participate in the necessary innovative solutions working from their strength and know-how. For that it is necessary to have; transparency in decisionmaking processes, equal opportunities to participate in those processes and the preferable solutions, and knowledge exchange between and for all 4 groups. And in this way we create a (more equal) level playing field.

## **Networking**

Together with like minded people within the SEiSMiC network, the process of network building started in early 2015. We contacted besides the people we met through SEiSMiC, at meetings, from our personal network and in our daily life, a lot of relevant people in Europe. People working at European offices, policymakers of cities, national governments, funds, people working within policy structures or research programs, or ones totally dedicated to their own endeavour; social innovators, entrepreneurs, etc. Free thinkers and experts European programs and networks like TRANSIT and URBACT.

And within European countries itself, we spoke with universities, social innovators and/or lab owners, policy makers: we now have [participants](#) from 9 European countries from various backgrounds (see annex 1).

## **So far we organized/produced:**

- [A starting paper](#) in which we place De Sociale InnovatieFabriek (The Social Innovation Factory) from Flanders and described their approach on accelerating social innovative projects.
- Three international network meetings and another one is on it's way this October.
- [A joint research proposal](#) (a co-creation of citizens and researchers) for JPI with a consortium of 23 partners,
- A features document about transnationally shared [Features of Citizens Living Labs](#) based on the approach from De Sociale InnovatieFabriek combined with the transnational knowledge within the SIAC Network of social innovators, scientists and city policymakers;
- Together with Jurgen van der Heijden we created a [business-model](#) for SI-projects;
- A number of presentations at different conferences; e.g. SRIA launch JPI Urban Europe;
- A website: <http://www.siac.network> on which you can read most of this and more;

- A short movie about our shared values, see [www.siac.network](http://www.siac.network);
- A legislation report for SEiSMiC which you are reading now;
- About 5.000 mails/letters and dozens and dozens of Skype calls/visits to social innovators, scientists, local/national/European policymakers, (inter)national funds and (inter)national companies.

In fact we have identified the features and processes necessary to run a CLL. We are currently working on the design of the digital matchmaking tool to organize the process of support and the realization of the transnational database for (scientific) validation.



## 2 Why we started

The starting points of this endeavor are our personal experiences in the fields of media, higher education, social housing, health care, youth care, public policy and social innovation during the last 25 years in the Netherlands. The difficulties innovators face trying to realize change and innovation in existing contexts, structures and organizations is mind blowing at times, and take a long breath and enduring persistence anyhow! On the one side, organizational goals (of existing structures) keep taking precedence over societal and personal needs and solutions, even when proven beneficiary. Short term solutions are favored over structural long term solutions due to systemic defaults. On the other side we see the queeste of the last decade by government, institutions and business for innovative solutions to solve problems or storm the markets. And our shared realisation that innovation projects and grassroots initiatives that do surface, don't or hardly ever, become structural solutions.

### **We got convinced from our experiences and intensive networking that (five principles):**

1. we need to connect intrinsically as humans to foster change instead of professionals representing institutions; social interaction and co-creation is the starting point to realize shared commitment and ownership.
2. we need to look different at 'results'; straightforward formulated goals and related actions have their limitations when it comes to cheer innovative (not-yet-measured) solutions (later on we formulated: 'social innovation is not about new products, but new relationships').
3. we need a broadly shared vision and goals: it is not enough to work within one structure or change a structure on it's own whereas everything is connected to everything especially in our globalized world.
4. we need to create a level playing field for everyone in order to make co-creation something real. So far citizens have been seen either as 'users' or (a few) as 'smart start ups'. For successful co-creation we need democratic and economical equality of participants, reciprocity, openness and trust. In short: for citizens this is not a level playing field.
5. we need changemakers; people with ideas and enthusiasm, who continue even when things are difficult. Transitional change is the work of humans: changes take place in the area where arrangements and rules are not yet there or are not effective.

*In the area where we have to create new values, it is only personal values and knowledge where we can rely on, to motivate first steps*

Our thinking is prominently shaped by experience and as we proceed, is backed up by scientific research. For us, to just go on with our work, in this growing world of upcoming new ideas and energies and knowing most of the ideas wouldn't become a real part of the bigger world we live in, didn't feel appealing. While a countless number of people is looking worldwide for new ways of working, to contribute to change. So, we decided, why not unite like minded people to co-create and learn together how to put an SI-friendly ecosystem in place and spread that knowledge? There are no networks active that aim for the realization of a sustainable local support structure for social innovators on a transnational scale, embedded locally in a democratic way with a continuously learning process.

### 3 Coincidence perceived as opportunity; how SIAC was born

Reading the former words one might get the impression that the network came into being by straight forward thinking. That of course is not the case. So below we write down a number of 'opportunities' that shaped this endeavor. As coincidence, when recognized as a real opportunity, is one characteristic of innovation. And very important, all the people in and outside our network that we talked to, contributed with their knowledge and sharpened our thoughts.

We, Arjan Biemans and Erna Bosschart, were introduced to each other by Fanny Gelissen, employee at Platform31 in the Netherlands in May 2014. We were both busy with innovations and visited Platform31 regularly for discussions and debates. Arjan has a history in the fields of education and health care. Erna has a history in media, social housing and youth care. We worked as policy makers, writers, social worker, journalist, lobbyist, coach. **We recognized a real will to better the world in each other.** Together with other citizens and professionals we started to support innovators, with people from Arjan's network [Projectenbrigade](#). We supported those innovators that got stuck with their innovative projects in various fields. We did this, because we thought and still think, that social innovation is a path in which we can better our world. With SI innovations we can solve many of the great challenges our society faces today in a more democratic and more effective way.

