

What is a Real-World Lab?



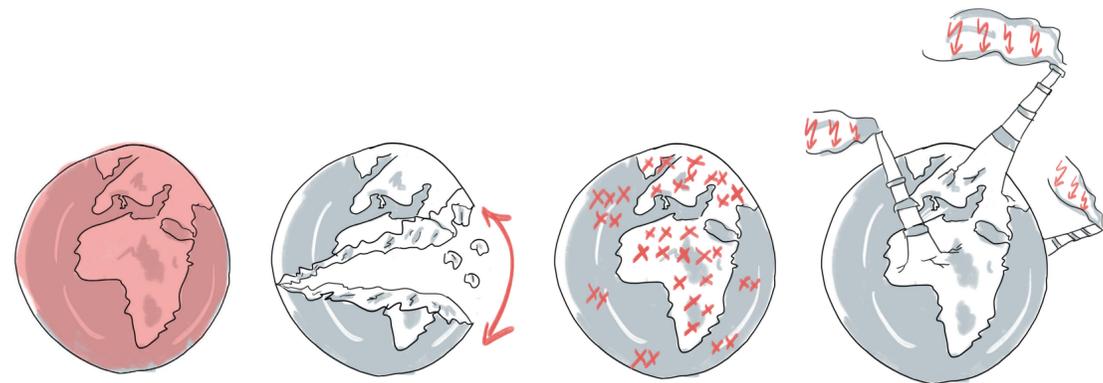
This is Kim.



Kim is wondering about what will become of her and the following generations.



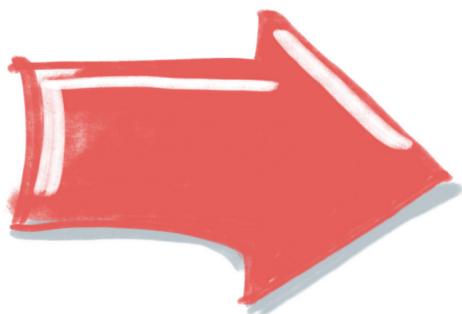
What can we do to stop climate change, social injustice, species extinction, or unjustifiable technological risks?



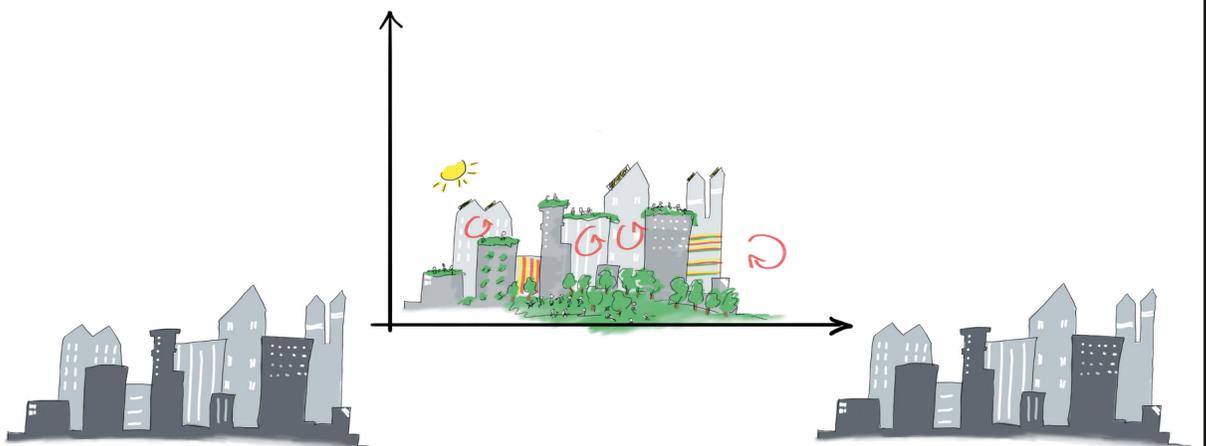
It's clear that something needs to be done! We have good intentions, and there is definitely no lack of information available to us.



But how can we take the step from knowledge to action?

