Chapter 6
Beyond the Presence: Dwelling *with* People and *with* Their Places

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Abstract The author intends to indicate some epistemological and political nodes of 'being there' at the centre of ULLs, in different forms as implied by the SoHoLab project. At the root of the idea that urban sites can provide an arena of learning within which the co-creation of innovation can be pursued among research organisations, public institutions, the private sector and community actors, lies the possibility of establishing meaningful relationships as a medium to know these sites, construct social design, implement and govern local and national housing policies. In the light of the modus operandi of anthropological field research, on another way to 'being there', the author shows how 'these meaningful social bonds' to be epistemologically and politically relevant need to be coupled with a strong critical reflexivity able to deconstruct continuously the discursivities (of policies, of disciplinary as common and mainstreaming narratives) and practices of the ULL itself. A cognitive strabismus has to be developed to catch these place-based laboratories and contexts dependents, to make them 'up close', apprehend 'from inside' and 'from below'. Analysis situ and analysis in situ are not disjointed: the third space of knowledge construction allows to join them and recognise the logics that govern these social bonds.

Keywords Immersion · Knowledge · Ethnography

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6.1 Introduction[1]

The European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL), an umbrella organisation for living labs around the world, defines living labs as 'user-centred open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real-life communities and settings'.[2] This definition condenses a broad range of domains and organisations that make living labs the main research facility of action strategies (sometimes carrying messianic expectations) for the innovation of the millennium. The literature concerning this topic has already become noteworthy (to quote only a few: Chronéer et al. 2019; Hossain et al. 2019; Marvin et al. 2018) and relates to an array of key features that make these devices appealing to both public and private entrepreneurial partnerships. The body of work on living labs gathers heterogeneous elements: from *landscapes* to *real-life environments*, from *methodologies* to the inclusion of public and private *stakeholders*, and different business *models*, methods and approaches. Open innovation works here as both a technical and economic paradigm in which centre is the final user, involved from the very beginning as cocreator and, at the same time, as beneficiary of the lab.

The *urban living labs* to which some of the chapters of this book will refer definitely fall within the frame of the *mainstream* definition quoted above, especially taking into account *tenets* like the integration of research, cocreation and innovative planning in the users' real-life contexts. Nonetheless, they appear to be eccentric variations, due to the epistemological, social and political nature of the 'innovation' that they want to promote. Situated in urban contexts, particularly in the so-called marginal residential areas, i.e. *public housing projects* that became urban 'black holes', these living labs are driven by the purpose of urban regeneration.[3] In their conception, urban regeneration is neither a new consumer product to be launched in the market (Nesti 2018) nor is an outcome of social technocratic engineering or much less an architectural *commodity*. The practice of urban regeneration is here a relational process that assumes the epistemological and political recognition[4] of the social bonds that entail dwelling in a place. This acknowledgement allows for the cooperative co-creation of initiatives aiming at transforming that very place together

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[1] This text summarises the keynote from a seminar held online on 13 October 2021 as a part of SoHoLab project. For more information, see the Introduction of this book.

[2] https://enoll.org/about-us.

[3] 'The complexity and uncertainty of the contemporary city and urban areas such as large-scale social estates require new readings, interpretations and analytical lenses. Regeneration cannot be thought remotely but should be rooted in place'. From the flyer of the SoHoLab seminar on 13 October 2021.

[4] Recognition is of course a concept that can be applied to different semantic orders. It refers to intersubjectivity (Ricœur 2004) and to political dimensions as well, concerning epistemology (Honneth 2005) and justice (Young 1997). The reasons for this polysemy are epistemological: the possibility of recognising the actors as carriers of a critical knowledge not to be devalued due to their ascribed social identity or locationing or for the lack of interpretative categories (Fricker 2007). For an introduction to recognition as a political concept, see van der Brien and Owen (2012) and Thompson (2006).

with the actors living there, and it does become the ultimate goal of urban transformation itself. In short, social recognition is the matrix, effect, and style of the living labs' way of proceeding.

