Living Lab – Final Neighbourhood Reports
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Ireland

Presentation of Living Lab Activities

We initiated the Living Lab with numerous focus groups with the stakeholder and community groups, to gather their perspectives on potential interest in the programme, on how best to set-up the Living Lab, and how to address any contextual challenges that may hamper interest and participation.

Some members of these different groups have continued to support the programme, in particular key members of the community group. These members are local, play community leadership roles and have the trust and insight into the unique socio-cultural context of the community. They have been instrumental in identifying the most appropriate age group to start with, and in promoting and supporting the programme in the community.

COVID restrictions meant a delayed start and it was determined that it would be ideal to run a series of sports sessions during Easter holidays in 2022 for various age categories, and from there allow attendance results to guide the evolution of the programme.

Attendance was predominantly 5-12 year olds, with some support from their parents, and we have continued to lead weekly sports sessions guided by the needs of the group and the weather. Sessions take place weekly on a Wednesday afternoon. They are sports-based sessions, primarily using football. These sessions have taken place for over a year and will continue to run into the future.

Simultaneously SARI has run an anti-discrimination workshop in the local school. We have been delivering an Anti-discrimination workshop to all primary schools in the local NEIC area. Although schools can be mixed in terms of socio-economic background of children, they are predominantly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Picture 1. The children and their trainer during warm-up in one of the weekly sport sessions.
Key Results

The Living Lab has had good reach within the community. Overall, 59 children (46 Boys, 13 girls) have signed up for the sessions and on average 25 (approx. 20 boys and 5 girls) attend weekly. We have also had 22 attend the special outing in the lead up to the May Bank Holiday.

Given the Living Lab aimed to create a sense of continuity through sport in the neighbourhood, with the weekly session as a reliable and constant in the children’s lives, having 20-25 average weekly attendance is a very positive result.

Another aim of the Living Lab related to modelling positive behaviour. The trainers have noticed considerable positive change in behaviour among the children since the sessions began. The children are less likely to fight amongst each other, less likely to use bad language and less likely to be rough with each other. While there may still be occasional outbursts, overall behaviour is much improved. This has transferred beyond just the Living Lab, with the children being better behaved in school as well.

Main Changes Made

The overall structure of the weekly sessions - after school sports sessions on Wednesday afternoons - has remained similar throughout the Living Lab. Football is the most common activity during these sessions. However, slight changes and modifications have been made in this time.

In spring 2023 a second session for girls was set up to run at the same Wednesday afternoon time. The original session was not set up as a boys-only group and initially attendance was quite mixed between boys and girls. However, as some girls dropped out, the boys came to dominate the sessions and were not very inclined to include the remaining girls which resulted in the girls not attending. A girls’ group now runs in parallel to the boys’ football sessions. The girls also play some football and do a range of sporting activities.

In January 2023, a monthly award was established to recognise and reward good behaviour. Each week, the children are marked out of five for behaviour, attendance, engagement and performance and the participant with the highest monthly score wins a voucher and certificate of excellence. The same child cannot win twice. Since the girls’ group has been established, there are two monthly awards.
This was introduced as the trainers identified behaviour as an important issue during sessions. Many of the children have experienced significant instability and proximity to violence. They may also lack structure and boundaries in their home life. When the sessions started some of the children had difficulties expressing frustration in a healthy way resorting to name calling, bad language and even punching. While this has improved in most children over the course of the sessions, in some cases outbursts persisted. It could be difficult for the trainers to effectively discipline such behaviour, especially without the backing of parents. In one incident a child punched one of the trainers and was told he could not come to the next session as a punishment. This was a temporary suspension only, to show the consequences of such behaviour. However, the father of this child responded to the suspension by pulling the child out of the lab completely. The child later re-joined and his behaviour has improved but this example highlights the difficulties with improving behaviour.

The team therefore wants to focus on recognizing and rewarding positive behaviour, rather than having to punish poor behaviour. To this end, the monthly award system was established.

A second change was with regards to the integration of Ukrainian and international protection applicant (IPA) children into the group. This was as a result of changes in the neighbourhood itself, which began housing Ukrainian families and IPA in 2022. The trainers had discussions with the children attending the weekly sessions about inviting children from these families to join the sessions. These discussions provided an opportunity to talk about what it means to be a refugee, why some people have to leave their homes, and about anti-racism and non-discrimination. The children supported inviting the new arrivals to join and the sessions now have around six refugees and five Ukrainians.
attending regularly. This was very significant as it took place against a backdrop of far-right protests in Dublin, and particularly in the North East Inner City area, against housing IPAs.

![Picture 4](image.png)

*Picture 4. The children and the trainers discussed together whether they want to invite Ukrainian and refugee children to the sport sessions.*

**Challenges and Solutions**

Trust is regarded as a key dimension of social cohesion, in particular trust in local organisations (Langer, A., Stewart, F., Smedts, K. et al., 2017) and building trust in the community is one of the greatest challenges, in particular in an area such as the North East Inner City. Being one of the most disadvantaged communities in the country, members of the community are often left behind in terms of socio-economic investment and support. The partnership is sensitive to the delicate nature of building trusting relationships in this community and is present to the need for slow progress, in particular in relation to deeper conversations that may trigger social or emotional trauma or heighten awareness of the social challenges in the area, and also in relation to reporting on the outcomes of the programme.

SARI had an opening in the community as a result of having led the Football for Unity Festival in Dublin in 2021 in partnership with key local stakeholders as part of the UEFA European Football Championship 60th anniversary celebrations. This was SARI’s first opportunity to operate within this community and the response was positive, with requests from stakeholders and parents to continue working in the area. While this initial contact allowed for good access and buy in when setting up the Living Lab, it became apparent that an approach whereby the lab would seek to raise and discuss issues relating to social cohesion abruptly and directly would not work well in this context. This posed a challenge for the SARI and MTU partnership who were cognisant of the requirements of a Living Lab approach but did not want to harm relations in a community which can feel exploited by researchers as though they are being "mined for information", as is common in this area and other disadvantaged communities.

SARI and MTU had several conversations on how best to address this challenge. The partners strongly agreed that it was most important to continue building trust and relationships rather than push too hard for research outputs. Conversations around issues relevant to social cohesion have been able to happen more naturally as trust with the group has grown, as seen for example in relation to inviting Ukrainian and refugee children to join the session.
An ongoing challenge has been engagement with the parents. The partnership would have liked to have seen parents become more actively involved in the community group and in the weekly sessions. While one parent is now fully engaged in the community group and a few parents have attended occasional sessions this has not led to broader engagement. Various strategies were tried to increase engagement including a coffee morning and direct invites to specific parents to attend sessions. However, these have not led to significant results.

Final Reflections

When SARI and MTU first began this project, both organisations were new to the Living Lab approach. It took the project group a significant amount of time to fully get to grips with the approach and what it entailed. As a partnership we had numerous meetings to discuss what exactly we understood by the approach and how we would implement it. We were faced with three core questions:

   What is it we are doing?
   How are we going to do it?
   Where are we going to do it?

These were significant challenges to get our heads around. These questions were exacerbated by the Covid-19 situation which precluded meeting with each other and with the community and stakeholders.

