

# Shaping cities for better quality of life - Fostering collaboration through Living Labs

## Part 3: DREAM

## Abstract

Have you ever used a route planner? It does not work without typing in the place where you want to go. The same applies for the practice of the Living Lab. You have to know where you start and where you intend to end up. Then the roadmap can be designed.

In this learning unit, the future vision for your city and the most pressing challenges will be defined.

## Objectives

**After completing this unit, you will be able to ...**

- create a vision for your city
- list existing problems in your city
- define the most important areas of activities for your Living Lab

### 1. Defining your dreams and visions

You were probably already thinking (or dreaming) about how things should look like in your city or neighborhood. For example, you may want more green spaces and parks close to where you live. You might want that the public spaces are safe at night. You might wish to have a better relationship with your neighbors. In this section, you will turn your dreams into a vision. A vision is a description of an ideal and desired future state and can be **defined at both city or neighborhood level**. Having a shared vision is a crucial aspect of a Living Lab, as it helps define the actions and future decisions necessary for achieving a desired state, while enhancing collaboration, mutual understanding and trust.

**How can you start outlining vision for your city? Here are some important aspects that you should focus on:**

- define the **area of activity** (city/neighborhood)
- **consider** the following questions:
  - How does your ideal city look like in 2040?
  - How does your neighborhood look like in 2040?
  - What do you envision for your city in terms of green and public spaces, transportation, buildings, safety, job opportunities, etc.?
  - Is there already a future vision for your city? This could be a starting point to elaborate on!
- **try to avoid discussion about the present and foreseeable problems**. Different people have different ideas on how the city ought to be.
- Try to write down statements that everybody can agree with.
- A vision should be **ambitious** but not impossible. Dream big, but try to come up with ideas that are possible to achieve, and therefore:
  - **desirable**: solutions should reflect the real needs of all people
  - **feasible**: solutions have to be technically feasible (example: no efficiencies above 100%)
  - **viable**: solutions have to be doable **from** a business perspective

## EXAMPLE BOX

**Example 1** describes a general vision for the city of Graz developed as a result of a participatory process. Once you have defined the general vision, it might be useful to define ideal situation for more specific fields, like energy or green space (**see example 2**).

### Example 1: A general vision for the city of Graz

- In 2050, the metropolitan area of Graz is a dynamic city with compact building development and urban mixed usage, attractive public spaces and a high quality of life.
- By efficiently implementing Smart City strategies and raising awareness among the citizens, resource and energy consumption as well as related emissions have been notably reduced. Graz is an energy-autonomous and waste-free city.
- Graz is an international benchmark for innovative urban technologies and systems, and therefore an attractive location for research, training and business and a desirable place to live and work at every stage of life.
- Soil and water quality as well as biodiversity have significantly improved, while noise pollution has decreased in downtown Graz.

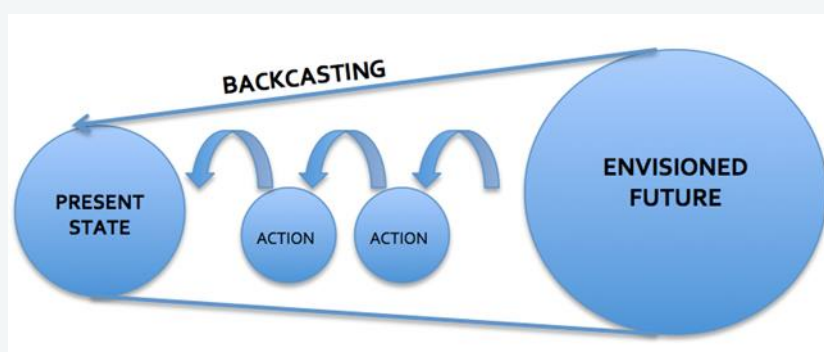
### Example 2: The vision for the city of Graz in the energy sector

- In 2050, the city of Graz finds itself at a sustainable energy equilibrium.
- The required energy is produced 100% regionally from renewable energy sources.
- The citizens of Graz understand the value of energy and use it consciously and efficiently.