In these pages, I will bring the reader's attention to what I think is the epistemological kernel of a key common feature of mainstream living labs and socially oriented *urban living labs* discussed in this book, that is, the explorative and cognitive research on the contexts in which they are located, their 'ecosystems'—the definition quoted at the beginning borrows the term from Population Biology, therefore overshadowing power relationships and the neoliberal environment where living labs take place. I will put into dialogue the living labs' cognitive endeavour with the most familiar practice for me: long-term anthropological field research, based on interindividual interaction and the *ur-practice* of conversation. In this respect, I propose a reflection on the use of ethnography and all other forms of direct and long-running encounter by *living labs* in order to comprehend the social universe of urban dwellers, starting from the permanent settlement in these residential areas,[5] whether it is the collective space of a lab or the living/workshop of a single person. Here, long-lasting ethnography appears as a research strategy in accordance with the living labs' reasons for being; the immersion in everyday life and social practices is an integral part of the process of transformative planning. That is of course a complex task, centrifugal in relation to the disciplinary safety of urban planning and architectural design, and also unpredictable, for such a project of immersion always entails a new path to trace. Indeed, for every single case of analysis, we just have to invent how this 'immersion' takes place and, hence, how it can give rise to a methodical observation of people, places and the process of planning itself. Ultimately, the manner in which the knowledge thus produced is used in the planning process cannot be predicted: this necessary and founding 'local knowledge' needs to be processually integrated into methodological-disciplinary apparatuses that are not very flexible, refractory or even impenetrable to 'contaminations' from 'irregular' knowledge.

In the following pages, after sketching the social ontology[6] of the SoHoLab project as well as the practice of anthropological research as I do it, I will outline the trope of 'Malinowski's tent', a figure of 'immersion' characterising anthropological research in the field, and reread it along with other figures of immersion promoted by the living labs in this book or from which they take their cue. It will become clear how settling into a place is not sufficient for knowing it. Extra critical reflection is necessary so that the adoption of these figures/tropes fulfils the promises coveted by living labs. Ultimately, I will conclude by illustrating how the innovative experience

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[5] 'This practice of "situating" in space and place can be introduced before the planning process, undertaken simultaneously or developed throughout the development process, preferably constantly contaminating the practice', from the flyer of the SoHoLab seminar on 13 October 2021.

[6] I refer to Keith Sawyer's reflection on the concept of emergency (Sawyer 2005). I refer also to Marguerite Archer's works, especially those from *Structure, agency and internal conversation* (Archer 2005) for her contribution to 'individual agency' as a project mediating constrictions and facilitations of 'causal powers' within social and cultural structures.

of the SoHoLab projects can lead to rethinking the act of dwelling by turning both spatially and epistemologically to the places and those who live them so that urban regeneration can be rooted in the places since it is part of them.

6.2   In the Beginning, Living Together and Figures of Immersion

According to linguists, 'living together' is an everyday, colloquial, almost banal saying, which seems to me evocative yet substantial to express what living in a place is and to define what places are 'made of'—basically, built space and human bonds. Architecture, buildings and streets have a meaning thanks to relations, in particular to the kind and quality of the bonds we establish through them, which these buildings and streets in turn iconise, index (in a Peircian sense), enable and relate to. We can say that in the beginning are the bonds. It is a category on which I confer a connotation that is firstly ontological and epistemological, with methodological derivations that I will illustrate, without denying the political, ethical and poetic harmonies coming with it. It is precisely this expression, social bond, that guides my rereading of the *modus operandi* with which some of the SoHoLab projects practise and interpret immersion in their 'doing', by putting it into 'action'.