It was Fanny's idea to bring us together, and she introduced us to the European SEiSMiC network. She connected us to Bram Heijkers, coordinator for SEiSMiC in the Netherlands. We talked to them about our ideas and vision. Bram asked us to preside a round table conversation at the first national meeting about our findings in our Dutch network.

#### **Based on our experience we used that day these 7 themes/thresholds:**

- 1. Social innovators and rules and legislation that holds them back.** Maybe did not so in the beginning (because everybody thought that the little project was just nice) but once the project begins to grow it will be judged by the current legislation and law whereas before it was the exception, an experiment on a temporary basis.
- 2. Social innovators are at risk of becoming an institution all over again** or at least get institutionalized; most often as a result of the existing structures that citizens are unable to address. They can be overtaken by existing powers or the people who founded the innovation adjust it to the current (inadequate) system in order to continue.
- 3. Social innovators and the idea of being competitors of existing companies;** especially when it comes to social projects concerning health care; youth care; care for the elderly etc. Because this area is dominated by companies that are most of the time subsidized and they don't want to share that money with other providers.
- 4. The existing infrastructure is managed by existing organizations with their specific dynamics and communication.** For instance: infrastructural works like real estate buildings that lose their original purpose. Social innovators that look for a place and want to give a new meaning, a new usage of those properties have difficulty in communicating with and finding solutions together. Although we are talking about public properties. Or presumable cross sectoral projects in which professionals of different institutions have to work together but answer to the systems of their employer first.
- 5. Social innovative projects that also have paid professionals working with them or for them; the roles of paid professionals and those of unpaid volunteers can cause big conflicts**



over stealing jobs (when they are paid) but also on quality or security aspects; can the volunteer do the same work as the professional? Are professionals able to be open to civilians needs or do they stick to the internal logic of their organization?

6. **Social innovators**, like ordinary people, do not live in sectors and **often invent cross-cutting solutions that do not fit the current sectoral approach** of institutions and government.

7. **Social innovative projects need to be connected to their socio-political context.**

These first 7 findings are backed up by reports from [FORUM](#) (in Dutch) and the report [Lab Matters](#) from Kennisland and others, or the report Social Innovation for Public Service Excellence from [GPCSE](#). We concluded at that table that locally we would need an Alderman of Free Space where all cross-cutting ideas could land. And that it would be a good idea if we do establish a 5% rule in government, meaning that 5% of all sectoral budgets should go into that portfolio where cross-sectoral innovative solutions could be mastered. For more interesting news, blogs & reports about SI that we use, please visit our website [www.siac.network](http://www.siac.network).

At the same meeting Bram Heijkers invited Kaat Peeters, director of the Sociale InnovatieFabriek (Social Innovation Factory) in Flanders, to share their approach in supporting social innovators. Immediately we recognized that their approach brought something missing to the table; a structured support available without thresholds for all, with a build-in reciprocity and with the aim to build a network that in the end would become self-sustainable and, their connection to the socio-political context. We reached out to her immediately (for more details on their approach read our starting paper).

The day after the first international SEiSMiC meeting in november 2014 we had an appointment with Kaat Peeters to ask her if they would be interested in starting a trans national learning and working network in order to support social innovation in Europe. The practical approach of the SIF fitted very well with what we learned so far and what we aimed for: their approach and insights would be very useful as a starting point. She agreed to share insights and knowledge. We believe that existing knowledge and insights are very important to build upon and create better solutions together.

At the launching meeting of SEiSMiC in Brussels itself we presented our idea. We invited everybody present at the meeting to use this unique SEiSMiC network and the number of meetings ahead as an opportunity to create something together instead of only talking about social innovation. We stated that although the phrase is; think outside the box, we are all actually inhabiting that same box. So we need to co-create.

We asked participants to join us and to create a network of social innovation accelerators in Europe with a new, different approach. An approach that is connected to the socio-political context. We found out that we reached some people in the room. We were lucky. First, that we took our time of presenting ourselves (although the organizers were cutting of minutes of speaking time every minute our time-slot came closer) and, that a number of people seemed interested...!

Followed by these opportunities...At the second SEiSMiC meeting in June 2015 we were granted a time-slot to tell participants about our idea of the transnational network and to see if more parties were interested in joining us. That was the case and with the support of the

Dutch coordinator of SEiSMiC we were able to organize a first transnational meeting in Berlin in June 2015.

To start the debate in Berlin, Platform31 enabled us to write a paper describing and placing the approach of the Social InnovationFactory. We called this the [starting paper](#). All participants read it and we used it for our first two days of deliberating and answering the question if we as people were willing to start this network and what our main objective would be. *We connected very fast and very easily by starting off with sharing our intrinsic motivation* on why we find social innovation a necessity in our societies. At the end of the second day in Berlin SIAC was born. You can read more about this meeting [here](#).

Within in the trans national group we discussed (at the first two meetings) what would be really helpful for social innovators and we decided that we need a certain type of labs, we call them Citizens Living Labs (CLL). We used a multiple value model, introduced by Jurgen van der Heijden, to identify relevant activities and areas of value (for details see the [website](#)). We decided to write down all the necessary features a CCL should have. You can find the [report here](#). We produced this report after our second SIAC meeting that was granted to us by the SEiSMiC board. For that meeting that took place in Vienna at the office of AIT, we invited also members form the URBACT network and TRANSIT. What we already found we discussed and fine-tuned again and we worked hard to get these European networks connected to SEiSMiC. At our second day we decided to write a proposal for the [ENSUF JPI Call](#) and to find even more network partners to join us.

