



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 81

Reflexive monitoring for learning about Living Labs

Monitoring is a process to assess and evaluate an activity, usually while it is underway. It is often done by an 'independent' monitor, such that the monitoring is 'removed' from the experience and understanding of those being monitored. In contrast, reflexive monitoring is undertaken by those directly involved in the situation of interest to gain insight into their own learning and to use this to design improvements during the activity. AgriLink has used reflexive monitoring to learn about the roles and practices of the 6 Living Labs established to promote innovation in agricultural advisory systems. The primary mechanism for reflexive monitoring was the appointment of a dedicated monitor in each Living Lab. The monitor worked with the Living Lab facilitator to establish and develop reflexive monitoring of its work, focus and activities. The monitor compiled quarterly and annual monitoring reports to document and review changes to the purpose, work and direction of the Living Labs, problems and opportunities encountered, and key learning points. A central AgriLink monitoring team reviewed the annual reports and synthesised learning. Subsequent discussion between Living Lab monitors and AgriLink colleagues provided further opportunity to monitor learning and reflect on the next steps for each Living Lab. This included a process where monitors engaged in peer reviews of other Living Labs and, in so doing, reflected on their own Living Lab and ways in which its work could be enhanced. There are many tools and techniques which can be used to promote reflexive learning, such as the 3 Es criteria of efficacy, efficiency, effectiveness (see AgriLink PA Nr.82), systems diagrams, structured inquiries during field visits, and co-researching.

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COUNTRY/REGION:

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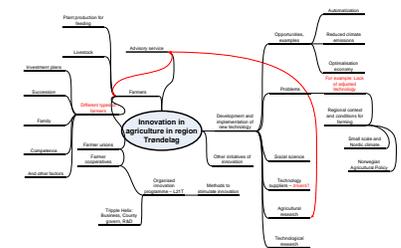
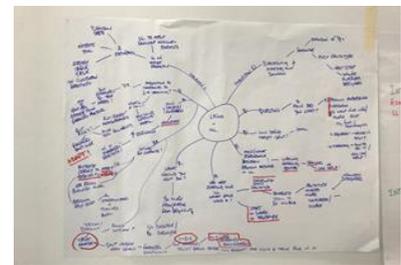
#diagrams, #systems thinking, #design thinking, #reflexive monitoring, #Living Labs

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The experiences of, and feedback from, the Living Lab monitors and facilitators strongly suggest that the reflexive monitoring process has been essential to help the individual Living Labs document, reflect and adapt their ideas, progress and direction and improve conceptual, methodological and practical skills and expertise over time. The discussions, training and peer-review exercises during AgriLink meetings have allowed for learning and adaptations within, between and beyond each individual Living Lab.

For the purposes of AgriLink, as a research project, the Living Labs were fully invested in and included a facilitator and a monitor in order to determine the overall usefulness of Living Labs as innovations for agriculture advisory services. In more commercial, advisory contexts, the monitoring of a Living Lab will require careful scrutiny in relation to the nature of the situation as it could have considerable bearing on the work of a LL if monitoring can only be supported for a limited time and ends before outputs and outcomes are evident.

As open-ended learning processes, Living Labs are dependent on some form of 'local' reflexive monitoring process. Where this can be extended across several Living Labs - such as peer review - then the potential for learning within, between and beyond Living Labs increases considerably.



ABOUT AGRILINK

AgriLink is a multi-actor project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It brings together 16 partners from 13 countries, including universities, applied research institutes, advisors and consultants from public organisations, private SMEs, a farmer-based organisation and specialists in communication and distance learning.

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