By means of the interpretative *phronesis* of the SoHoLabs, the images of the immersion and the root—both behind the idea of a regeneration of the place pointed out, guided and coming from the inside—become courses of action. These two metaphors represent an alternative, critically and intelligibly performed, to *mainstream* top-down urban and social policies. Yet, in so doing, they open paths to be explored, new ways of proceeding which can always be readjusted. The immersion in social practices and the everyday life of places is necessary to think this regeneration from near, from the inside and from below—from the 'roots'—in a cooperative way. Of course, the imaginary of immersion is itself ambiguous. We anthropologists are responsible for the idea that 'entering' a culture means 'immersing into it'. This is misleading if we push that theory to the far end of its literal meaning. Immersion would imply the idea of an environmental passage, a radical change in status. Now, it is clearly not like that. Stressing the differences is part of the strategy to stage the overcoming of the differences. Social changes on a global scale—and before them, a critical grasp of the act of creating anthropological knowledge—blew up the ideology that *people*, *place* and *culture* are welded together, of which area studies were a direct consequence. That ideology on one hand led to the idea of 'entering' an alien culture by gaining the trust of its members, the informants. On the other hand, once anthropologists started exploring urban areas, they were still looking for the village, the microsociety, selecting specific neighbourhoods, or those elements within the neighbourhoods that seemed to confirm the confinement of microsocial in microlocal. National belonging, 'ethnicity' and social class were deemed as those

features allowing one to retrace the place for a common belonging in the heterogeneous city. Actually, once we are in the field, whether it is urban or rural areas, we do not interact with cultures—be they national, ethnic or of poverty. Rather, we get to meet living and concrete people and we interact with their doing, their gestures. We enter a living relationship with their space–time. We meet people who belong to groups with internal hierarchies, borders and social universes: not static, but rather caught in their becoming. We are necessarily in the places and their historical temporality, made of conflicts and ruptures, of the bonds that form them and that are moulded so. This immersion—as long as we keep on using this image with this warning in mind—is the device allowing SoHoLabs to interact with the residents in a worthwhile way during the whole process of a planning which otherwise, it has to be highlighted, has often been devised from afar, from the outside, by a few experts.[7]

The artist residence (Aernouts et al. 2020, pp. 147–152), the *permanence architecturale* (Hallauer 2015), and the living lab are all figures, each of which has its own constellation of variations in a hypothetical taxonomy, of staying in the places while being equipped with critical thinking. This falls, on one hand, within the practical and cognitive value horizon of art, architecture and urban and landscape planning and, on the other hand, within the relations and bonds that these actors establish with the people living in these places. These are ways of being in the neighbourhoods that, once they are put into action, call into question the epistemology and disciplinary *mainstreaming* practices, which made living in those places a specific object of analysis and planned action. By acting like this, the usual devices on which these apparatuses rely are yet unbalanced and questioned in a reflective way. The epistemological devices tell apart and classify theoretical and practical knowledge through hierarchies of value, along with dividing expert knowledge from common sense. Yet, they often mistake with the theoretical projection of a transparent conscience of oneself on others' practices with the sense 'created' from the doing, which instead stems from the needs of everyday life. The political devices handle the distribution of powers between public deciders, stakeholders and residents, activating formal decisional processes and authorising parodies of participation. The mediatic devices fuel dominant representations proposed as true and in so doing distribute the values of normality in and out of these places or, on the contrary, promote different restitutions of them in the public sphere. In this 'being' in places and weaving these bonds, an awareness—one of the results of the endeavour of this immersion—is reached of the kernel of the values guiding judgements amidst the life forms that the living labs mean to understand. At the same time, this is something I want to stress, one becomes aware of the values and evaluations of the gesture of those who mean to understand them. In other words, in these figures of the immersion in places, the epistemological, political and ethical fragility of thinking of the others' dwelling without them surfaces. Thus, the result is not only a gap between a *savant* representation of dwelling and its social, concrete and situated factuality but also between the symbolic order of the residents and the symbolic orders of disciplinary fields and

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[7] We continue to have the idea that an expert and disciplinary practice when it comes into contact with life is contaminated by it, such as COVID-19.