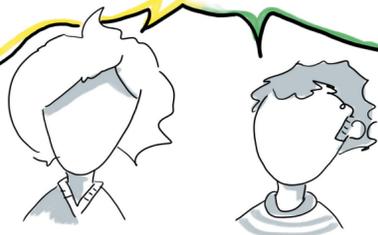


This is where real-world labs come into play! Real-world labs are specially created experimental spaces established in the communities, such as in a city district.



Now, what is so special about a real-world lab?  
First of all, those who participate share a common goal: **sustainable development** for society. In short, this means leading a good life while also respecting the society and the natural environment that we are a part of as well as the future generations to come.

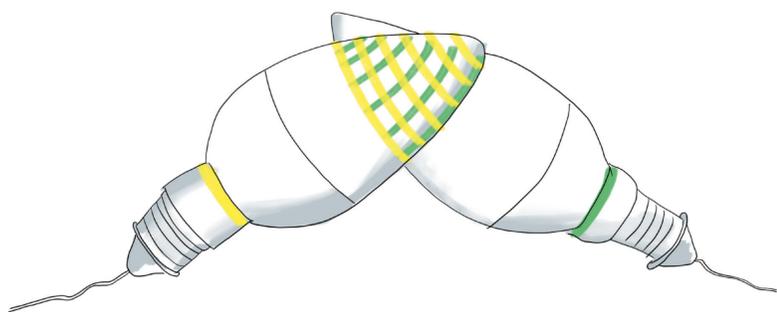
Sustainable Development



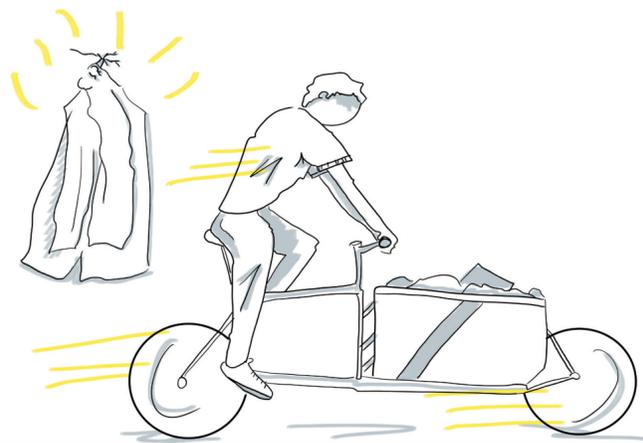
Accordingly, this common goal and its implementation is examined closely from a **research perspective**.



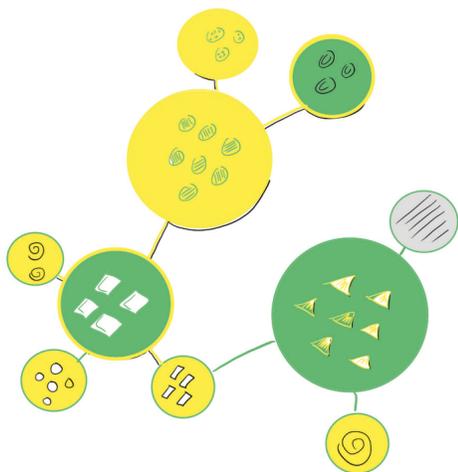
And we do this together, both researchers and community members. This cooperation is called **transdisciplinary research**.



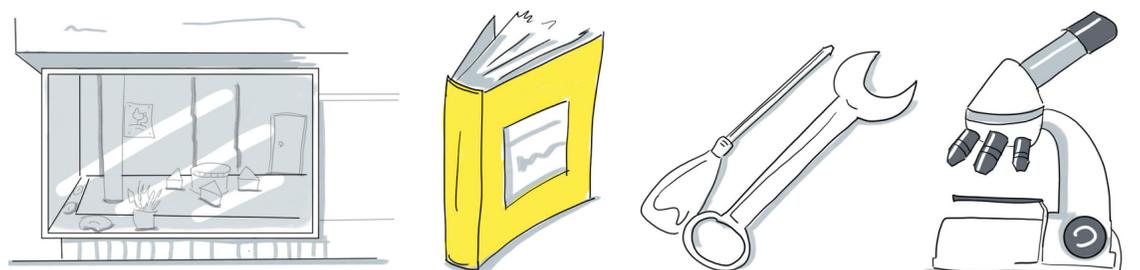
Researchers do not participate from afar but take off their proverbial lab coat and play an active part in these experiments and discussions. They are part of the change and not just external investigators! We call this attitude "**transformative**".