Answering the third question of where we would be based was a major decision. However, the Laurence O’Toole neighbourhood did emerge as a good option. Getting the location right was very impactful in terms of setting us on the path to success. There was a real hunger in the location for an initiative like this and facilities available to work with. With the location decided answers regarding the how and the what were falling into place. Although it had taken the partnership a long time to get our heads around the approach, once we started implementing the activities things became much clearer. Now that we have confidence with the approach, the value and applicable of it is clear. The partners now feel equipped to implement such an approach in any situation in Ireland and believe that people would respond positively.
The need for the intervention of the Living Lab in the neighbourhood was apparent throughout the project. The partnership is very aware of the importance of continuity in this regard. We do not want the Living Labs to be a project where we drop into the neighbourhood for eighteen months and then pull out when the project ends. The sense of stability and continuity provided by the weekly session is very valuable even over this short period of time. We would like the local children to have this support throughout childhood. While we will only see long-term impact as the cohort reach adulthood, it is clear that creating stable structures can have a positive impact on the children as they grow up. In areas such as the neighbourhood we are in the offer around sport can be very dependent on the individuals working in community centres. While the centre currently has driven and committed people behind it this could change with a change of personnel. Embedding the project in the community long term ensures there is a constant offer available. While the offer may grow and evolve over the coming years to include options for teenagers as the first cohort begin to grow up, the Living Lab has started a journey of ensuring there will be an offer long term.

*Picture 6. Children of different ages are engaged in the weekly sport sessions. The goal of the project is to establish a long-term offer for the children as they approach adulthood.*
Germany

Presentation of Living Lab Activities

To foster and facilitate Living Lab initiatives within the In Safe Hands project, we have employed five primary methods. These methods aim to engage and establish connections with various stakeholders, ultimately fostering collaborative processes of co-creation. The main methods include focus groups, interviews, observations, a research activity game, and regular meetings between In Safe Hands and the German Sport University. Below is a brief overview of these activities:

Meetings between In Safe Hands and the university team

Regular meetings took place between In Safe Hands and the university research team, occurring either monthly or every two months. These meetings served as platforms to discuss ongoing activities, explore potential next steps, and maintain up-to-date information exchange. They played a crucial role in sharing challenges, successes, and establishing future plans.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the staff of In Safe Hands, as well as the two coaches responsible for the observed class. The objective of these interviews was to gain insights into the perceived goals and impact of the program, as well as the challenges and opportunities within Bunter Ball. Additionally, the interviews aimed to gauge respondents' understanding of social cohesion. Interviews were carried out with two coaches and three program managers between May 2021 and February 2022. Due to the young age of the Living Lab participants, no interviews were conducted with them.

Focus group

One focus group discussion was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the goals, impact, challenges, and opportunities within Bunter Ball, as well as the local perspectives on social cohesion. Originally planned to include two educators, two ISH coaches, and the head of the ‘all-day’ department at AWO Ruhr-Mitte, the focus group only consisted of the coaches and educators. To facilitate communication and engage as many stakeholders as possible, the focus group was conducted online on November 16, 2021, taking into account the prevailing Covid-19 situation. By bringing coaches and teachers together, the aim was not only to gather valuable information but also to enhance collaboration among different project stakeholders.

Observations

Recognizing the importance of incorporating the experiences, views, and needs of the young participants in the Living Lab, regular attendance and observation of their weekly Bunter Ball sessions were organized. A member of the German Sport University team attended 11 sessions between November 2021 and March 2022. The primary goal of these observations was to build trust with the participants, facilitate informal contact between GSU and the coaches/educators, and gain unique insights into the delivery and experiences during the sessions.

In May 2023 a member of the German Sport University team observed two “Bunter Ball” sessions to get some impressions about the current set-up of the sessions. Another series of observations will be conducted by a researcher between October and November 2023. The objective of these observations is to identify possible challenges for teachers implementing the “Bunter Ball” project.

Research activity with the participants

Considering the young age of the participants, formal interviews or focus group activities were not suitable. Nevertheless, acknowledging the significance of their feelings and opinions, a research activity was designed by the observing researcher based on the project’s regular activities. This activity was presented and adjusted based on feedback from the research team, the In Safe Hands team, and
the local coaches. The aim of the activity was to capture the children's emotions and perspectives through an interactive, movement-based game. In this instance, the activity involved posing questions to the children, who responded by running towards specific pre-defined cones.

**Reflection workshop**

Regular roundtable discussions were held with educators at the schools to gain insight into their well-being, challenges, and concerns. Based on the feedback, visible changes in the process and structure at the leadership level of the Bunter Ball sessions were made. In autumn 2023 a reflection workshop with 2 coaches and 1 educator is planned to obtain useful information and feedback regarding workflow, practice implementation and challenges regarding practical and theoretical implementation in the 3rd grade.

**Key Results**

**The understanding of social cohesion in our team**

In interviews the program manager and coaches were asked what they understood by social cohesion. In cooperation, the understanding of social cohesion was then defined as following:

*The understanding of social cohesion is based on peaceful, respectful social relations between diverse individuals and these individuals working together towards common goals. Social cohesion focuses primarily on the quality of relations between individuals of different backgrounds.*

**The role of coaches and educators**

The relationship between educators and coaches is a recurring topic in our observations, interviews and workshops, specifically regarding program delivery. The presence and role of educators during sessions hold great significance. At times, children may exploit the situation with coaches, displaying differences in their perception of authority and occasionally not following the coaches' instructions. In contrast, educators, who interact with the children almost daily, have earned their trust and respect, enabling them to offer guidance. An educator (during observation 11) highlighted this dynamic, saying “If I were to stand there in the middle, the children would immediately be quiet. I wouldn’t even really have to say anything. But I don’t want to take on the role of coach.” Additionally, educators are often more trained for the pedagogically work with children within the project and can thus contribute to a higher quality of the sessions. However, it can be hard for educators to take a more active role as they “have to take care of individual children permanently during the session and thus have no room to instruct exercises” as one educator says. Additionally, not all educators are open and motivated to take part in the program as the following quote of one educator illustrates: “We can’t identify with the project because we have no affinity for sports or social-emotional learning in connection with sports.”

**Main Changes Made**

To improve the program delivery, several changes were made in regard to the dynamic between coaches and educators. As explained, the perception of authority differs between the educators and coaches, and the children may not always follow the instructions given by coaches. As such the presence and role of educators during sessions are crucial.

However, as educators have a supportive role in the program, they often refrain from intervening to assist coaches during sessions. Some even consider the session time as a sort of "break" from their work. Therefore, to clarify the responsibilities and to overcome this challenge, a Tandem-Model was introduced in Summer 2022. This means that one coach and one educator were leading one course.
Beforehand, the role of the educators was defined and agreed in the sessions in order to have a clear leading and task structure in all courses.

Six month after the implementation of the tandem model, several problems emerged. Many of the educators are at the limit of their workload, cannot identify themselves with the Bunter Ball project, and feel that they are being pushed over the edge. The AWO imposed on the educators from above the task of participating in the Bunter Ball sessions and taking an active role during the sessions. Given the educators were not allowed to decide for themselves whether to participate or not in the Bunter Ball project and thus were not transparently involved in the decision-making process, some of them have developed an emotional defensiveness and see the project more as an additional burden than as an enrichment.

Regarding the coaches, there was a high fluctuation because the coaches had other jobs and study appointments which means that there was hardly any continuity in the Bunter Ball sessions. In addition, many coaches were inexperienced, and although they receive training and workshops from ISH, it was still a big task for the coaches to master all the pedagogical conflicts and tasks that take place primarily in elementary schools. It is also very difficult to find competent coaches in the area of Bochum and Herne.

With all these points in mind, ISH decided to change the structure of the project. In the future, the “Bunter Ball” project will be implemented by teachers as part of the regular sport sessions in the curriculum. Through their position, teachers have the necessary authority over the children. As teachers have extensive pedagogical training, they are more competent in bringing the content to the children than educators or coaches. Additionally, they have the possibility to address topics from daily life of the school in the sessions (e.g. conflicts) and to remind the children of the content of the sessions (e.g. strategies to deal with emotions) in the daily life of the school. Additionally, this makes the project more scalable as no additional coaches are needed.