urban policies which rule and maintain this exclusion. Paradoxically, this separation is also reproduced in the solution that *prima facie* appears to solve it: the settlement *tout court* in the place as sufficient per se to understand the dwelling of others. It is a figure of a romantic and innocent *going resident*, an urban avatar of the *going native* of anthropological tradition. This solution presupposes the exclusion and keeps it unresolved, like a haunting ghost in the attempt to go beyond it, unless it is not deconstructed and traced back to the epistemological and political conditions that make it possible. To 'immerse' into the social customs of the places in order to grasp their social universe *from the inside* requires critical reflection, of course not self-centred, which resets this simple 'being in' as a more structured and complex 'being with'. The Scilla of the objectifying external gaze on dwelling and the Cariddi of a naive and transparent identification to the place and its dwelling frame the 'space' of the epistemological and political placement of this immersion. The ascetic exercise of an epistemological vigilance and faithfulness to the methodological disposition warn us not to choose these two options, despite being appealing comfort zones. Thus, via *negationis*, the SoHoLab and its actors are placed *in between*, within a threshold space that is the space of interaction.

The presupposition, often not made explicit, that founds living labs understood in this way is a social ontology of places which considers social bonds—the ones residents establish between them and with their built spaces—as both the matrix and the effect of dwelling. It is an ontology needing their recognition anyway. Upon closer look, it also represents one of the necessary conditions to practise anthropological fieldwork, as well as a compass for orientating methodological reflection. Indeed, anthropological research is based upon the attention to the microsocial level of interaction, which can be justified only insofar as such an interaction, through which bonds are established and kept, is thought to have a relative autonomy where we the actors elaborate unpredictable significant realities. The bonds that we weave doing research as much as those we aim to understand, everyday bonds always in the making, cannot be boiled down to global mechanisms of structural processes nor to stigmatising mediatic stereotypes. To put it in a way related more to contemporary social theory, the actor *agency* giving shape to these bonds eludes structural (spatial, economic, political and symbolic) constrictions, although it is bound to them. This agency creates an unexpected and unpredictable space of action which is therefore sensible. It is not possible to meet such a space of action outside the space–time of its happening; we must be within the dialogical interaction, in microsocial proximity. This modest yet real autonomy of invention allows for a field research based on the interindividual encounter, taking conversation as the practice where its knowledge originates. The microsocial level of this research encounter and of the bonds that the actors continuously establish between them in the field, therefore have an autonomy authorising the acknowledgement of the 'place' of the resident as the position from which they negotiate, resist and redefine the bonds that, on different scales, burden them and their space, marking their bodies and architectures. I wish to discuss further some points about this fieldwork bond, that makes the encounter an epistemologically relevant relationship.

6.3 Malinowski's Tent

I would like to add a fourth figure of immersion in social practices, which I would call 'Malinowski's tent' out of love for the discipline and henceforth 'tent'—the figure of the anthropologist's physical (as well as symbolic) living within the social universe (s)he means to analyse. (S)he centres this analysis not so much on consulting the archives or reports from others or even statistical *surveys* but mainly on his/her direct relationship with the subjects, who (s)he met where they produce their place and their story, which both affect their lives. Also, on one hand, 'being' in the anthropologist's field, as much as the other figures mentioned above, refers to the horizon made up of evaluations and representations of his/her discipline; on the other hand, it refers to his/her *modus operandi*, that is, the way of being in these bonds and in social practices that establish them. The interdisciplinary debate in the second half of the twentieth century was indeed marked by a deep questioning of epistemological and political presuppositions and how to perform this new theoretical approach in the field. Ethnography, in the version I am presenting here, is far more than a tool to gather information and autoptic observations: it is a path to follow, *meta-odon, a modus operandi*; a way to learn how the interlocutors establish their social bonds. This involves the anthropologist personally, since it is only through this bond that (s)he succeeds in establishing on site with his/her interlocutors that this understanding of a specific universe is made possible. The anthropological tradition—specifically, the one in which I learnt the profession—has something to say about how to make these interactions relevant from an epistemological point of view (Althabe 2001; Althabe and Hernandez 2004). The research relationship develops through a bond that is not present before the anthropologist gets to the place; it goes through the inscription of this relationship in its duration. The anthropologist does not act like the bird striking the hours in a cuckoo clock: (s)he does not get out for a moment and then gets back in and then disappears. (S)he weaves an emerging bond which indeed unfolds and stays that way over time by means of social acts of mutual recognition. It is a bond intentionally and clearly oriented towards knowledge, which stays so for the entire duration of the research because it does not lead the anthropologist and his/her interlocutors to hold a social, institutional or familiar role, in their different social universes. It is a bond oriented to knowledge, whose space is, therefore, as mentioned above, that of the threshold between insider and outsider, which makes understanding through dialogical construction possible by virtue of this in-betweenness (Fava 2017).