## EXERCISE 1

### Draft the general vision for your city!

In this exercise you will use the method of **Backcasting**, where you define a desired future situation and then work backward to construct a causal chain between the future and the present state.



1. Begin with the end in mind.
2. Move backwards from the vision to the present.
3. Move step by step towards the vision.

Figure 1: Backcasting process. Source: SMACC after The Natural Step

**In order to develop a vision for your city, follow the instructions:**

1. Imagine your city/neighborhood in 2040. What is your desired situation in the future?
2. Is there already a future vision for your city? Make an online research!
3. Write a short story (100-150 words) starting with "My city in 2040...". Be creative and specific! You can also make a drawing instead of writing a story.
4. Backcasting in three steps 2040 ->2030 ->2020 -> now
  - i. Describe the current state
  - ii. Decide on the future states in 2020 and 2030
  - iii. Determine actions that are needed to achieve these states (work backwards)
5. Draw a timeline with "now" on the left side and the 2040 on the right side. Place your actions on the timeline.

Materials:

Sticky notes in multiple colors, flipover sheets, pens, A4 sheets

## 2. Defining your starting point and challenges

After you developed a vision for your city, **starting point for the future work of your Living Lab** can be defined by listing up possible fields of activity. The goal is to identify the most important challenges in your city or neighborhood that will serve as a basis to focus on in the next phases of the design thinking process.

## THINK!

What are the major problems in a city? List 5 different examples!