Real-world labs are actively joining forces with **society** and include the community in many ways.



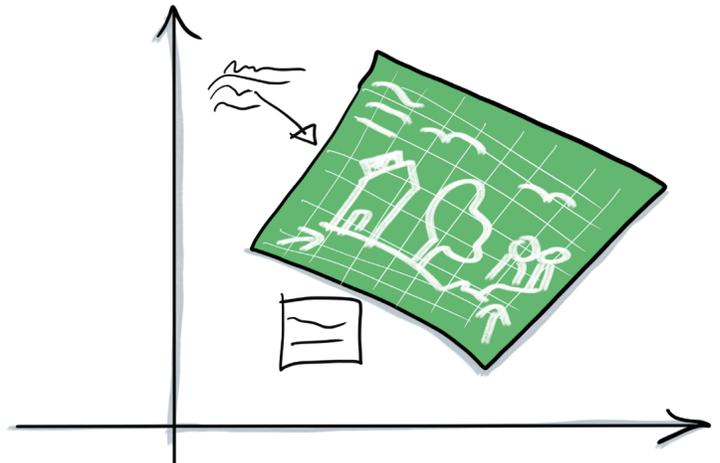
However, the **laboratory characteristics** are still important. Everything people need for their experiments is provided or specially created for them. For example, this could include: the location, special knowledge or tools – whether they be simple or a bit more sophisticated.



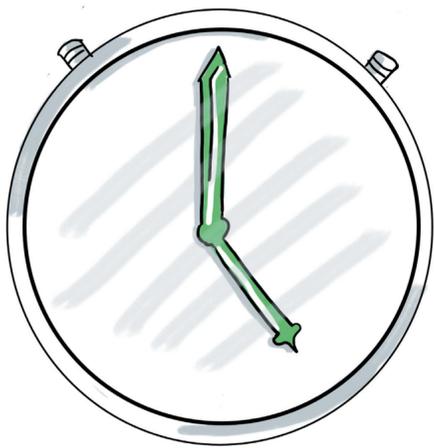
By acting and researching, the community members who are participating are permanently learning something new or challenging their own patterns of thought. So real-world labs are also **educational institutions**.



There, people can gain new insights that are not only effective on site, but can also be **transferred to other contexts**.



Of course, all of this takes **time**! Therefore real-world labs are oriented towards making progress in the long term, not just over a few years.

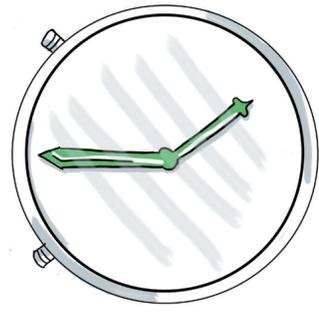
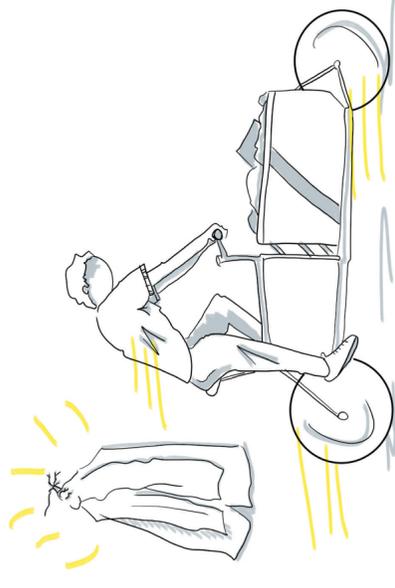
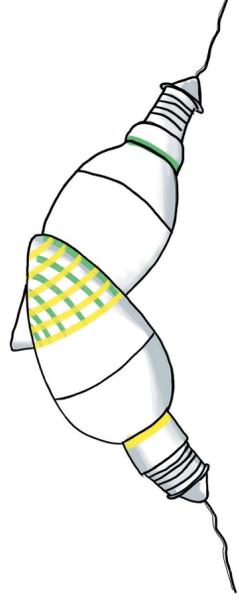
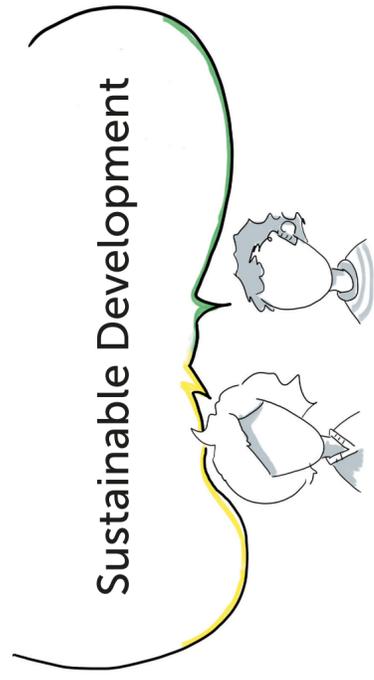