We then already talked different times with people from the TRANSIT network. In fact they were the first people to join us. TRANSIT is working on a theory of social innovation, so we have a mutual learning interest. *Besides we thought it would be a real waste if knowledge found in this research-project and their database would vanish after the project ends.* The URBACT network we just contacted through their office in France. Necessary as it is to co-create with the public sector, so we really want input from SI-enthusiastic members of that group as well. After meeting experts at our meeting in Vienna, we got connected to the URBACT group 'Boosting Social Innovations in Cities'.

At the beginning of March 2016 we applied for the ENSUF call with a network of 30 parties; consisting of universities, social innovators/lab owners, cities, SME's, knowledge institutes. *Even though the idea originated from us, we are not able to apply for funding ourselves and our working hours cannot be paid for from the budget (predetermined we would get funded).* And even with a number of good brains between us, the European funding structures are a study in itself. We learned in May 2016 that our proposal was rejected. Unfortunately the feedback of the experts is very limited, so it is not possible to draw conclusions from which we can learn how to improve our ideas.

We held our third meeting in Brussels at the Sociale InnovatieFabriek and we did that asking again other parties like URBACT and specific professionals with a background in IT and psychology to add with their knowledge. Again we gathered intrinsically motivated people who were willing to share their knowledge. There we started with the design of the digital CRM we all could use in all the CLL's of the network. We also laid the foundation for an invitation for co-creation to the 9 cities within the URBACT network 'Boosting Social Innovation in Cities'. At this moment we are talking with, Milan, Wroclaw and Rotterdam. But apart from that we are investigating various other ways to realize (parts of) our initial goal.

We have been speaking in person, via Skype and on the phone with an enormous amount of people these last years. Think of national ministries, EC bodies, social innovators like Marco Traversi lab-owner from Naples, researchers of the university of Bologna, Nesta and many similar organizations and people. Or to give another example: a network of co-working spaces in Rome (coreteroma.org) or Yhteismaa in Helsinki, representatives of Funds, city officials, we visited hubs, conferences and meetings in The Netherlands but also abroad; like the SRIA launch meeting of JPI Urban Europe. We have got a least 5000 saved emails between us.....so as you understand this listing above is very far from being accurate when it comes to our work, our active communication and lobbying to make this network work.

*Networks are not born by itself and definitely do not remain existing by itself.*

For an overview of the timeline so far, we refer to Annex 3.

## 4 The challenge of being innovative ourselves...

During this process of establishing our network and undertaking of our activities, we found out we are a social innovation ourselves. Within the institutional European context we are working in, as well as in the national and local situation. As citizens we do not fit into the current structures.

Our network consists of many enthusiastic, intelligent people with great ideas and different professional backgrounds. We all recognize that the current sectoral structure of institutions whether they are public, private or in the field of research is a enormous threshold for transition. There is a vast chasm between citizens (meaning us all) living their daily life and us, citizens, in our professional role.

In fact we stumbled on some of the points we mentioned in the third paragraph. We are perceived as **competitor** when all we want is to work together. So after reaching out, we shared (on request) our starting paper, insights etc. with professionals or potential partners. Especially those in our country that are also known abroad we considered to bring additional and solid knowledge and tools. Didn't work. But being reliable on subsidies we do fish in the same ponds, so although that was a setback for us, we do understand this mechanism.

We were at **risk becoming institutionalized**. Funding structures that we came upon with the network are only applicable for institutions. Like for example the proposal we wrote for the JPI Call can only be submitted by a university. Besides the European rules for JPI Urban Europe, the specific national rules the participating funding agency needs to comply to narrow down the accessibility for funding for us even further. Due to the Dutch national rules the management of our project could not be done us. So from where we stand now, it seems that to bring SIAC under the management of an institution is probably the best option for continuity. As stated we are not the only ones to come across this. TRANSIT also found proof for [this](#) in their research. JPI Urban Europe is of course also aware of this and they are searching for new ways to solve this problem. The issue remains how to ensure framework conditions that allow entrepreneurs and societal actors to participate or even lead projects.

Thirdly we have a **cross-sectoral solution embedded in a co-creational decisionmaking process**. The cross-sectoral approach is of course not the way in which cities are organized but because we designed a *support structure* for social innovative solutions we thought that this specific threshold was not applicable on our project.

Along the way it appeared that this holistic approach was not only difficult to communicate, but was also not fitting in the current policies or organizational structures or themes of the potential partners we spoke to.

### **We came to find that:**

- \* Funds want this support we came to describe and could offer, but only for the initiatives they finance. Additional: Mostly their goals are set the year before for specifically targeted groups or problems;

- \* Cities have the same financial annual strategy and besides that would like to see the outcome of to-be-projects in number of jobs created or other specifically named/listed results. They also want proof that the project will deliver these outcomes. They are organized in silo's, rigid sectors. In addition policymakers do have to answer to politicians

whom have to answer their electorate; so short term solutions and subsidies are more logical from that perspective; especially when outcomes are not sure.

\* Researchers look for knowledge in their specific fields; very logical as it is their *raison d'être* and it affects their career immediately. Their funding structures are organized in the same way. Additional: Funds for research projects expect 'excellent' research results even when the research-field barely exists;

\* Citizens want practical answers and direct action, that connects with their questions and their daily life (urgent) challenges.

### **New learnings**

Another challenge we personally stumbled upon is that funds, institutions and government rather dislike the idea of spending money on **management of support structures. This is considered to be overhead**; costs that, very understandable, need to be as low as possible. But networks do not come to live, stay alive and remain in place without any effort. Let alone that they will produce practical knowledge and approaches that can be actually used. In our specific case the result of winning the JPI Urban Europe proposal would have been that we would never get paid for our part of the work. The Dutch rules applied are very strict and leave no room for other than research-participants in projects. Cities would rather let their own employees work on this and emphasize outcome in products and services, same applies for potential business partners.

