



Africa-EU Cooperation on Open Living Labs

Session chair

Marlien Herselman, Chair, Living Labs in South Africa (LLiSA), CSIR, South Africa
Alvaro Oliveira, President, European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL)

Session rapporteur

Peter McGrath, TWAS, EuroAfrica-ICT project partner

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Panellist list

■ **Marlien Herselman**

■ **Alvaro Oliveira**

■ **McLean Sibanda, CEO, the Innovation Hub, Pretoria, South Africa**

■ **Danie Kok, Director, SAP Research, CEC Pretoria, South Africa**

■ **Jessica Colaco, Research leader and manager, iHub, Nairobi, Kenya**


■ **Effat El-Shooky, Advisor, Minister for International Cooperation, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Egypt**

■ **Sibukele Gumbo, Project lead, Siyakhula Living Lab Management Unit, University of Fort Hare, South Africa**

■ **Brent Williams, Director, Reconstructed Living Lab (Rlabs), South Africa**

■ **Ilari Lindy, Senior ICT policy specialist, ICT Sector Unit, World Bank, USA**





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Marlien Herselman introduced the concept of the Living Lab from the point of view of the Living Labs in Southern African Network (LLISA, www.llisa.net), which emerged in 2006 and was formally launched in 2009. Living Labs, she said, are: "All about people who come together with a specific focus in multi-disciplinary teams to tackle community challenges, where all stakeholders play and equal role, be they from academia, the private sector, NGOs, government, etc." and, unlike in Europe, where the movement began, in Africa Living Labs often focus on the challenges of rural communities.

Alvaro Oliveira noted that the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) has 274 members, of which 238 were EU based while others are located in Africa, China, N & S America etc. In total some 25,000 organizations are involved, including universities, companies, SMEs etc.

"Trust is a major driver within Living Labs," he added "And they must also actively support skills development of members and the communities with which they engage."

McLean Sibdanda confirmed that the Innovation Hub, Pretoria, based its activities on a strategy derived from national and provincial government perspectives and that it forms a bridge between academia and the marketplace with the aim of developing skills, and creating jobs and new businesses.





Report - Slide #2

Despite his somewhat cynical introduction, in which Danie Kok noted that multinational companies only carry out research so that they can make more money, he noted that Europe has a richness of knowledge and skills, but that these need to be adapted to Africa's challenges. "You can't take a solution from somewhere and try to force it into a problem when we haven't identified the problem," said. "Living Labs allow us, if used in an Africentric way, the engagement that is required in a multi-centric society."

Jessica Colaco introduced 'Ushahidi' ('testimony' in Kiswahili) – an innovation developed in Kenya that is rivalling m-Pesa. It was originally used to map reports of violence etc. After Kenya's contentious elections and has since been sued in post-earthquake Haiti and elsewhere. It has been translated into 18 different languages and employed in 132 different countries. It was also used to stimulate the establishment of the Nairobi iHub, described as a catalyst/enabler for the technology community to help get their ideas out there where they can eventually (within 5 years) make an impact in the community. The average age of iHub members is 23.

Effat El-Shooky introduced the concept of 4Ps: Public-Private-People-Partnerships, noting that three ENoLL members were working in Egypt in the areas of health, education and agriculture and that pilot cases were now running with NGOs. "Egypt needs a national Living Labs network as part of the African Living Labs network, but it should be established before Egypt becomes a member of the African network," she added.



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Sibukale Gumbo noted that the Siyakhula Living Lab in Eastern Cape aims at reconnecting marginalized communities through ICT through connecting the IT work of university students and postdocs with real, practical questions. The projects also use the 4P concept and incorporate linguists, economists, social scientists ,etc ., so they are truly participatory and multidisciplinary. An example has been the development of an internet presence to help market local crafts.

Brent Williams works with ex-gangsters and ex-drug addicts, developing their skills in social networking running services such as online mobile counselling, serving 500,000 people. He is also training 300 people 'rough diamonds' in computer literacy this year alone (up from 30 last year) and helped empower people by setting them up with an email address (and helping to get Cape Town's Table Mountain selected as one of the Seven Wonders of the Natural World in the process).

Summing up, Ilari Lindy noted that the World Bank had established an Open Technology Development Alliance to look at different ways of doing things – more innovative cost-effective solutions to problems such as providing community services in large urban areas of Africa and that the Living Labs model could help provide low-cost solutions.





Report - Summary

Living Labs are often active – even before they were aware of it. They are all about people who come together with a specific focus in multi-disciplinary teams to tackle community challenges, where all stakeholders play and equal role, be they from academia, the private sector, NGOs, government, etc.

Built on trust, all partners co-create innovations – solutions to local challenges.