**Challenges and Solutions**

The primary objective of our Living Lab is to enhance project delivery and outcomes. A crucial aspect of achieving this goal is obtaining relevant feedback for program improvement, including insights on challenges and potential enhancements.

It is worth noting that the structured and scheduled nature of the program is seen as both advantageous and disadvantageous. On one hand, the regular engagement of In Safe Hands over a four-year period is recognized as a significant opportunity to develop relationships between the program and children, build emotional competences, and foster social cohesion. However, on the other hand, the presence of ISH limited to designated school hours may hinder the development of certain relationships and prevent coaches from engaging deeply with specific children. As expressed by a coach in a focus group discussion, "In the sessions, I often feel that some don't have enough time or attention, and we still have to play."

As explained in detail before, the dynamic between educators and coaches is a recurring topic in observations, interviews and workshops. The Living Lab approach helped to identify the problems and implement changes. As the introduction of the tandem model of one coach and one educator, as well as the decision to implement the project via teachers in the future shows, the Living Lab did not only lead to changes, but also established an approach of constant reflection to continue improving the program even after solutions to challenges where found. In terms of stakeholder engagement, one of the significant challenges is reaching and engaging parents. Since we do not possess direct contact
details for parents, we always have to communicate with them through the children or school administration. This, coupled with the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the families, presents communication difficulties. To address this challenge, a parent survey was developed to establish closer contact with this group. But there was no participation which led us to the decision to sidetrack this activity.

Another challenge lies in actively involving the children in the Living Lab process. Due to their young age, certain methods such as interviews or focus groups are not considered suitable. However, it is crucial to bring together all the different stakeholders, including children, parents, In Safe Hands, teachers, educators, researchers, coaches, and AWO. Moving forward, at the very least, it will be important to continue observation and interactive feedback activities with the children. Non-sport activities like drawing or storytelling could also be employed to facilitate their participation.

**Final Reflections**

Though Living Labs are typically associated with fully open settings, our work within the Bunter Ball programme has shown that the principles of a Living Lab – namely multi-stakeholder involvement, multi-method approaches, and co-creation – can be adapted to a more closed setting like a school-based intervention. In fact, adopting the Living Lab in this context has supported Bunter Ball to make numerous important changes in how the programme is implemented, and this was always directly in response to input from educators and collaborative observations of the activities.

Like numerous other programmes targeting children, however, actively integrating the students and their parents proved to be a challenge. We have experienced how regular presence and observation at Bunter Ball activities, conducted by University partners at the German Sport University, can provide a low-barrier way to get a sense of the activities and engage with the children in an informal fashion. Moving forward, there is still a need to actively engage with parents, who are critical stakeholders for the group targeted by Bunter Ball. Any engagement will need to recognise the many demands put on parents and offer clear accomodations, as well as flexibility, to participating parents.
Czech Republic

Presentation of Living Lab Activities

The Czech Living Lab (LL) activities were organised in the Olomouc region, in the cities of Prostějov, Přerov and, primarily, Olomouc. Concerning the practical level, all the Living Lab activities are carried out by the Czech partner, INEX, and its team of social workers and facilitators who are in regular contact with the target group. Practically, there is a series of activities organised for the target group constituted by Roma children and youth mainly. The research part of the LL activities was carried out with the support of Palacky University Olomouc. It also coordinated internship possibilities for its students in the field of sport and social work.

Interviews
Four interviews were carried out in four locations in the cities of Prostějov, Přerov and Olomouc with the target group of children and youth from 10 to 18 years. These are mostly contacted through different drop-in centres and sporting programmes, within the project Football for Development (FFD) in case of INEX. A local collaborator of INEX (social worker responsible for FFD implementation) guided the children throughout the interviews that took place in November 2021. The interviewed boys and girls mostly come from a socially disadvantaged background, from families with single mothers or without significant support for education and/or leisure activities.

Focus groups
Two online focus groups (due to COVID restrictions) were carried out with the different stakeholders from the Olomouc region in December 2021 and March 2022. These stakeholders involved professionals from an education agency, social workers, municipality and regional authority officials or Roma coordinators. These LL activities were coordinated by Palacký University Olomouc researchers.

Football training sessions
Regular weekly football training sessions were organised for the children and youth in each location with the help of the person responsible for FFD in each organisation in the researched region. These regular LL activities were coordinated by a local collaborator/social worker of INEX.

Football3 tournaments
Each month there was a football3 tournament organised where the children and youth from the different organisations connected to FFD participated and practised the football3 methodology. This was also the place to meet youth and kids from various backgrounds and places, socialise, perform and this way learn new skills and abilities through sport.

Student discussions
Students of Palacky University Olomouc (Faculty of Physical Culture) participated in several football3 tournaments and actively took part in different positions within the football3 methodology. They tried out to be a player, observer or mediator. All these activities were discussed with the students in order to foster their learning process, understanding of what was happening on the pitch and structuring the possible use of this experience in the future.

In Person Consultation
One in-person consultation between social workers and academics was organised on the role of sport in youth work. This was the occasion to validate or revoke some theories on the topic. It took the form of a discussion on various assumptions on the role of sport in youth work.
Engagement events
Two engagement events between stakeholders and end-users were carried out in Prague and Olomouc to bring the two parties together in a dialogue around a shared sporting experience. The events hosted a football3 tournament and a number of side activities organised by the stakeholders (e.g. face drawing, interactive scoring board, t-shirt self-branding, skate-boarding workshop, etc.).

Dissemination
Dissemination of the information about project and its activities (beside the information published at Palacký University and INEX website and social media) happened through the presentations at 3 different conferences and in a journal called **APA in theory and practice (in Czech “APA v teorii a praxi”)**:

- Wittmannová, J., Šafaříková, S. & Svoboda, A. (2022). *Building social cohesion through sport and physical activity (poster presentation)*. 6th international scientific conference Experiential Pedagogy in Educational and Social Contexts, Prague, Czech Republic; 3.11.2022; Book of abstracts, p. 52. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vtIpB7InUNDjzZPZMQDzH4ZTAL_tcHkm/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vtIpB7InUNDjzZPZMQDzH4ZTAL_tcHkm/view)

Connection with leisure time organisations
Connection between FFD project and leisure time organisations (in Czech - DDM - Dům dětí a mládeže) in Olomouc region was established during the National Conference of Adapted Physical Activities in Véska (17.-19. 5. 2023).
Social Cohesion through Sport: Social Cohesion Lab

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INTRODUCTION Project Sport and Social Cohesion Lab brings together the academic and NGO sector in Germany, Netherlands, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Austria, and Switzerland. The project's aim is twofold: First, it elaborates the topic of social cohesion in diverse urban neighbourhoods and generates an understanding of the processes constructing social cohesion through sports-related activities. Second, it supports practitioners (NGOs) delivering social programmes using sports with methods and tools for understanding and evaluation of activities contributing to social cohesion in communities.

MAPPING SPORT AND SOCIAL COHESION IN EUROPE: Exploratory study
- Online structured survey
- Data analysed by Creswell et al. (2007) procedure and MaxQDA 2020
- European sample: 84 organisations from 26 countries
- NGO's: 47.6% - Sport clubs: 22.6%

FOCUS GROUPS with stakeholders and participants in sports programmes

WHAT DOES IT MEANS SOCIAL COHESION?
- PARTICIPANTS: CHILDREN, YOUTH 6-18
  - „Safe space“ to meet peers
  - Have someone to listen
  - To do sport

WHAT DOES IT MEANS SOCIAL COHESION?
- Stakeholders: SOCIAL WORKERS, PUBLIC ADMIN. OFFICERS
  - Clients as individuals, families
  - Lack of intercultural connection „drop-in” and „leisure time centres”

THE LIVING LAB APPROACH

Sports programme organisers, participants and other stakeholders are brought together to generate an understanding of factors that build social cohesion through sporting activities.