Most of the people in the Public Service we talked to, did not know the field as well as we do. And that is very understandable considering the overwhelming amount of initiatives, networks, community centers, incubators, hubs, labs, challenges, knowledge institutions.

**There is a lack of knowledge concerning SI in government and institutional bodies.**

The phrase we heard a lot was: "This reminds me of...isn't this similar to..." People think that there is already a working solution for the problem raised by us or want us to team up with initiatives that do not want to team up with us (Dutch problem?) or are not fitting because they focus on specific social innovative projects like social entrepreneurship or IT for instance.

Further the approach of social innovation by institutions, government and funds are most of the time **short term** and do not provide a solid basis to build real sustainable solutions. Both **tactically and financially.**

### **Policymakers**

Policymakers find themselves caught in broad subjects like tackling poverty or fighting youth-unemployment. But how to achieve these goals, is rarely checked or discussed outside city government, let alone that the process of what is needed in society is decided in co-creation with the People, Private or Research sector. So the subjects are already defined, they are not determined making use of the knowledge within these groups. Afterwards it is possible in various participative levels for these groups to give their (requested for) input.

Although policy ambitions are filled with ideas about the changes in society, active citizens participation, etc. in daily practice it appears difficult to leave space for or create space for initiatives. On the one side municipalities stimulate citizens to take up action to contribute to society, on the other side local authority determines what public values are important. And above this the initiatives have to be accountable according guidelines and directives of local government. As if they are part of the government. It seems to be very difficult for local



government to deal with the initiative on equal footing. Government is not serving society by putting her representative reason above the participative reason. Democracy needs space for new and different ideas and approaches. (Read: Op weg naar meervoudige democratie, 2016, [Van den Donk](#), only available in Dutch language)

Like policy makers, funds are often linked to specific goals, or specific communities or groups so cross-sectoral supporting structures are not what they are about. Also knowledge institutions operate in one or more specific outlined fields.

Financially we often see challenges, subsidies for a short term period, short term experiments etc. What are the long term ambitions behind these approaches? We don't know. What are the *implemented* results? We don't know that either, apart from the fact that we keep on seeing these same approaches again and again over time these last years undertaken by the same institutions in government and research on every level, but also businesslike. Especially in IT as it is a niche that brings in good money for the bigger companies that are behind those challenges. It is a fact that these approaches are never initiated by ordinary citizens, but they are always economically, policy and/or research driven. Little or no bottom-up approach in defining the most urgently felt problems, little or no co-creating involved in selecting the solutions. And we think that is a pity, because we do not use all available knowledge in society for society.

We're all in the same box. Maybe we forgot that ourselves as well. We are in the middle of it as well: The world around us continues in the known routines mostly driven by very legitimate questions. Do we spend the money effectively? What is the quality offered? Ecosystems for social innovation challenge the operational paradigms we know so far. In practice it still seems to be the other way around; innovations are challenged by the existing paradigms and are at risk to be re-institutionalized etc. See our 7 points. The SIAC Network aims to offer a process of co-creation on local level involving all groups to define most urgently felt problems together in order to be all responsible and willing to support solutions based upon their own strengths and their local possibilities. The good news is that on local, national and international level, these critical success factors surface. We see steps being taken to change this in various cities.



## 5 Europe; how SEiSMiC opens a door for citizen participation

Within SEiSMiC a real learning environment was created. We came into contact with a lot of very nice people that do very interesting and important things. And we got real support to work on the network. For that we are very grateful.

We were also really happy to read the [SRIA report](#) from JPI Urban Europe (SEiSMiC is a project of JPI) to find out that the central focus is aligned with what we envisioned. It breathes change. Pinpointing critical factors and raising the right questions. It made us think that what we try to achieve is necessary, internationally shared and welcomed.

And this is what we learned; JPI wants to **change** their **funding structures** to welcome differently structured projects where there is more room **for direct citizens participation**. But they would need the cooperation of the national institutes that grant the subsidy nationally. Furthermore JPI want to be kept posted by us to learn what challenges we face, so that maybe in a later stage our story, amongst many others, will support alterations in Europe that will create a more level playing field for citizens in the European bureaucracy. That is a hopeful development!

### Lessons we learned internationally:

**Contributing for a longer period of time to an international network is for citizens more challenging than it is for professionals.** While participating in SEiSMiC we often saw and heard citizens tell their stories and share their insights. But we also noticed that the input from citizens, most of the time professionals with small social innovative enterprises, over a longer period declined. Most of the participants in SEiSMiC meetings participated only once or twice (inter)nationally. The group that was consistent were the professionals; as they all were paid for attending it was much easier for them to attend the meetings.

On the national level we experienced the same in the Netherlands, despite real efforts from the national coordinator of SEiSMiC. The commitment of people, citizens, was declining rapidly after the first two meetings. Most heard reason was; I cost me a lot of time, little concrete stuff is happening and on top of that I don't make money for a day or more. Another thing we noticed is that **co-creation is not a common European approach**. Although SEiSMiC was very welcoming and open for citizens and professionals or policy makers from other fields than research, few people from these groups attended the conferences.

Further **the European structures and funding opportunities are a study in itself**. Bigger cities have staff members that do nothing else than roam these, making plans based on these call topics. Same applies for universities, to come up with research programs after the calls are released. For 'citizens' it is practically impossible to oversee and work within these structures. It is easy to get an appointment, but to get real support or real connections to other European institutions, offices, officials, that wasn't really the case.