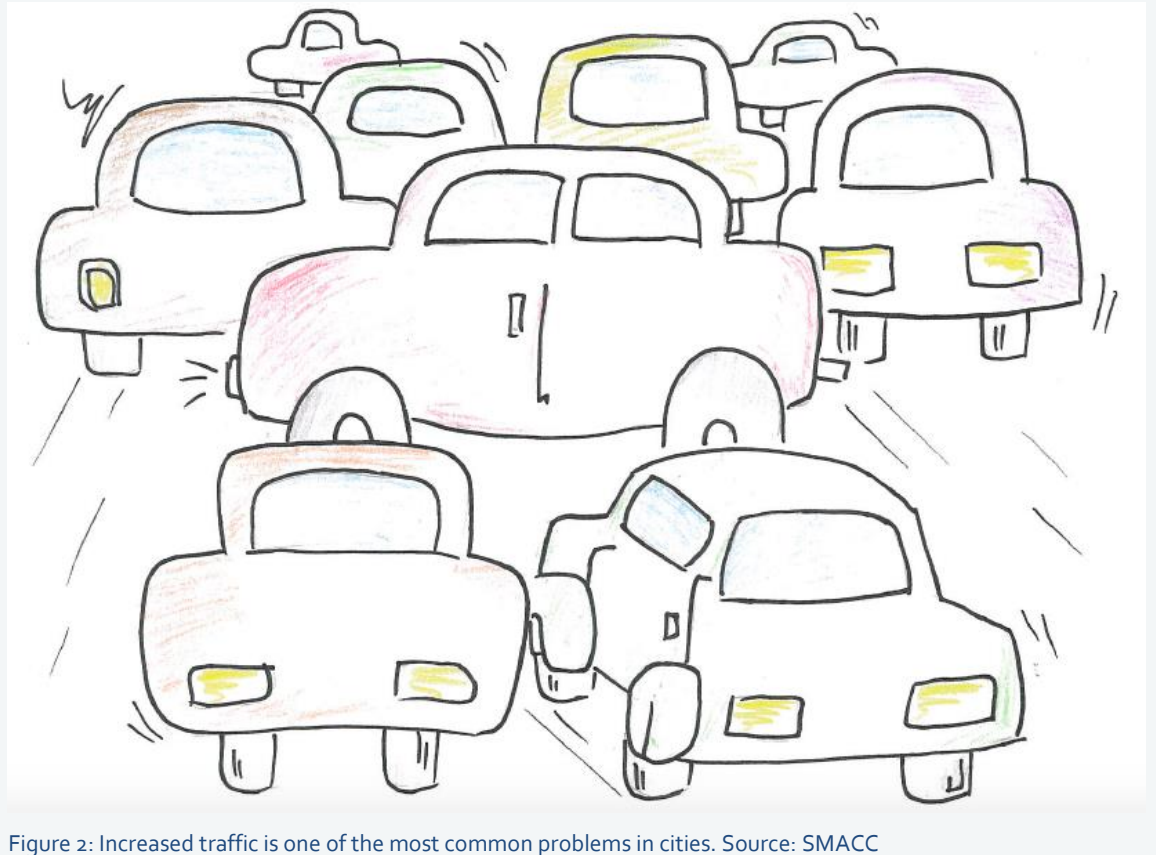


Figure 2: Increased traffic is one of the most common problems in cities. Source: SMACC

There are many urban-related topics to consider when you plan your Living Lab. It depends on you to define issues that are the most relevant in your specific context.

### Examples are:

- Water supply and water quality
- Energy
- Transport / mobility
- Waste (solid waste, wastewater, air pollution, chemical waste, landfill)
- Safety / security
- Food / health
- Social challenges like social cohesion and social tensions
- Destruction of cultural heritage and its preservation

After you selected the topic to elaborate on, think about how your Living Lab can work in relation to the following aspects of the city development:

- Buildings
- Social structures
- Consumption / lifestyles
- IT infrastructure
- Physical infrastructures (for energy, water or waste)
- Public spaces
- Citizen participation

## EXERCISE 2

### Define the most pressing challenges in your city!

In this exercise you will use the **Mindmapping** approach. A mind map is a hierarchical representation of a topic connected by branches and associated topics. You can use different visual techniques, like colors, symbols and other graphic representations, as you can see in the example.

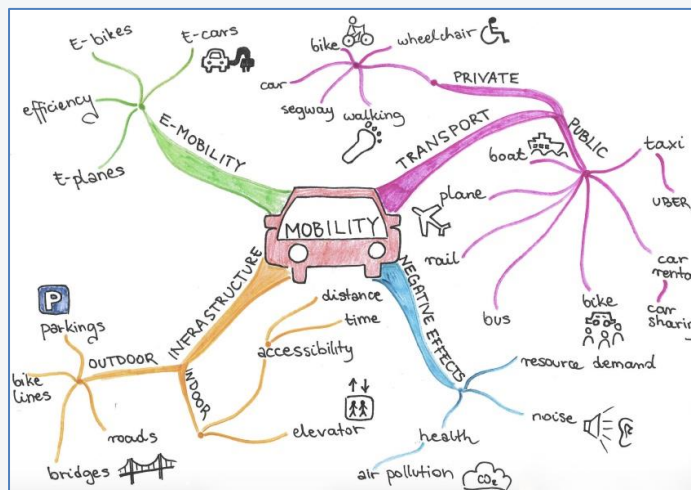


Figure 3: A mobility mind map. Source: SMACC

In order to create a mind map outlining the most pressing challenges in your city, consider the following steps:

1. What are the main challenges in your city/neighborhood. Be specific!
2. Define the central theme. What is the starting situation (water, energy, waste etc.)?
3. Write the name of the theme in the centre of a sheet and draw a circle around it.
4. Brainstorm each major facet of that theme, placing your thoughts on lines drawn outward from the central thought like roads leaving a city, and add branches to these lines, if necessary.
5. Use additional visual techniques, like different colors for major lines of thought or symbols.
6. Reshape or restructure the mind map if necessary.
7. Finally, write down a list of the most urgent challenges in your city or neighborhood.

#### Materials:

A4 sheets, pens, A0 flipover sheet, felt pens, your brain and imagination

### What can be the other outcomes of the DREAM phase?

It can be a video, picture, drawing, text, "a day in the life of...", describing the ideal city of the future. But it can also be a story describing the "nightmare-scenario", i.e.: what would happen if we don't do anything to improve the current situation.



Figure 4: Photo credit: Nikolaus Kurnik



## Impressum

Published by:

e-genius –Open Education Initiative  
in Science and Technology  
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Layout: e-genius –Open Education Initiative

January 2017

## Project: SMACC – Smart City Coaching



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

This learning unit was funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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