Picture 7. Conference poster EUCAPA 2022; Coimbra, Portugal (Wittmannová, Svoboda, & Šafaříková, 2022)
Key Results

The project brought several results both on the theoretical and practical level. As the Czech partners sum up, the results have positive effects not only on the everyday work of INEX and Palacký University Olomouc but also on the general understanding of social cohesion and how it is linked to movement activities.

What does “Social Cohesion” mean? [Adapted from the Interim Report]

On the theoretical level, the Czech partners had to solve the conceptualisation of the very term “social cohesion” which is rather unusual in everyday Czech language without having an extensively used synonym. Especially in the case of the target group (made up of children from 10 to 16 years old) social cohesion was specified as care for other people and, vice versa, perceived care, general experience from the neighbourhood, number of friends and quality of the friendly bonds and sense of safety or equality. It is also important to note that, at least in the Living Lab localities, the concept of “neighbourhood” cannot be simply translated into Czech. A more structured and active community might be needed to be called a “neighbourhood”.

As for the target group, an environment where social cohesion is established depends on the personal experience of the participants. Chiefly, they wish for a “safe” space where they can experience a “good time” with friends, having a chat with them without anyone bothering them or complaining about the music they listen to. A sense of social cohesion is also built upon the idea of someone listening and taking an interest in their opinions. Such a role can be even attended by social workers. Furthermore, some girls also specifically mentioned the safe space but without boys entering it.

The stakeholders cannot identify any cohesive community except for people from the very same locality or being members of some kind of organisation. Part of their job, however, is to promote or establish social cohesion in the region bringing socially excluded children closer to the “majority” children.

Indicators of social cohesion based on interviews and focus groups within the Living Lab:

**Joint values** promoted during football3 sessions in the FFD project (fair-play, self-confidence)

“...while field workers employ football or florbal or other sports as a contact tool that is most important for boys. This is important for me as a social worker. I can use the game to discuss more things in depth. Therefore, Football for Development is a kind of superstructure for us and fairness and education are an added value for us.”

**Integration** - the goal is to bring children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds closer to majority children (auxiliary factors include enhanced cooperation with schools or finding links between activities of drop-in centres and free-time centres for children)

“And there are teachers interested in these topics. A lot depends on their specialisation. Sometimes they are also psychologists but, mostly, they are teachers of math, languages, chemistry etc. And they often see children in their classes who might benefit from drop-in centres activities.”

**Open activities for everyone** - based not only on the freedom to join but also to offer well-suited activities to possibly excluded groups (such as dance activities for girls instead of primary focus on sports)

“We came to the gym during winter where we had a few kids. They were friends from the school. But then, when we are at an outside playground, anyone can come if he or she wants to. Various group ages and kids who wouldn’t otherwise speak with each other meet there.”

**Safe spaces** - suitable for spending free time with friends safe from endangering outside elements
“... there was a playground made for kids but it was closed after a few mishaps. I cannot think of any other place similar to that one in Olomouc. I mean a playground out of sight where kids could do what they want and have it as their place. Such a safe place where they could shout and express themselves without bothering anyone, that would be great. It could be somewhere under a bridge, some underground place where they could do graffiti, play football or do anything else.”

Family - frequently mentioned primary social group which is thought of as a basic “safe space”

“I enjoy having my family around, it’s my shelter.”

Thanks to the interviews with the participants and the stakeholders, we were able to identify further possibilities. Most of the participants spoke rather positively about their neighbourhood and the activities provided. However, they would welcome more accessible and quality sport facilities. The sport pitches have been mentioned as either not in good quality or not existent.

Joint stakeholders’ activities

The project has also been a chance for various stakeholders to come together. This opportunity is quite unique, especially in the field of sports and education. This first encounter allowed stakeholders to identify further cooperation possibilities and, hopefully, create synergies that are beneficial for the development of social cohesion within the region.

In terms of sport cooperation success, we can highlight establishing cooperation between Football3 league organisers (INEX) and professional football clubs in both supported regions - in Prague football club Bohemians Prague 1905 and Slavia Prague, in Olomouc football club Sigma Olomouc.

The latest development has been reached for FFD also in the Prague region following one stakeholder engagement event held in one district of Prague 3. It was the occasion to bring together different stakeholders and actors active in social cohesion and get inspiration from the best practices of the consortium countries and neighbourhoods. The event attracted a number of workers from different Prague municipalities and districts, notably the Prague 10 district, which has been particularly eager to cooperate following the event. The event was followed by a meeting with the mayor of Prague 10 and his assistant to explore potential ideas for cooperation and lay down the first plans. It was then followed by another meeting a month later to concretise some of the first ideas. It was concluded to start with a joint launching event of the new season 2023/2024 on a popular public sports ground, which faces notably a number of challenges with youth hanging around without guided activities and in need of integration, as they are predominantly newly formed groups of youth displaced from Ukraine and creating certain tension with the local youth who feel they are losing their comfortable ‘homeground’. With the municipality of Prague 10, FFD is aiming to address this challenge by introducing football activities on that playground.

In Prague and Olomouc, June 2023 was also the scene of two events uniting the local stakeholders and the end users into practical activities. It was the occasion for end-users to engage with stakeholders from the business, technology, media and sports industry. The event hosted a central football3 tournament, where the key principles evolved around the communication and dialogue between players. It was a great occasion to bring the stakeholders and the end users into an informal setting prone to dialogue through the shared experience of the game. It worked well in Prague and had a bit more limited outreach in Olomouc, but still a good experience to take lessons from.

Another result we would like to highlight is the support given by a limited number of students from the Palacký University Olomouc, who have been genuinely interested in the work of the NGO and decided to voluntarily contribute to it. The ambition at the beginning was higher but nevertheless, we
can say that some students have shown dedication to some of the needs of the NGO, notably in terms of translation and organisational tasks.

Main Changes Made

Change in the form of work and engagement with stakeholders and end users
The beginning of the project was influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and meetings and activities were organised online (focus groups), in the second part of the project it was possible to organise meetings in face-to-face form, which helped to achieve better networking between the partners (meetings with stakeholders in Olomouc, Prague; football tournaments; Day of Fair Play Football in Olomouc and Prague).

Possibilities of raising students’ awareness of the field of sport for development
The first aim of the project was to bring the academic and NGO fields closer together. The project allowed the NGO and university representatives to engage in regular conversation and meetings to discuss the partnership and synergies between the two parties. We can confidently claim that the project contributed extensively towards this first aim, as it gave us dedicated time and capacities to explore different cooperation possibilities and also share responsibilities towards the greater goal of achieving more social cohesion.

It has of course also demonstrated some of the limitations that the cooperation can have in terms of involvement of students for example, and gave us some indication on the potential solutions or approaches to change for the future. In conclusion this project has certainly raised the interest in pursuing the cooperation and developing new initiatives that bring together the university and the NGO.

Unlocking potential among some different stakeholders
Another aim of the project was to engage with other stakeholders with a vested interest in pursuing greater social cohesion. The first phase of the project achieved this in reaching out to several actors of the Olomouc region involving professionals from an education agency, social workers, municipality and regional authority officials or Roma coordinators. This first contact allowed us to get to know some of the relevant actors and explore potential joint initiatives, which remain to be explored.

In a second phase, the project also gave the NGO the opportunity to get in touch with other stakeholders in the Prague region thanks to the organisation of a stakeholder engagement event that attracted different representatives from the civil society. It helped to concretise planning meetings with the municipality of Prague 10 and the joint interest to cooperate in order to increase social cohesion within this district. The start of the cooperation on the ground is aimed at taking place from September 2023 onwards.