### Answers

The perfect answers to these issues we raise, we do not have of course. But the questions raised are factors of importance if the EU is really serious with their wish of getting citizens more involved and connected to Europe's policy and decision-making processes.

So we would recommend a **subsidy-structure open to citizen initiatives without the accountability structures used for institutions**, but a structure that fits the possibilities of citizens-initiatives.

Second: **give policy-makers in cities or EU-level liberty to work with small not in detail specified budgets on SI**. Like the city of Rotterdam appoints 1% of the sectoral budget to be donated into a shared budget for SI in order to create cross-sectoral solutions.

Or like we stated at our first Dutch SEiSMiC meeting after talking with a bunch of social innovators; appoint in every city an **Alderman of Free Space** where all cross-sectoral innovative experimental concepts meet a professional SI-friendly co-creational set of eyes.

## 6 Future steps: How to proceed?

As you have been reading we are full of ideas and plans. We already did a lot, but we are not finished yet.

### **Ambitions regarding the network:**

- To create an international network of people with different professional backgrounds to exchange knowledge and join forces to finance our common goals and realize actual products, tools etc to do so;
- Creating different methods and tools to be used to support innovative people within these CLL's;
- To realize or transform existing places locally to new kinds of social innovation accelerators, we call Citizens Living Labs (CLL);
- To connect all these CLL's to feed the same database so transnational research is made possible; both on the SI-projects itself but also on impact, scalability, transferability and processes involved;
- To connect all these CLL's to their socio-political context by initiating local partnerships within these CLL's of Public, Private, People and Research. To co-create effectively; identify local problems and work together in solving them to bridge the gaps between these groups and reach decisions in a more democratic way;
- This network of people delivers and structurally evaluates and produces knowledge for a structural sustainable method for accelerating social innovative solutions for cities and their direct surrounding areas. (These social innovative solutions are thought of and build by the people that inhabit these cities and regions, because they are aimed at solving problems and questions they experience themselves.)

### **Where are we now?**

We met a number of our ambitions by creation and co-working with our international partners the last two years. We have met the first two above mentioned ambitions. For number three and four we ended half way, with 23 partners in an international research consortium, our ongoing connection with TRANSIT and URBACT, requests from other universities to work together and join their consortia or new call proposals in the making. For number five we started a good first basis regarding different cities and networks in Europe, that started to know the network, talked about possible cooperation. etc. etc.

Still we do not earn a living with this work; and due to that our time becomes more limited. We cannot invest another two years. We received a small budget to write our starting paper, we got our expenses for the European meetings refunded and we received a donation to write this report. We helped the city of Rotterdam to create a simple and effective tool to judge innovative projects for available subsidy in a cross-sectoral way.

Anyway our current financial status aligns with some of the findings from the TRANSIT research project (we recommend their reports/[briefs](#) to all of you busy with building a SI-friendly ecosystem). To say it in short: TRANSIT found that, when it comes to SI initiatives, many of the people involved are in the same financial position as we are in now:

**‘There is limited knowledge on how social innovation emerges and what conditions and variables are critical to this process. Social innovation is not always a key to success and it is critical to understand when it leads to (dis-)empowerment.’**

Avelino, F., J.M. Wittmayer, B. Pel, P. Weaver, A. Dumitru, A. Haxeltine, R. Kemp, M.S. Jørgensen, T. Bauler, S. Ruijsink, T. O’Riordan (2016): *Transformative Social Innovation and (Dis)Empowerment*. Accepted by Technological Forecasting and Social Change, February 2016.

The first thing that we need to do right now is to create (political) **awareness** in order to make the second step; to create SI-friendly eco-system in our societies. For citizens there is no a level playing field; a big need in our democratic societies.

In our opinion this is **a big threat to realize real sustainable social innovative changes**. Who will take and can take responsibility for that alone? It takes no rocket-science to answer that question. Like we wrote in our preamble the time seems right to evaluate European policy regarding social innovation.

And, what can we do at this moment, as a network? Shall we use the Right to Challenge on the EU-commission together with other trans national networks that face the same challenge? To state that citizens are better in connecting to citizens and support them to create sustainable innovative solutions? Shall we adjust ourselves and our ideas and possibilities to the sectoral approach on local, national and international level? Or shall we try to embed the network in an institution? Or shall we quit?

#### **How to proceed?**

So far we proceed looking for partners on smaller national and local levels to try and realize (parts of) our vision. The consequence however is a landscape of puzzle pieces in funding, research and actual innovative development; no European database for SI data-mining. But to continue in that way, would also make the management of the trans national network even more time consuming than it is already. So this doesn’t seem a sustainable solution. With whom can we work together?

**The ten million dollar question is how to proceed**. Well anyway, we continue in designing tools for the Citizens Living Labs. We just don’t stop being active citizens. We still talk to cities, universities, knowledge institutions and lab owners. The network keeps on growing... And maybe, new coincidences will create new opportunities?



