Understanding each other: the relationship between the academy and operations

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Overview

1. Introduction

2. Actors and relationships

3. Key pointers from Cambridge's LL experience

4. Sharing experiences

Introduction

- Living Lab project coordinator at University of Cambridge

- Situated within the Environment and Energy section in Estate Management

- Living Lab started in 2012

- I joined 1.5 years ago

- Project funded by Santander

- Convenor of Living Lab community of practice - emerged out of last year's EAUC conference

Introductions

- Name?

- Role?

- Where do you sit within the University?

- What is your interest/involvement in a Living Lab?

- LL stage of progression? *E.g. starting out? Bits and bobs? Established process/framework? Institutionally embedded?*

Cambridge Living Laboratory for Sustainability

Academic projects

Voluntary projects

Internships

Award scheme

Benefits and value of LL for relationships

- **At Cambridge, LL contributes to the following strategic areas in our Environmental Policy:**
  - Teaching and research
  - Partnership and engagement

www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/policy

Benefits and value of LL for relationships

Practical assistance	• Provision of data and information • Linking up with relevant contacts
Collaboration	• 'Go-to place' for information on environmental activities across the University • 'Connecting the dots' between different initiatives
Communication	• Highlights stories of success • Increases awareness of the Environment and Energy Section
Engagement	• Provides opportunities for students to get involved • Helps engage people who are not already involved in environmental action

Benefits and value of LL for relationships

Effects on University operations

- Enhanced links between academics and Estate Management
- Use of research to apply on the Estate
- Allows for work to be done that might not otherwise be focused upon

Environmental impacts

- Cuts resource use and reduces the University's environmental footprint
- Demonstrates that the University is acting in a sustainable way on multiple scales

Culture change across the University

- Embeds sustainability into the fabric of the University
- Fosters greater innovation
- Allows new approaches to be trialled

Teaching and research

- Contributes to the impact agenda of academic research
- Provides local and relevant examples and case studies to enhance learning
- Allows operational and administrative areas of the University to contribute to the core aims of teaching and research

Student experience

- Students learn professional skills
- Improves students' employability
- Provides meaningful opportunities for students to contribute to improving the University's environmental sustainability

Over to you…

- What benefits have you seen or would you anticipate seeing in your context?

- What are the two or three benefits from LL most important to you?

- What do you think are the two or three benefits from LL that are most compelling to your senior leadership team? (Thinking about embedding institutionally…)

Four types of actors in a Living Lab

Goodwill drives involvement, contributes to work sometimes but not usually the motivator

Interest in supporting their students, may contribute to their research interests

Professional Staff	Local Actors
Academic Staff	Students

Interested to engage with university staff & students, willing to put in time where it links to their work

Want an interesting project, a good mark, practical experience, workplace skills

The Diversity

Stakeholder group	Major actors within the stakeholder group
Professional Staff	Individual staff; teams; groups; and departments (administrative wings, academic support, operations & estates, sustainability departments & other corporate services.
Local Actors	Registered local private, public and third sector organisations
	Local individuals, families, communities and informal groups
	Current affiliates & existing partners. Special relations already established. E.g. levels of government, regulators, charities, & firms (contracted architects, engineers, builders, suppliers etc.)

Exercise

1. Which of the four types of actors are you?

2. Who do you work with most and least from these four types?

3. Which links would you want to or do you prioritise for strengthening?

4. How could you enhance and strengthen these links using the Living Lab?
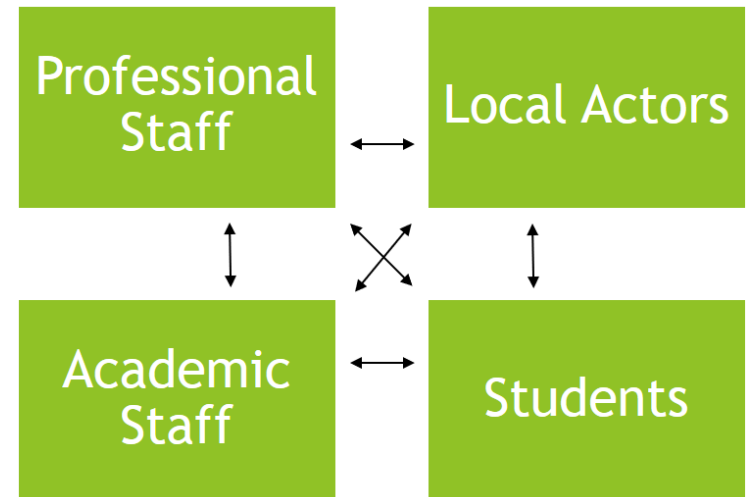
Key pointers from Cambridge experience – relationships in the Living Lab

- **All** about relationships between people

- Experiences and tips from Cambridge – I am deliberately now focusing on challenges and difficulties that have arisen, and things that have helped address them, rather than on success stories

- Please throw in your own experiences as we talk through them! All will be unique.