Further, in connection with one of the findings of stakeholders interviews about the lack of intercultural connection among “drop-in” and “leisure time centres”, an information meeting of these two parties took place. Football3 coordinator (from the Olomouc region) representing the “drop-in centres” and the employees of leisure time centres for children and youth established by regional or municipal education authorities met and discussed possible cooperation at National Conference of Adapted Physical Activities, 17.-19.5.2023.

Overall, this project opened up the spectrum of partnership for the NGO and also the university, as it started to work with the concept of the Living Lab principles for the first time and then attempted to implement some of them with relative success and echo from the different stakeholders approached.

Positive echo from the professional football industry and their responsibility towards the society.
Following the point above, we can also mention a positive development from the side of professional football clubs in the Czech Republic towards their social responsibility. INEX was fortunate enough to
have had the chance to work with 2 Prague professional football clubs in 2023, thanks to some initial engagement. The first club, Bohemians Prague 1905, has been hosting INEX and FFD for one of the stakeholder engagement events and the second one, Slavia Prague, has been opened to explore further sustainable ways to complement each other and propose a series of educational initiatives.

Girls’ football team from SK Sigma Olomouc took part in *Fair Play football Day* (using the Football3 methodology) held in Olomouc 30. 6. 2023.

*Picture 8. Announcement: Fair Play Football tournament, Olomouc, 30.06.2023*
Challenges and Solutions

COVID-19
2021 was still a challenging year in terms of offline meetings and activities, hence it was not easy to build up from the regular activities, as those were disrupted. Therefore, in our FFD context, the post-covid efforts were mostly dedicated to getting back into some form of normality and regularity in the field activities. This prevented us from developing our Living Lab with a strong base at the beginning of the SSCL project. Additionally, with a certain online fatigue in place, we couldn’t reach as many stakeholders as we had wished for the interviews. Nevertheless, this presented us with an opportunity to engage with new stakeholders and with some of them structure the post-covid program planning and implementation.

Online interviews helped us to gather some stakeholders’ opinions on the social cohesion phenomenon. In reality we would not have been able to gather the interviewees all together at one place.

Student engagement
During the lifetime of the project, we have seen some limitations in the practical engagement of university students towards the NGO. Some students have been involved, but mostly when the
attendance was validated with some extra credit for their degree. Only few students have then contributed to FFD activities organically out of the formalised context of university courses.

With this in mind, we shall probably systemize the cooperation, in order to offer opportunities to students in advance but also within the logic of a selected university course or curriculum, with a clear presentation of the expected benefits and outcomes.

During the lifetime of the project, the university already implemented the following structure in order to tackle the mentioned challenge. Within the Palacky University course called **Conductive Pedagogy** (dealing with children and youth with behavioural problems, persons with conductive disorder, socially maladjusted citizens etc.) students participated in two Football3 tournaments organised by FFD in Olomouc region. The tournaments took place on Friday and students could choose two dates out of five proposed. The course professor worked with a tool called LOUIS (Learning Outcomes in University for Impact in Society)\(^1\) to assess the students’ general academic and personal learning outcomes in selected competences. Due to participation in Football3 tournaments students worked on competence a) **Civic engagement: Diversity of communities and cultures** and b) **Global learning: Cultural diversity**. The students’ participation had the following phases:

- before the tournament: preparation in the field of methodology of FFD project, students got familiar with the book *Football for Development: Football as a tool for informal education* (Ambrozy, Hofmann, Kyncl & Žwak, 2016)

- at the tournament: students took part of the organising team of the tournament and they were asked to observe the pre and post communication of the team and mediators.

- after the tournament:
  - focus group of the involved students with topics of cultural diversity, community work, sport (football).
  - students provided written answers on suggested open questions from organisers of the tournament.
    - Where do students see overlaps between football and learning? Consider to what extent in the role of mediator to intervene in the action of the game, if it does not take place according to fair play - rude behaviour, more dangerous game, non-compliance with the rules, mockery, etc.? Let such situations escalate and then have the opportunity to reflect on them and learn from them, or intervene in the process and prevent risks?
    - What F3 soccer rules do to create space for learning?
    - What can be done so that a team of young players can play with older players and it is beneficial for both teams and preferably interesting?
    - Were there any situations that were not sufficiently reflected in the discussions? Any untapped potential? How should they be addressed?
    - If the F3 concept was played by adults, would it make a difference? If so, why isn't that the case for our 6-18 target audience?

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\(^1\) [https://aurora-universities.eu/resource/aurora-louis-competences-tool/](https://aurora-universities.eu/resource/aurora-louis-competences-tool/)
Neighbourhood set-up
As opposed to other settings abroad, in the Czech Republic our Living Lab couldn’t be set up in a specific neighbourhood but rather on the scale of a region. Therefore, it is more challenging to rely on the specificities of a concrete neighbourhood and its stakeholders.

Hence, our approach was more directed to the end users and their needs, regardless of their living locations.

Real co-design with the end users
Deeper co-creation and design with the end users is something we would like to develop further in the future. At INEX we consult the end users in the forms of evaluation and discussions, but we have not been able to really involve them in the creation of an intervention. However, we gather information from the end users during the intervention, as the main method used is based on group reflection. This allows us to observe, but also gather direct feedback from the end users.

In the future we want some of the end users to shape the intervention prior to the delivery and therefore reinforce even more the aspect of co-creation and engagement of end users in the design of the intervention. This is what this SSCL project and the experience we gathered motivates us to do.
**Final Reflections**

The final reflections on the Czech side are provided from two perspectives - the NGO one and the university one.

**INEX reflections**

INEX would like to build on the current contact network and further promote the discussions between the local and regional stakeholders about the possibilities of sports (for development) programmes. INEX will not only facilitate the joint discussions but also invite stakeholders from the Olomouc region to local events organised within the FFD framework, such as the League of Fair Football. Another future goal is to bring together the current stakeholders and the implemented activities and schools. Even during the focus groups with stakeholders, the need to interlink children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds with the rest of the “majority” population has been highlighted.

Finally, another aspect that INEX wants to develop further is the link established between the University (UPOL) and the NGO (INEX, FFD), so that the cooperation is based on a sustainable needs analysis and synergies. During the project, we have been jointly with the university able to identify some of the limitations that the academic field in the Czech Republic can have in proposing a complementary curriculum in cooperation with an NGO. The motivation for students is often driven by practical needs for credits and not necessarily by the pure interest in the work of the NGO.

Besides, FFD has the ambition to replicate a similar approach in the other Czech geographic regions where FDD is active. SSCL experience provides a good base for a replication effect in other regions where interconnections between stakeholders are the most needed (e.g. Ústí nad Labem region).

From the NGO perspective (INEX and its program Football for Development) this project has been beneficial on many levels. Firstly, it has helped the NGO to look at a new concept and give itself the means, capacity and incentive to approach stakeholders who weren’t approached yet or weren’t considered yet. It has been beneficial to understand better the principles of a Living Lab and implement some of them in their practice. Secondly, this project has been important in bringing INEX (NGO) and the Palacky University Olomouc closer together and building on the partnership which already existed. It has been the occasion to try out new initiatives with students and consequently also draw some conclusions on the limitations but also on the potential untapped yet. Eventually, we want the NGO and the university to find a cooperation model that will be a bit more systematic and efficient for the students and for the NGO itself. This project has certainly served its purpose.

Finally, for the NGO this project has brought specific fruits following the first multiplier event organised and which attracted some stakeholders with a vested interest in cooperation and eventually leading up to some real event planning and aim to solve some societal challenges.

INEX would benefit from a follow-up project that could support our work started with some of the stakeholders and take on the Living Lab activities into the next phase.

**Palacký University reflections**

Palacký University evaluates the experience, both nationally and internationally, very positively. Besides the new contacts with academic institutions, deepened cooperation with the NGO sector is greatly appreciated. On the national level, joint activities and future planning with INEX even outside the SSCL’s scope have taken place for the whole project’s lifetime.