## 7 Our products

**Starting paper** describes the approach of the Sociale InnovatieFabriek and their place within the world of incubators, accelerators, labs and workspaces

**Features document** describes all necessary features for a Citizens Living Lab

**Website** Read about our members, their intrinsic motivation, our blogs, insights and work

**Movie** a short introduction about the intrinsic motivation why people participate in the SIAC network. You can find it on: [www.siac.network](http://www.siac.network)

**Paper** you have just read it

All of this and more is to be found at our website [www.siac.network](http://www.siac.network)



## **Acknowledgements and contact details**

We want to thank some special people without whom we would never have been able to do what we just did;

Margit Noll, Paul Erian and the team from SEiSMiC, Koos van Dijken, Bram Heijkers, Fanny Gelissen, Jonas Bylund, Saskia Ruijsink, Tom Bauler, Linda Zuijderwijk, Bonno Pel, Liesbeth van Zoonen, Darinka Czischke Ljubetic, Derek Martin, Peter Ramsden, Liisa Joutsenjarvi, Stefan Göllner, Yvonne Franz, Carolina Pacchi, Matteo Bartolomeo, Kaat Peeters, Jeroen van Herwijnen, Denise Barret, Tuomas Valtonen, Oscar Racké, Leon, van Kammen, Mark Heijne, Paul Tissingh, Rob van den Bos, Arie Lengkeek, Martien Kromwijk, Wolfgang Teubner, Ania Rok, Peter Wolkowinski, Lukas Weiss and Christoph Grud.

**This list is far from complete, so we want to say**

***Thank You!***

**to all the other great people that have contributed  
to the work of SIAC!**

If anyone wants to join us, share ideas, ask questions, please feel welcome to contact us at:

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## Annex 1 SIAC participants come from 9 European countries

The United Kingdom; [Denise Barret](#), [Fatemeh Rabiee Khan](#)

Finland; [Tuomas Valtonen](#), [Anne Paavolainen](#), [Liisa Joutsenjarvi](#), [Jaakko Blomberg](#)

Netherlands; [Linda Zuijderwijk](#), [Saskia Ruijsink](#), [Darinka Czischke](#)

Belgium; [Kaat Peeters](#), [Bonno Pel](#),

Austria; [Yvonne Franz](#), [Christoph Grud](#), [Lukas Weiss](#), [Janine Fellner](#)

Germany; [Stefan Gollner](#)

Hungary; [Szofia Ret](#), [Laszlo Agoston](#), [Ivan Kepecs](#)

Italy; [Carolina Pacchi](#), [Matteo Bartolomeo](#), [Marco Traversi](#), [Sebastiano Prisi](#), [Gaspere Galiri](#),  
[Valentina Gianfrate](#)

and Poland; Marlena Wosiak from Maria Curie-Sklodowska University

The list above is not complete; our network is dynamic. You can find a number of short personal stories of the members here: <http://www.siac.network/item/participants/>

Besides that we also created working relations with people and partners in other countries like Spain, Sweden and Iceland. The network is still growing; we are establishing an official association at the coming meeting in October.

## **Annex 2 Partners in the ENSUF JPI Urban Europe Call**

**Austria:** The City of Vienna & Werkstadt15 Vienna & Die Bäckerei Kulturbackstube  
Innsbruck

**The Netherlands:** Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies of Erasmus  
University Rotterdam & TU University Delft & Platform31 The Hague & The City of  
Rotterdam & Knowledge Lab Urban Big Data Rotterdam & Eindhoven Living Lab & Space-S  
& Future Landscapes Utrecht & Steen van Rosette Delft

**Poland:** Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Lublin & The City of Lublin

**United Kingdom:** Birmingham City University & The City of Birmingham & Ladywood Health  
and Community Centre

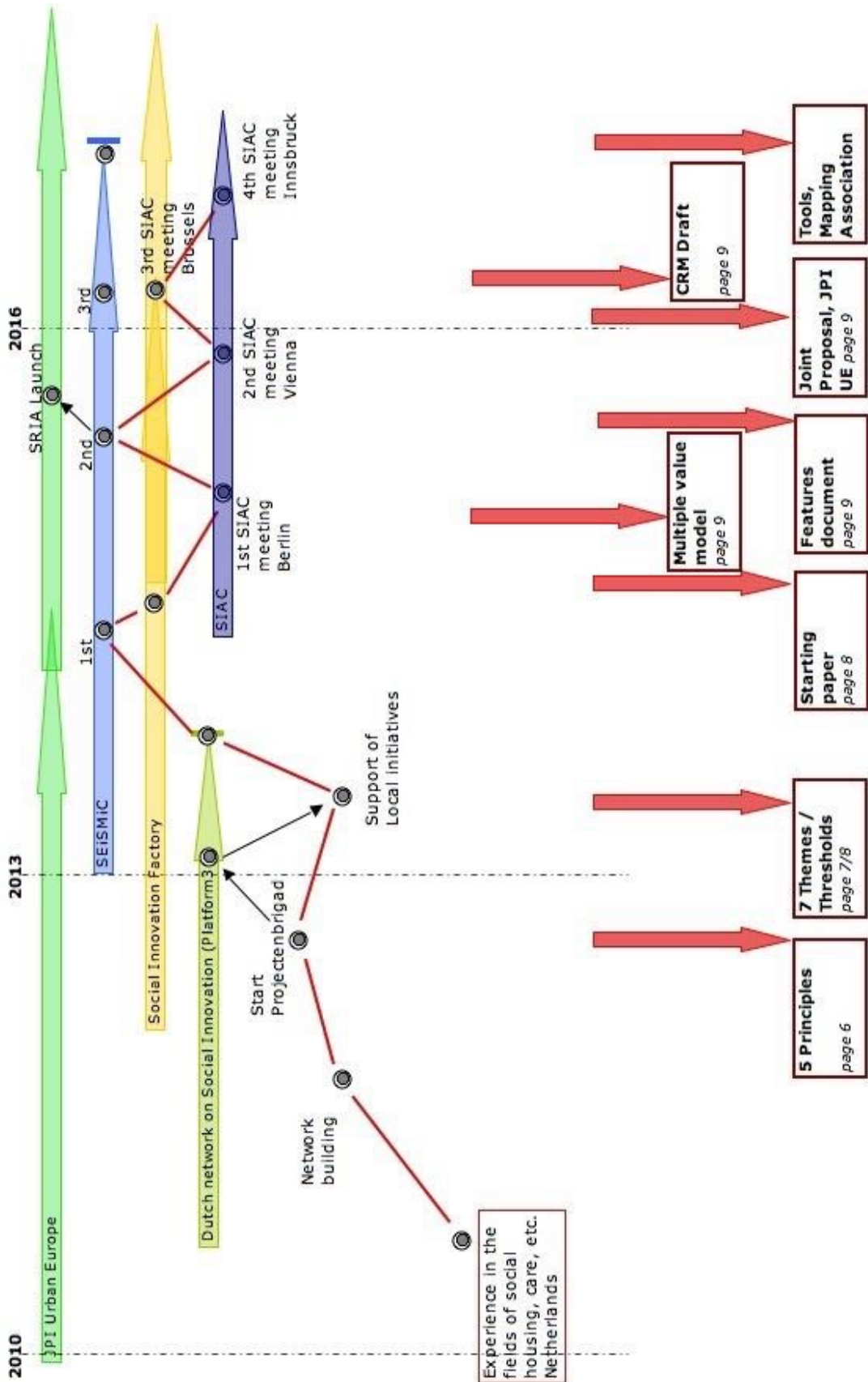
**Finland:** Technology Research Centre Turku & Startup Refugees (part of Gimmeyawallet  
Productions) Helsinki & Metsätähti Oy Helsinki & Turku Science Park Ltd