- Bear in mind the Cambridge dynamic: one designated person to find and create new opportunities, rather than more senior level push and/or drive forwards from multiple people. Advantages and disadvantages to this!

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

THE CAMBRIDGE *green* CHALLENGE

1) Listening skills are essential

- Everyone has a different approach, needs and expectations from linking with the Living Lab

- Understanding each person's viewpoint (what's in it for them, what they expect) is key for helping to ensure successful outcomes

2) Don't make assumptions – clarify expectations

- Ideas and suggestions for how to do this?

2) Don't make assumptions – clarify expectations

- Could be through a conversation or meeting, and/or standard guidelines that you ask to read and sign.

- A data release statement is important if the University has requirements about use/reuse of data – ask if you want a copy of ours!

- Discuss timelines – this can be a barrier.

- Understand what each person involved is putting into it and getting out of it – discuss further if expectations differ (this may be an iterative process).

- Sometimes a project may not happen if someone has unrealistic expectations.

- **Example:** environmental history – course requirements and potential for sustainability outcomes did not match.

3) Consider the project output(s)

- Ensure relevance for all different parties

- Can be part of initial conversation or determined towards end

- **Example:** Including a requirement for students to complete a 1-2 page summary of their 50+ page dissertation has increased utility of project results by professional staff

- Trust that relevant people will take forwards what they can – then check in! It sometimes comes in a few years later so keep reviewing

- **Example:** Greenwich House and use of literature review for benefits of plants in offices.

4) It's a balancing act

- Harness peoples' goodwill – be supportive, positive & encouraging

- Help meet expectations and requirements (whether for course, research or job role)

- Be clear that things don't always happen as expected or planned

- **Example:** embedded carbon in renewable energy installations – wide scoping of data to ensure sufficient for the project

5) Flexibility is important

- Flexibility and back-up plans are important for all parties concerned

  - Requirements might be set but not always met (e.g. the student doesn't always send on their dissertation or thesis as agreed; the data isn't always good enough)

  - Trial and error is part and parcel of LL – not every project will have the outcomes anticipated or impacts wanted e.g. timelines change; data availability/access/quality may be sub-optimal

- Set out risks and challenges at the outset and together ensure these are mitigated as far as possible

- **<u>Example:</u>** Dimitra's PhD research – timelines completely changed, massively affecting her original plans and scope of research

6) Accept different levels of involvement

- Certain actors may not want complete buy-in to a project e.g. they are happy to be interviewed but might not want further involvement or have further interest

- How to encourage engagement and involvement?

6) Accept different levels of involvement

- Ensure relevance of final outputs

- Initiate conversations about utility of results

- Discuss potential for future follow-up projects

- Focus on needs of those you are struggling to get involvement from

- Set up an initial meeting with all stakeholders concerned

Framework for Engagement (1/2)

Potential Tool

	INSTITUTIONAL EMPLOYEES	INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS
PRACTITIONERS	Professional Staff	Local Actors
ACADEMIC ACTORS	Academic Staff	Students

The LL

Projects equate to relationships equate to benefits

| Treat all actors as equals | Prepare and involve in decisions | Approp-irately include all in project | Adequa-tely inform & update. Effective comms & transpa-rency |