Both for students and academic staff, the project has also brought a substantial connection between theory (Sport for Development, social cohesion, social capital etc.) and practice. For students, participation naturally widens their experience of faculty teaching modules. Social workers from the
FFD programmes also visit modules and students participate in selected football3 tournaments as a mandatory part of specific modules. Simultaneously, academics are brought closer to the sport for development and social work industry and its stakeholders. Links with regional and municipal stakeholders have been established and the project team would like to keep them active even in the future (mutual exchange of information, participation in round tables and other events) Last but not least, data gathered during discussions with stakeholders adds to the research activities of the project team and is used for scientific publications.

The collaboration also opens new perspectives for students’ future employment as the activities of the FFD programme (combining work of sports coaches, social workers and leisure activities animators) are presented as one of the possible professional careers. In the last years, several Palacký University alumni started to work in the area of FFD. On the other hand, the inclusion of students into the FFD activities shows the downsides of volunteering students’ work when some of them lack the motivation in case where the activity is now rewarded (financially or with ECTS credits).

To sum up, Palacký University would also welcome any follow-up project or activity transferring the living lab concept to other localities and regions. The current project further revealed that the cooperation between NGOs and academia is enriching for the theory, practically helpful and both sectors benefit from each other’s expertise.
The Netherlands

Presentation of Previous Living Lab Attempts

From the start of the Sport and Social Cohesion Lab (SSCL) project, it was known that ISA would form a local partnership with The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), in which ISA and THUAS would jointly implement activities in the community Morgenstond. Unfortunately, due to various obstacles, the ISA living lab in Morgenstond, the Hague did not take place. The following is a summary of ISA’s attempts to set up a living lab, the obstacles they encountered in doing so, and the lessons learned.

ISA Living Lab in Morgenstond

Unlike the other SSCL partner organisations, with Universities focusing on MEL and Living Lab analysis and NGOs on implementation, THUAS already had its own Living Lab, namely Morgenstond. Implementation activities, which were focused on providing sports activities for Islamic mothers, were also largely implemented by the University. Because a Living Lab already existed, discussions were held with ISA about setting up a new ISA Living Lab in Morgenstond, where ISA would implement its GAME programme, focused on participation and providing structural sports offerings in local contexts for young people. In the first months of 2021, several conversations were held between ISA and THUAS about setting up a possible ISA Living Lab in Morgenstond, the local context, possible partner organisations and the target group. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic proved to be a difficult situation to actually follow through and implement an ISA Living Lab during that time.

ISA/THUAS Minor “Impact of Sport”

ISA and THUAS jointly decided to give ISA an active role in the Minor programme ”Impact of Sports” offered by The Hague University of Applied Sciences. In this 10-week Minor a group of +/- 20 students learned about Positive Youth Development, the Power of Sports and how to conduct semi structured interviews with young people. The ultimate goal of this Minor was to have the students engage in conversations with young people from the community Morgenstond, to investigate what needs and wishes the young people had and what (sports) facilities were lacking in the community. The Minor programme would end with a large community event in which the students, youth and community organisations would join forces. Youth from Morgenstond, who thought it would be cool to help organise their own event, would then be approached by ISA to participate in a new GAME programming in Morgenstond; the ISA Living Lab. Unfortunately, it was decided to end the Minor programme after a number of weeks, due to the re-emerging Covid-19 situation in the Netherlands.

Collaboration with local partners

During the same period that the Minor took place, ISA held discussions with local community organisations to hear what challenges were faced by the youth in Morgenstond. In addition, these conversations were also a way to make ISA and its ideas for setting up a Living Lab known to community organisations. After an inventory of organisations and concrete directions, ISA began discussions with the following organisations: MasterPeace, 3X3 Unites and Bureau-MHR. MasterPeace and 3X3 Unites are both international organisations and had the idea of facilitating their own activities in Morgenstond, where ISA might be able to join them. Unfortunately, after several discussions, both organisations dropped out. Bureau-MHR is a local youth organisation dedicated to social recovery and rehabilitation of ex-prisoners. Bureau-MHR organised sports activities in the Morgenstond where
youth came to play and talk together. In the talks with Bureau-MHR, it was agreed to organise these sports activities together for a period of time and to incorporate ISA GAME elements into the activities. However, this collaboration did not get off the ground, mainly due to disagreement over a substantial financial contribution for Bureau-MHR.

**Second attempt to start the ISA Living Lab in Morgenstond**

Without a local partner, ISA nevertheless tried to facilitate its own activities. First in Eibernes, the local gym in Morgenstond, but due to low numbers of participants this was later moved to outdoor locations within Morgenstond. Here ISA coaches facilitated safe, fun, active and inclusive sports activities to young people within Morgenstond. These youth were recruited locally on location and invited friends themselves. A total of four sports activities were facilitated where an average of 8 young people attended each session. At the same time, ISA realised that, without an implementation plan and execution strategy, the activities delivered little data and knowledge for the SSCL project. To intensify the activities and organise them on a weekly basis, it was devised to involve local students in implementing the activities. Several attempts were undertaken to involve students from The Hague’s Sport & Exercise and Sport Science programmes in the activities. Afterwards, it turned out that there was too little enthusiasm from within this study, both among the students and the courses.

**The main challenges we as ISA experienced while implementing a living lab were:**

1. Limited knowledge about the local context and local organisations
2. Lack of time to build trust with local organisations
3. Challenges in attracting and retaining members of the community and stakeholders
4. Lack of community engagement from members of the community

**Limited knowledge about the local context and local organisations**

It is crucial that implementing organisations of living labs have sufficient knowledge of the local context and local partners when setting up a living lab. Without this knowledge, implementing organisations cannot understand the specific needs of the local community, which may result in the living lab not connecting with participants and stakeholders. In addition, implementing organisations need to understand what local resources are available and how they can be used to support the living lab. Consider things like; local organisations with a large network in the community, infrastructure to carry out living lab activities and local projects that can be connected to.

*Tip:* Before you start with the implementation of your living lab, make a mapping of the local context potential partner organisations and local resources. This mapping is a collection of all the local resources and potential partners which may of additional value for the implementation of the living lab. Once these have been identified, implementing organisations can proceed in a far more efficient and targeted way with the involvement of local partners and resources in their living lab.

**Lack of time to build trust with local organisations**

The trust of local organisations in the implementing organisation is necessary for good cooperation. This cooperation with local organisations is vital for the success of the living lab. Living labs require collaboration between various stakeholders and local organisations can help facilitate these partnerships by providing support, contacts and other resources. In addition, these organisations have a far better understanding of the local context, including the community’s needs, culture and practices. They can provide insights into the challenges and opportunities that exist in the area and can play an important role in this.

*Tip:* Ensure that you spend sufficient time to build trust with local organisations. This can be achieved by having a structural presence in the community as implementing organisation, planning partner meetings with local organisations and hearing their ideas and thoughts and regularly sharing
information about the activities in the living lab. Frequent contact with local organisations also aims to manage expectations and judgements about the living lab. By following these actions local organisations will be much more likely to contribute to the living lab.

**Challenges in attracting and retaining members of the community and stakeholders**

During the implementation of our living lab, we struggled as an implementing organisation to attract and retain community members and stakeholders in our activities. This was mainly because there was too limited structural contact with local partners and the community members, not enough investment had been made in strong partnership with local organisations and the whole idea of the living lab was unclear for the community members. Strong partnership with local stakeholders is essential for reaching community members of your living lab, as they know the local context best and are essentially the link between implementing organisations and living lab community members.