**Italy:** Politecnico di Milano & Avanzi Srl, Milan & The City of Milan & Kilowatt Soc. Coop  
Bologna & Project Ahead Soc. Coop Naples

**Belgium:** De Sociale InnovatieFabriek Brussels, Housing Europe Brussels, Université Libre  
de Bruxelles

For the proposal, look at our [website](#).

## Annex 3 SIAC Timetable and interaction



## Annex 4 Acceleration of social innovation by Citizens Living Labs

### Principles

The envisioned local Citizens Living Labs will be open to all individuals, groups, whether they are commercially oriented or not, in the fields of sustainability, green energy, food, health care, welfare, education, housing, democracy and media, by creating a learning network that is based on reciprocity, see our [features document](#) for more detailed information.

### Connecting to the context

Basically a lab works on a local scale, open to all kind of different partners. This local scale is recognizable on the level of neighborhoods and cities. It is not indispensable to have a city, or a number of cities, on board to start a lab: an existing network organization might also be a good starting point. But we are convinced that social innovation has to take place in dialogue with the institutional context. Especially cities are recognizable entities to cooperate with to realize change.

We will support and actively promote scientific research in co-creation with 'the system', like (local) governments to realize real input on change making policy and thus make alternations in current policy and legislation logically and desired.

### Reinventing society

Our democratic societies have developed over decades to the central model we know today. This model uses too much resources and reduced the interconnectivity between people. It has led to alienation. A lot of area's of life are 'over organized', or better stated: institutionalized. Top-down systems of planning, design and delivery tend to be closed and unreceptive to urban change. Many of them were created at a time when big government and big thinking were thought to be needed to solve big problems of the time. Driven by utopian visions, they have promoted simplified behaviors, treating neighborhoods, quarters and centers as mechanistic elements of the city.

In this world, people can not be trusted to do the right thing. There is no room for experimentation, for creativity nor for learning. In this way the ratio of this 'system world' dominates our relations more than necessarily. The logic of these institutions doesn't bring responsiveness. Our mission is to bring back human creativity and potential in ... the accommodation of society, fueled by communities and civilians

*'(...) in a world defined by disparate and deeply specialized silos and sectors, we tend to select the best solution from known options as opposed to creating integrated solutions. This is because, by and large, we operate within closed, risk-averse environments where human creativity and potential for innovation are stifled. Experimentation with alternative methods, approaches and solutions is not typically part of organizational DNA.* p. 6, MaRSReport-Labs-designing-the-future\_2012

### Geography

Most of the time there are no simple solutions or central government regulation that bring the new answers we need. The questions of today are multi-level, multi-layered and interdependent. Traditional approaches to building solutions are having difficulty coping with this kind of complexity. So not one central player is able to come up with the right solutions.

We will find these solutions at the local level by being open to all kinds of initiatives. Local solutions will incorporate needs and capacities that are present at this level. The spot (geographical area) and the connection to the local community are the central elements in this approach.

### People driven

When you acknowledge that SI solutions come from the local community (and the answers don't come from above), individuals or social entrepreneurs, you have to acknowledge that everybody has relevant knowledge and skills, especially in the area where the social innovation is grounded. So people are the central point of action, instead of institutions.

If we want to find new approaches and solutions at a local level, in the community, we no longer can trust upon institutional logic alone.

*The voices of citizens are being recognized as increasingly important in decision-making and design processes. Participation has increased the pool of ideas, which in turn has increased the probability of finding transformative ideas. In this new context, it is no longer only up to those regarded as the “experts” to prescribe the future. Rather, it is up to the collective to imagine what is possible. MaRSReport-Labs-designing-the-future\_2012*

The shared insight behind this approach and learning network is the following:

*Instead of developing solutions in terms of new smart products,  
we argue that social innovation labs should focus on redesigning the way we are organized  
in institutional processes  
and activate and organize in new ways existing capacity within local communities*

### Let's start!

The beauty of this approach is that we don't have to wait, e.g. for new legislation, or until everybody is ready for this change. Change on a local level is already possible today. Right now. Just by realizing new connections, sharing knowledge, and creating a good context, or ecosystem, for the network (by empowerment, reciprocity, value creation, and the creation of partnerships). Since there is no 1 central approach, every new initiative will have the character of an experiment.