Shared Vision & Goals

Shared Values & Beliefs

Project actions & outcomes

In-project
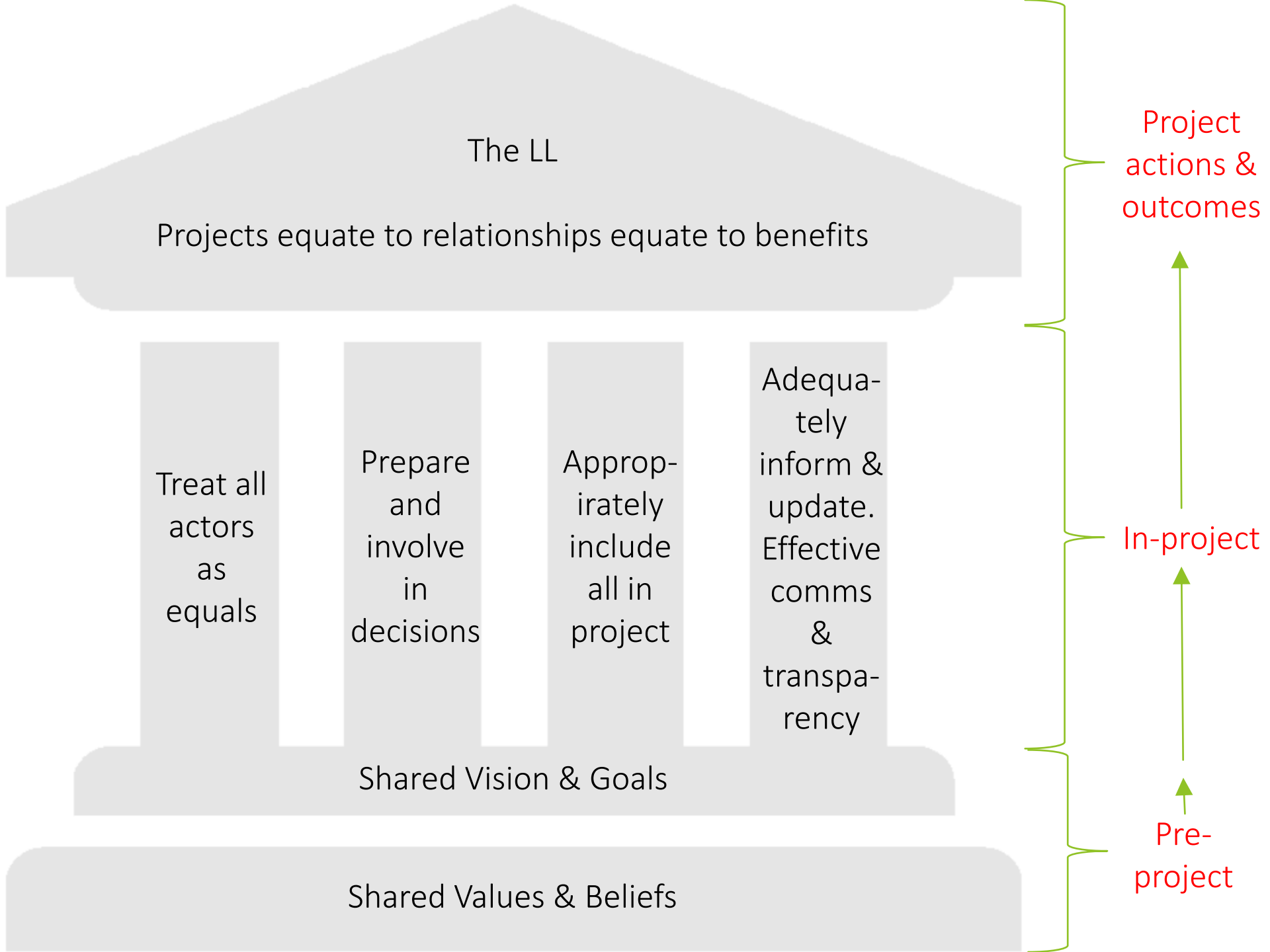
Pre-project

7) Keep asking questions

- …of anyone and everyone you are working with - and could potentially work with:

E.g.:

- Are there particular future projects that could be useful for you?

- Who else should I talk to?

- How do you feel this project is going?

- Any feedback for next time?

8) Check in regularly

- So much can be about chasing people!

- Often not top priority for all concerned

- A gentle nudge is usually welcomed

- Also ensures you can better predict problems arising and work towards successful outcomes

- Enables more consideration of current as well as future projects

- Strengthens relationships for other purposes or benefits

Example: Establishing a voluntary project (waste auditing) with an academic ended up resulting in him offering an academic project too.

9) Remember it's a laboratory

- Embedding results is hard – can take years or sometimes not at all.

- Experiments don't have 100% success rates - same principles apply to Living Lab projects!

- Trialling, testing, space for making mistakes are all part of it

- Projects can build on each other year on year e.g. freezer replacement programme

- Not all projects get off the ground – I have far more conversations about projects than come to fruition

- **Example:** JBS procurement teaching exercise; lack of student interest

What would you do?

Scenario:

A student carrying out an analysis of energy generation of different renewable energy installations across the Estate requires energy data and info about the installations. The person who can provide this is initially very engaged, but then gets swamped with work and isn't responding to emails. What do you do?

A couple of side points

- If you set up a stakeholder committee for maximum involvement and buy-in of key stakeholders, ensure their participation is genuinely required otherwise attendance will drop.

- Those involved need to be able to dedicate time and see it as contributing to their work.

- Finding the sweet spot of student interest and uptake, meeting course requirements or research needs and desired outcomes in practice is hard to find.

- Providing multiple pathways of involvement can help increase involvement, but not recommended in EAUC's LL model, as it takes focus away from the core of research for implementation and impact.

What experiences and advice do you have?

- What tips would you share?

- How are the dynamics between the different actors in your context?

- How do you manage expectations?

Contact Information

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Scenario: finding challenges to address

- At Cambridge…

  - I always have my ears open for potential research questions and future projects cropping up in conversations & raise them when I can

  - I keep a list of such projects arising and share them online and in talks I give to students

  - I refer regularly to our core mandate and brainstorm ideas with the wider team (the Environmental Policy)

  - I'm currently considering holding a workshop to initiate future ideas amongst academic and professional staff

- **<u>Example:</u>** analysis of energy use at college – student volunteering project initiated