*Tip:* To mitigate this risk, implementing organisations should involve key local stakeholders (such as implementing organisations) more in the design of the living lab. Communicate the benefits for them to participate and have strong regular communication throughout the process. Try to understand stakeholders’ expectations. What do they expect from the living lab, their involvement and the results? Once this is clear, more focused efforts can be made to invest in strong partnerships and engage community members.

**Lack of community engagement from members of the community**

Living labs are designed to be created and implemented together with local organisations and community members. Without the involvement of community members, the target audience of your living lab, it can be challenging to find and recruit suitable participants for your living lab. Without community involvement, there is no possibility of creating a successful and sustainable living lab. A lack of community engagement can have several causes. Community members lack confidence in the implementing organisation, not see the value of participating in the living lab, or not know about the living lab at all.

*Tip:* To maintain community involvement in a living lab, implementing organisations need to engage with the community to understand their needs, expectations and priorities to ensure the living lab is relevant and also meets their needs. One way to do this is to organise regular open meetings or establish a panel of community members where they are asked to provide input on certain choices for the living lab. Moreover, community members should be aware of the living lab activities so that they can participate. Implementing organisations should thoroughly communicate their living lab activities and ensure that community members receive all information.

**(New) Local Context**

**General information**

De Hambaken is a community in the city and municipality of the same name of ’s-Hertogenbosch, in the Dutch province of North Brabant. The district is located in the Noord district. Hambaken has 1,300 inhabitants. Below is an image about the location of Hambaken in the municipality of ’s-Hertogenbosch.

Hambaken is a community where social challenges are relatively high. In 2017, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to enact the Special Measures for Metropolitan Issues Act. This is a law to regulate the number of low-income persons in urban residential areas, housing complexes and streets and is only implemented in communities/communities with a particularly high number of problems.

Hambaken residents are a truly multicultural community. 38% of residents have a migrant background. The most common migration backgrounds in the Hambaken community are Moroccan (24%), Western (23%) and other (30%) (Allecijfers, 2022).
The average gross annual income in Hambaken is relatively low compared to the Dutch average, at €19,700 compared to €34,000. You could possibly connect this to the average level of education in the community. 45% of the residents has a low level of education (Allecijfers, 2022). There is also a high level of obesity among residents (59%) and 46% of residents meet the exercise guideline. For adults, this is to exercise moderately intensively for at least two and a half hours every week and children at least one hour daily (Allecijfers, 2022).

![Picture 100. The location of Hambaken in the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch.](image)

**SheGotGame programme**

We see as ISA that teen girls (12+) have far less opportunities to participate and engage in community sports activities; 35% of all girls in the Netherlands hardly ever play sports. The rate is higher for teen girls in urban settings and for girls from minority backgrounds (Carlman, Wagnsson and Patriksson (2013). One of the root causes is that (community) sports is still male dominated: boys get more training time, more opportunities for competition, more training facilities, and more financial and material rewards for participation. The bottom line is that in the field of sport too often men take the decisions on how women should participate in sport.

In an effort to put a stop to this, ISA has developed the SheGotGame (SGG) programme. SGG is a girl-participant programme in which teenage girls from a community are trained as girl leaders and coaches and independently facilitate activities for other teenage girls in a safe space for them to team up, play and learn. ISA provides Girl Leaders, coaches and the girl-participants with a supportive environment: Coaches will mentor the Girl Leaders to realise their goals; and ISA provides training and mentoring to the community teams of 3 Girl Leaders and 2 Coaches. The programme focuses on developing the coaching and leadership skills of the programme’s coaches and girl leaders, creating role models for the youth and increased (sports) participation within the communities.

In 's-Hertogenbosch, the municipality where ISA has its headquarters, we as an organisation also saw these challenges for local teenage girls. In discussions with the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, it soon became clear that there was a need to start a girls’ participation programme within local communities and the community of Hambaken was chosen as the location. Through the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, ISA came into contact with youth organisation PowerUp073, a key stakeholder.
in this programme. PowerUp073 served as a resource for interested girl leaders and coaches who wanted to participate in the programme, and ISA was responsible for training and mentoring these girls.

Some of the key stakeholders during the SheGotGame programme in Hambaken were:

- **PowerUp073**: PowerUp073 is a youth organisation that challenges young people from 'S-Hertogenbosch to be the best they can be and is ISA’s main cooperation partner in this project. Within the programme, PowerUp073’s location served as a venue to meet, plan activities and spar with local youth workers and the girls.

- **S-PORT**: 'S-PORT is an initiative of the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch. It is a large organisation that organises sports activities throughout the municipality and manages several sports halls and sports venues. These sports halls are also frequently used to organise activities for the girls.

- **Municipality of 'S-Hertogenbosch**: Supported the whole programme and LL activities. Through the municipality, we came into contact with the youth organisation.

- **Schools**: offered the project opportunities to promote activities and find participants.

- **Hambaken residents**: participated in the LL activities, but also took part in focus groups, interviews and various brainstorming sessions to shape, coordinate and reflect on these activities.

- **Girl Leaders**: Teenage girls who were trained as Girl Leaders within the programme

- **Coaches**: Girls trained as coaches within the programme

Within the SGG programme, there are three different types of participants, namely Girl Leaders, Coaches and teenage girls from the community who participate in the activities. The coaches are girls between 18 and 21 years old and are interns or volunteers at PowerUp073. They accompany the Girl Leaders during training days and during the implementation of activities. The coaches serve as a sparring partner for the girl leaders and support with setting up and facilitating activities. The Girl Leaders are responsible for facilitating 10 sports activities within the community and one major sports event where attention is generated for a self-chosen social cause within the community. The teenage girls are participants in the activities and come from the Hambaken community.

**Presentation of New Living Lab Activities**

**3 training days for Girl Leaders and Coaches**

During the programme, ISA facilitated three training days for Girl Leaders and Coaches, focusing on designing sports activities, facilitating sports activities and how to be in front of a group.

**First training**

The first training introduced Girl Leaders and coaches to the basic techniques of facilitation and coaching. What is asked of them, which sports and game activities can they use and how to create a safe environment for girls. During the first training, the Girl Leaders and Coaches learned how to apply working forms to retrieve the wishes and needs of teenage girls from the community. Thus, the Girl Leaders found out what sports activities the girls in the community would like to see.

**Second training**

The second training focused on the Girl Leaders and coaches reflecting on the first activity given and exchanging best practices. In addition, the girls made an action plan for the coming weeks and described which activities they wanted to facilitate and how they were going to do it.

**Third training**

The last and third training was mainly about planning a big final activity and how to achieve goals for girls’ sports for the future. Here we had the girls think about sustainability of the programme.
10 sports activities in Hambaken community facilitated by Girl Leaders and Coaches

In total, the Girl Leaders and Coaches organised 10 sports activities for teenage girls in the community of Hambaken. On average, there were 15 participants per session. The girls mainly used indoor football as a sport to recruit teenage girls, but focused on different target groups. For instance, there were sessions for girls up to an age of 12, 16 and above and one where teenage girls could play indoor football with their mothers.

To initiate and support the Living Lab activities within the programme, ISA worked with different methods in order to build trust with different stakeholders and to initiate the wished process of co-creation. The main methods we used were focus groups, field visits, mentoring sessions, interviews and girl consultation moments.

Focus group

Before the start of the programme, a focus group was held with different stakeholders of the programme, PowerUp073, the Girl Leaders and the Coaches, to identify the wishes, needs and expectations of the programme, as well as local understanding of social cohesion. This focus group helped to align all stakeholders and ensure that everyone understood their position in the programme.

Girls' consultation moments

After the first facilitated activity, the Girl Leaders and Coaches held consultation moments with the teenage girls. Here, they asked how the teenage girls liked the activity, what they wanted to do next session and whether it matched their wants and needs. In this way, the Girl Leaders and Coaches ensured that the activities matched the wishes and needs of the teenage girls, thus ensuring sustainability of activities.