Since people recreate and reinvent (parts) of society on a local level, every experiment will face challenges in organizing and will face boundaries grounded in how we organized our society so far. So the experiment has to incorporate this socio-political context to be successful. A well organized initiative gives the opportunity for this.

### But what is a social innovation or Citizens Living Lab?

In short, a lab is a container for social experimentation, with a team, a process and space to support social innovation on a systemic level. The rise of labs is partially explained in the transformative promise that they bare, namely that they function as vehicles to combat our social ills by achieving systemic change. In this regard, labs do not operate alone in their endeavor, but form part of a growing number of practices that rely more and more on citizens to act “prosocially”, both individually and collectively. There is a growing number of parties that create a network, place or hub to support and promote social innovation. The differences in approach are many: it is not easy to make a general classification of types of



labs. A broad range of initiatives and organizations are using the term "Lab," with many choosing either Design Lab or Change Labs.

- Design Labs tend to place emphasis on the quality of the ideas or solutions being generated, with a particular focus on incorporating different (often "user" or "citizen") perspectives in the development of specific "thing" (technical innovation, likely a product, object or service)

- Change Labs tend to emphasize building collaboration and shared understanding between participants in the lab as the basis for shared action(s)

- Social Innovation Labs would emphasize the development of solutions, but place more attention on the processes by which these solutions become deeply integrated into systems and ultimately transform them. <http://www.sig.uwaterloo.ca/feature/social-innovation-labs>

### *Incubator?*

The similar and sometimes overlapping characteristics of accelerators and incubators have led to some inconsistency in classification. Organizations may refer to themselves as being one type when their operations more closely reflect the other. In the absence of a standardized definition, scholars and practitioners have arrived at their own definitions, and each one is different. In general there are a number of distinctions: (Innovation Accelerators: Defining Characteristics Among Start-up Assistance Organizations, oct. 2014). Incubators tend to be local, and select participants locally. Offer facilities, a location, office space, access to management skills, network etc. Most of the time no funds are involved: they do not invest in the start-ups. Terms of assistance are one to five years. They are nonprofit organizations, frequently associated with universities.

### *Accelerator?*

Start-up accelerators tend to select participants from a wide region or even a country. Accelerators provide training and mentoring for cohorts of participants (rather than individual companies). Offers validation of ideas, linking to business partners, facilitates pitching to follow-up investment ('demo-days') (aiming to help the entrepreneur scale their business and become ready for investment). Terms of assistance are relatively short, 1 to 3 months. Time-limited support comprising programmed events and intensive mentoring. Most of them are for-profit organizations that receive equity in exchange for the provision of funding to the start-ups. They do not necessarily provide office space for the start-ups they support, but typically provide meeting space.

Both accelerators and incubators work with a highly competitive selection of participants. From qualitative interviews that he had conducted with startup founders, Jed Christianson found that mentoring and networking opportunities were the most valuable benefits gained from attending programmes, while generic and inconsistent mentoring, and too much focus on demo day, were frequent drawbacks. <http://siresearch.eu/blog/social-enterprise-accelerators>

Incubators and accelerators for social innovation may work in a similar manner to technology incubators or accelerators, by bringing together the resources, skills, and expertise needed to assist entrepreneurs and innovators seeking to build a social enterprise or to address a societal need.

They may also take on entirely new tactics and processes. <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/socialinnovationeurope/en/directory/europe/news/social-innovation-incubators-europe>

### Characterizing a Citizens Living Lab

The word lab is used frequently, but the practice of each lab varies and reflects different ideas on how change occurs.

The roots of this emergent practice stem from a certain fatigue of limited and insufficient institutional repertoires that do not challenge, for example, undemocratic decision making, socio-economic inequality and unsustainable use of natural resources (Moulaert 2013: 228). The “innovation society”, with its traditional models of innovation, like narrowly framed technical models, conventional public sector policies and market-led innovation, seems to have run its course (Lane 2014: 29). In practice this entails that we do not solely need incremental solutions that continue to lean on a reluctance to imagine alternative practices. What is needed is discontinuous change: change that displaces an established structural order for something new. (Lab Matters, KL, 2014)

So, it's understandable that we cannot easily classify the activities of a Citizens Living Lab in classical scheme, since the practice of accelerators and incubators originate from quite classic institutional repertoire, although they create a vivid environment for new startups. Leaving behind this classic institutional repertoire brings something completely new, and in the meantime we recognize a form and activities that resemble things we know.

A citizens living lab is a social innovation lab, with some characteristics of an accelerator, although it doesn't take equity stakes in startups, is founded by profit and nonprofit parties, is not (highly) competitive in the selection of participants (and is open to more participants than social enterprises alone), and the term of assistance is longer and in this respect makes it more look like an incubator.

A Citizens Living Lab also has features close to a social innovation accelerator with a focus on mentoring and creating networking opportunities (very important assets, since these two were the most valuable benefits gained from attending programmes).

The last form one might think of reading this overview are so called '[living labs](#)'. A research concept, also used in the area of policy testing and creation. Most of the time test-area's for new products, policy and methods of participating, *before* implementation. Citizens are in those approaches being seen as 'users', as 'source' or, at the best, as relevant players 'we have to take account of'. So, living labs will bring beautiful solutions, but in a very restricted playing field. One might call that social innovation, but we think differently about that.

The big difference with all the above described approaches is the inclusion of all relevant parties and partners in the area of the lab. Regarding the goals and the agenda of the lab, and regarding the process and transparency regarding the added value of every initiative.