However, individuals are not forgotten in all these experiments. In the end, we also have to identify which skills and capabilities each of us already has or needs to improve to make the world a better place.



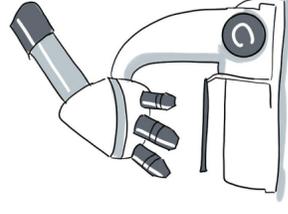
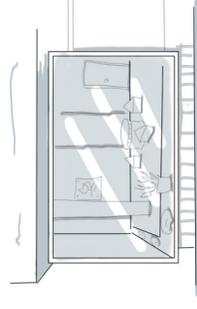
Once we have all these elements, we are ready to go! What makes real-world labs so interesting is the wide variety of activities which take place simultaneously and influence each other. We call this **"dense sustainability"**.





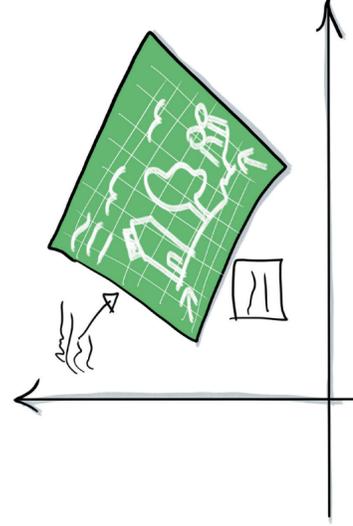
# What is a Real-World Lab?

Long-Term

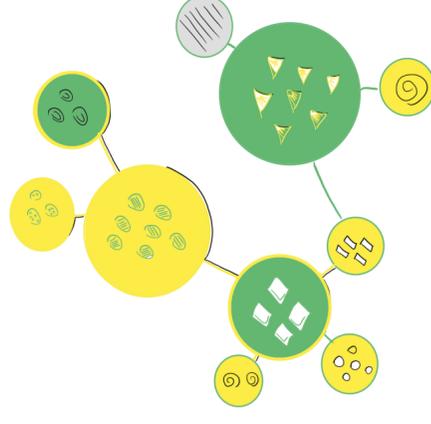


Educational Institutions

Laboratory Characteristics



Transferability





## Publication Details

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)  
Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)  
Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres (HGF)

What is a Real-World Lab?

A comic strip by District Future - Urban Lab, Energy Transformation in Dialogue and Karlsruhe Transformation Centre for Sustainability and Cultural Change.

Concept and implementation

Marius Albiez, Johanna Sterrer, Teagan Wernicke

This comic is based on the film of the same name:

„Was ist ein Reallabor“: <https://t1p.de/Reallabor-Video>

and reflects the real-world lab interpretation of the District Future - Urban Lab team. This may differ from other interpretations.

Further information and suggestions at:

[www.reallabor-netzwerk.de](http://www.reallabor-netzwerk.de)

First Edition (March 2020)