'Being there': as a bedrock of the figure of the tent, there is the founding gesture of 'departure'—which is usually a source of fascination—and 'a place' that has to be established as 'a relationship, a bond', or rather, a net of bonds in order to become a source of knowledge. In this surprising and defamiliarising net, questions but also restlessness, pain and joy arise. These two gestures of 'leaving' and going to a 'place' are at the root of what I call the anthropologist's topology, and contribute to the creation of emerging bonds, as I have already said. Not only are they emergent because they were not present previously—the encounter with the anthropologist always represents a rupture, a break in the everyday ordinary

rhythm, but also because, despite being linked to the anthropologist's bonds, they are not circumscribed by them. These emerging bonds are *in-between* positions, other spaces of dialogue and observation, around which the everyday bonds and their vicissitudes, conflicts, and tensions can come to light, leading to a shared awareness. Through this emerging bond, it is, therefore, possible to learn of the group's other inner bonds, the bonds between individuals and institutions, the bonds with their built environment, the relationship between the contingency of interlocutors' present time and the temporal depth of socio-economic and spatial transformations on which their dwelling is projected. 'Immersing' into the social practices of the places means witnessing these bonds through 'Malinowski's tent', acknowledging and understanding them—I repeat—from the research bond in field.[8]

A further feature of the epistemological and methodological reach of the mutual recognition of bonds behind our social ontology is that we the social actors 'interpret' ourselves mutually when entering a relationship. We give a pragmatic meaning to actions, to the gestures of others as well as our and our interlocutors' social and spatial positions. This is an acted meaning, not explicit, which many times does not lead to a reflexive awareness, yet it rules our taking the floor in the dialogical exchange—or its denial—and the interaction, our 'what to do' and our 'where to go'. The matrix of this meaning lies in the personal horizon made up of the life story, values and the present lived by each one, where the effects of a shared social and economic contemporaneity arise, with which each one has to come to terms. In the way I conduct the anthropological fieldwork, this meaning plays an important role in achieving an understanding *from the inside* of the social universe of the people I meet. The emerging research bond, which suspends the usual bonds and opens the possibility of a knowledge relationship, originates from this operating attribution of meaning, anchored to the singularity of the interlocutors and of their socio-spatial situations. As is said, the observer is observed. Acknowledging this meaning in its spatiotemporal becoming—*who am I to my interlocutors?*—and its working in the research bond is a methodical goal in itself. It helps define the interpretative frame of the saying and doing happening in this bond, of which the anthropologist is the witness and coactor (in disciplinary terms: the ethnographic material that has been gathered, descriptions of observations and transcriptions of exchanges and interviews are communicative products) (Fava 2017).

The consequences of this prerequisite are different. Just two of them come to mind, which seem relevant to me to denote the immersion sought by the actors of the living labs. The first consequence is epistemological and concerns 'intimate' knowledge. It is thanks to this mediated acknowledgement of how the anthropologist is so engaged, that is, authorised to enter the bonds of his/her interlocutors, that their social universe can be understood in the present without reducing it to an objectivation from the outside, or trapping it in a persistent grid, or retyping it on a predictable

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[8] In historiographic terms, I will point out that Malinowski understood his being in the village within the paradigm of positivism, where the relationship with the residents was understood as a mere tool for gathering information (Ellen 1984, pp. 48*ss*; Stocking 1983, pp. 7–120). The hermeneutic awareness of this relationship developed in research practice later (Geertz 1973, pp. 3–31).

and timeless representation or on a presentist narrative atomisation, concealing what presently matters to the interlocutors, *what is going on*, which refers to the history of individuals and places.