Field visits

During the activities facilitated by Girl Leaders, ISA visited twice for field visits. During the field visits, ISA staff participated in the activities and observed how the sports activity was facilitated and received by the other participants. Afterwards, they reflected on the activities together with the coaches and Girl Leaders. The purpose of these field visits was to build trust with the Girl Leaders and Coaches, while observing the experiences and implementation of the sessions. In this way, we got a unique insight into how the activities were received by the teenage girls.

Mentoring sessions

During the programme, special mentoring sessions were held between ISA, the Girl Leaders, Coaches and policy staff from the youth organisation PowerUp073. These sessions were all about reflecting, sharing experiences and creating a sense of belonging. These sessions gave us a unique insight into how the Girl Leaders and Coaches operated, what they encountered and how the activities were received by the teenage girls. These sessions greatly strengthened the collaboration between ISA and the various stakeholders.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the programme’s coaches and Girl Leaders. The aim of these interviews was to find out the Girl Leaders' and Coaches' experiences with the SheGotGame programme as well as the challenges, opportunities and impact of the activities. We also asked whether the Girl Leaders and Coaches continue to organise activities and what this programme meant to them.

Local Understanding of Social Cohesion

We established that in academic literature, social cohesion is a very broad term, with multiple definitions. In general, social cohesion refers to the extent to which individuals in a society or
community feel connected to and trust one another, and are willing to cooperate and work together for the collective well-being. It reflects the level of unity, solidarity, and shared values among members of a society or community. Within the focus group with the Girl Leaders, Coaches and youth organisation, we found that the LL activities from the SheGotGame programme were mainly focused on community engagement, inclusiveness and equality and social inclusion.

- **Inclusiveness and equality**: By empowering girls' voices and giving them equal opportunities in the community, it promotes inclusiveness and equality. It emphasises the importance of including all members of the community, regardless of gender, and creates a sense of justice and equality. This strengthens ties between different groups within the community.

- **Social inclusion**: Creating community sports specifically for girls and providing safe places for girls encourages social interaction and integration. Girls are given opportunities to work together, play together and build social bonds with other girls and also with boys and other community members. This promotes mutual understanding, reduces prejudice and strengthens community cohesion.

- **Empowerment and self-confidence**: Empowering girls’ voices and providing safe spaces helps girls discover their own strengths and potential. They can build self-confidence, develop their skills and make their voices heard. This contributes to self-esteem and personal growth, and when girls feel empowered, it has a positive effect on overall social cohesion.

- **Community engagement**: By actively involving girls in the community and giving them a voice, they become active participants in community life. They can contribute to decision-making processes, share ideas and develop initiatives that benefit the community as a whole. This fosters a sense of shared responsibility and collective action, which is essential for promoting social cohesion.
Other Key Results

Meanwhile, the Girl Leaders and coaches have facilitated 10 sports activities in the community of Hambaken. Looking at the interviews with the Girl Leaders and coaches, it can be concluded that the LL activities have made a significant impact on both the girl leaders and coaches, as well as the participating girls in the community.

The programme has contributed significantly to the creation of ‘safe’ sports venues for girls within the community and, in the process, to the provision of girls’ sports activities. Previously, there were no specific girls’ sports activities and these girls fell by the wayside. Many participating teenage girls in sports activities were of Islamic origin. Especially for this target group, it was important to create safe sports areas where no men were present.

"There are many girls there who are not comfortable exercising in public and that’s really something very strong about this programme" - Coach

“I think a lot of girls don’t like playing sports with boys or feel unsafe at playgrounds” - Girl Leader

"Almost all the girls who joined our sports activities for the first time have continued to come to the sports activities" - Girl Leader

There was high demand from the community for sports activities especially for girls. In discussions with youth organisation PowerUp073, municipality of ’s-Hertogenbosch and the Girl Leaders and coaches themselves, it was repeatedly stated that these kinds of programmes have a great impact on girls’ sports participation and social integration in the community.

"From the girls there is also much more demand for this kind of programme. Look, if men want to play football they just go to a football club and sign up. They know where to go. Girls who don’t want to
play mixed sports or don't want to join a sports club don't know where to go for alternative sports activities” - youth worker PowerUp073

You see that there is a huge need from the community for sports activities just for girls. By playing sports only with girls, you still create a very safe environment that would not have been there without the programme” - Girl Leader

"Some girls have really become friends and now see each other outside indoor football. That's kind of nice to see" - Coach

The programme has also had a great effect on Girl Leaders and coaches. Almost all Girl Leaders and coaches interviewed indicated that they gained more self-confidence and leadership skills through the programme and were more confident to stand in front of a group. In addition, almost all interviewees also indicated that they wanted to continue facilitating sports activities for girls in the community after the programme, on a voluntary basis.

"The programme has personally 'empowered' me much more, so to speak. The feeling I experienced before, of we have to give way to boys, there is no place or no money for activities, that has really been taken away a lot more" - Girl Leader

Main Changes Made

The main change ISA has taken in the LL in Hambaken is the communication towards the Girl Leaders and coaches. This communication was weekly via WhatsApp or through mentoring sessions where brainstorming and reflection was done with the Girl Leaders and coaches. Initially, a policy officer from youth organisation PowerUp073 was supposed to pick this up, but due to staff shortages, ISA took on this role.

In addition, the Girl Leaders and coaches adapted their sports activities to the wishes and needs of the participating teenage girls. This kept the sessions in tune with the target group. For example, the teenage girls could specify which sports and/or games they wanted to do during the sessions.

Challenges and Solutions

Lack of time to organise the community's sports activities by the Girl Leaders and coaches

What was a challenge in ISA’s most recent living lab was underestimating the time it took for the Girl Leaders and coaches to organise activities independently. Since the first training facilitated by ISA, it took quite some time for the Girl Leaders and coaches to start facilitating activities. They found it especially difficult to take actions independently. We as ISA solved this by maintaining more frequent communication with the Girl Leaders and coaches and supporting them more in the executive part, for instance by holding joint brainstorming sessions, giving tips and acting as a sparring partner. Below, for example, is a flipchart of one of these brainstorming sessions.
Lack of time from the youth organisation to support the girls and coaches

Another challenge was the availability of youth organisation PowerUp073 to mentor the Girl Leaders and coaches in facilitating activities. Initially, this role of mentor would be more with the youth organisation and ISA would be more concerned with general training. When it turned out that the youth organisation was facing capacity problems and therefore had less time to guide the Girl Leaders and coaches, ISA also mainly took on this role. As a result, the girls were adequately supported while facilitating activities.

Stable and sustainable flow of community sports activities for the girls in the community

As the end of the programme approaches, it remains to be seen whether the girls-only sports activities will continue. Almost all Girl Leaders and coaches have indicated that they want to continue organising sports activities, but without a budget (e.g. for renting the sports hall) this will be difficult. Many teenage girls have also already indicated in the sessions that they are not comfortable playing sports at public sports venues because they feel watched by boys. ISA will engage with the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch and youth organisation PowerUp073 to see what possibilities there are in the future to continue facilitating exclusive girls' sports activities in Hambaken.

Final Reflections

As described in the first part of this report, we as ISA encountered several obstacles in setting up a Living Lab. In contrast, our second attempt, the Living Lab in Hambaken, succeeded and managed to achieve great results in the community. This is mainly because we took the knowledge of the hurdles of the first Living Lab in Morgenstond while setting up the Living Lab in Hambaken. We invested more time in establishing partnerships with the municipality and youth organisation, spent a lot of time building a trusting relationship with the Girl Leaders and coaches, and actively involved the participating girls in shaping the sports activities. All this has meant that the previous obstacles we encountered in Morgenstond have not occurred now.
References


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