



**UNIMORE**

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI  
MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA



Seminario organizzato nell'ambito del Corso di Dottorato in Lavoro, Sviluppo e Innovazione di Unimore - FMB

# **Living Labs' key principles: are they always applicable?**

## **The Modena Automotive Smart Area case**

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Relatrice

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### **Abstract**

Living Lab (LL) concept enters in the European policies in 2006 with European Network of Living Labs (ENOLL), an umbrella organization active worldwide which has boosted the number of LLs among the European countries defining them as “user-centred open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real-life communities and settings”. In the last decade, an increasingly number of scholars and politicians have been starting to study LLs as units of analysis to understand and implement the innovation processes and outputs from different perspectives and diverse fields. Albeit the interest the topic has gotten in the policies, also at a national level, there is still a problem in illustrating LLs due to the indeterminateness and pluri-definition of the elements characterizing them. In particular, a clear and systematic identification of the criteria necessary to determine a LL is missing. The aim of this paper is then to determine a set of founding principles for the LL construct based on the extant literature, namely Openness, Empowerment of Users and Realism, and to use them in the characterization of a real case. We then take in consideration the Modena Automotive Smart Area (MASA) as case study in order to investigate whether a relationship exists between the tested technologies and the intensity by which the three key principles are involved in the formation and in the early stages of the observed LL. Using a qualitative approach, with the purpose to offer new insight to theory from a case study research methodology, results show that the key principles occur with different degree of intensity within MASA. In particular, we observed that, while Openness and Realism principles are active with high intensity since its inception, Empowerment of Users is present with a lower degree of intensity. The emergence of technological and contextual factors that hinder the application of Empowerment of Users principle or make the emergence of interactive practices more difficult to implement in early stages, opens the question about the way these key principles interact among them and the contextual factors that may shape the formation of a LL and support specific evolutionary paths accordingly.

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