The second consequence is methodological: it is the decentring of listening and looking. The endeavour to acknowledge this implication leads to a necessary and continuous decentring of the self in the research process. Here, the self is the psychological, methodical and epistemological self of those who wish to immerse themselves. Listening to the interlocutor requires making room for his/her narration without worrying about handling his/her word. The gaze of the interlocutor crosses the gaze of the anthropologist, ceaselessly evading the latter, without ever becoming one of its objects, something visible, because that gaze observes and contains that one of the anthropologist. Forgoing the pursuit of his/her own research agenda anchors this agenda to the space-times of the interlocutors, tuning the research into the latter's becoming. The conceptual mediations that mean to account for this universe are therefore built from the inside of this interaction, which acknowledges not knowing as generator of a situated knowledge, always in transit.

I find these features to be decisive, so that knowing the places that the socially oriented urban living labs pursue matches the recognition of bonds, which is necessary for the cooperative elaboration of their possible transformation. Indeed, it is not just up to the anthropologist to wonder about the meaning that her/his interlocutors assign to immersive (non)cognitive practices and about the effects that these have upon them and their universe. In other words, it is also possible to wonder, as for the immersion figures mentioned, what meaning the residents assign to the artist residence, to the architectural permanence, and to the living lab to which the actors of this planning reach out? It is a reflexive question indeed, yet with a decentring reflexivity, which brings back to the residents, their troubles, and the process of creating the place—the latter, simultaneous to the research process, enables one to re-question the cooperative planning by redefining and reorienting it. The immersion, in order to be productive, needs that exchange of gaze mentioned above; the gaze of our interlocutors on our practices and our glancing back; that is, that critical reflexivity which is not a mirror of the status quo but rather an icon of the possible openings.

6.4   Which 'Immersion'?

In view of this rapid read-through of the practice of anthropological research, I wish to get back to the figures of immersion and reread them. If we line up *architectural permanence*, the artist's residence, and the living lab together with the tent closely, we can detect an accent from the same native language: the 'gesture of going' and the 'emerging bond' typical of the tent seem to create a common founding device which produces a knowledge relationship present in all of these figures, although with different purposes and outcomes. For sure, this device, as it has been remembered

earlier, is inscribed in institutional traditions and processes which would strictly redefine—although not in an immutable way, as proven by SoHoLabs—the relationship between different actors involved: the architect, the artist, the *urban planner*, the anthropologist, and their interlocutors, in this case, the residents. This relationship is made up of a complex twine of words, gestures and possibilities. The everyday experience shows that these founding gestures, despite being so socially and disciplinarily built, are spread through options that always witness a margin of choice—a personal initiative—which lies at the origins of these figures themselves, in compliance with the social ontology of the places and consequently, defying disciplinary canons. These are the choice of the interlocutors; the choice of long durations; the choice of a decentring listening, which seizes in what is heard an instance of truth that exceeds the individual and the local. The choice of sifting through one's own discursive and material context, one's own agenda, the categories in use, especially those that seem obvious, clear and glaring. The choice of narrative strategies; the cautious choice of words to be used to write the reports; the choice of the intended audience; and the choice of taking into consideration the possible effects and possible political uses of what is told about these bonds—that is, these places—in the public sphere. The living labs' practice of everyday life proves once again how the personal word plays an unequal role and weight in the public sphere, especially for the residents of the *social housing estates* and their representation in the media.

This discerning, which is inseparably epistemological, ethical and political, opens the possibility of reconfiguring the structural asymmetries established in the relationship with residents from the outset. The founding gestures of the immersion figures, indeed, condition invisibly relationships and mutual positions. Thanks to these gestures and these bonds, some hold the positions of artist, architect, urban planner and anthropologist, whereas others are just residents of the neighbourhood. Acknowledging this means acknowledging how these bonds are marked by cleavages to which they are not reduced but of which they bear traces. The Heideggerian dwelling and Holderling's poetic dwelling are not deprived of relationships of power and exclusion, yet they bear their footprints as scars from wounds. Well, like Bourdieu, we would say that this discerning opens the possibility of decreasing—with patience and over time—the symbolic violence always looming over us, and making it ineffective by going through it (Fava 2021). Of course, the space of manoeuvre is modest, since it is personal, and limited, since it is real. It is the decentring effect once again: away from one's own universe of practices and one's own categorial horizon, from one's own epistemological narcissism, from one's own disciplinary, professional, even existential comfort zones. This leads to the genealogical and epistemological critique of one's own categories, that are thus 'mobilised' in the act of decentring itself. This also leads to re-establishing the mutual acknowledgement of the acting subjectivity through the differences and invisible diaphragms wherein these bonds are crystallised.

Social housing estates are often the recipient of social and urban interventions because the residents' personal initiative and voices, their capacity for self-representation, their critical subjectivity, the energy they spread out in order to live

day by day and try to get away from the grips of material difficulties and external rejections—as the critical analysis of the SoHoLabs highlights—are massively denied. *Social housing estates* are neither obvious nor transparent.

The perspective opened by living labs is that of knowing from the inside, according to registers that are not limited to an instrumental presence in these places, as in the expression of a methodical antiseptic rationality. It is quite the contrary: it seems to me, from these figures of immersion, that being in these places is not just a physical presence aimed at gathering information, but rather an 'attempt to inhabit them', inhabiting a research relationship, endeavouring to stay there over time, alone or together, establishing bonds, placing at the centre not so much the architectures and their configurations as the concrete people and their relationships. Residents are unique singularities that carry shared wishes too, as we all do.

6.5   Conclusion

The planning experience of the living labs and the knowledge of *social housing estates* that they promote are abundant with significant repercussions that exceed the relevance of the local knowledge they build. In particular, as a conclusion to these brief reflections, I would like to stress their contribution when it comes to thinking about dwelling. I think it is also to be stressed that 'dwelling'—through this form of knowing by living the places via these figures of immersion—is no longer a mere object of disciplinary perspectives. It is also the subject *from* which to think. It is the passage from the epistemologies *of dwelling* in the places to an epistemology of the places *from dwelling*, from the inside, yet where the others' dwelling is not just the neutral object observed from a formalised discipline, tested negative for the contaminations of reality. The others' dwelling is also the subject, the experience lived and practised by residents and 'urban professionals' which establishes a cognitive and praxeological apprehension of dwelling as the critical experience of those who are the subjects of it. It is no longer possible to think of the dwelling of others without them. Their dwelling is no longer or not only a technical-engineering reduction, an abstract entity of reason, an exotic and romantic dream, a juridical-legal device or a construction of rules and policy tools. Without denying these acceptations, the dwelling that emerges from living labs is firstly a shared experience of understanding the bonds that make up a place. For it is in dwelling indeed that the differences in hierarchy, values, social status and gender arise and are made visible. The awareness of the epistemic breaking always involved in the endeavour to understand these bonds enables one to restore the conditions of an understanding suitable for the decentring of looking and listening, which leads to the social acknowledgement of the subjectivities we always are. It is not enough to install oneself in the *social housing estates* to conceive their urban regeneration. Living labs prove that it is necessary to understand the place of others: it takes a critical position, an intelligent grunt which is not ascribable to experts, theorists, deciders, nor the residents. It is a shared property, a variable-sum inner good, if it

is apprehended (learnt), invented and carried out together. The stories of the living labs on the following pages show that it is possible, involving adventures certainly without guarantees, but promising and fruitful already in their realisation.

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