

Solution Labs as a Method of the Open Innovation Approach

1 Introduction

Companies and local authorities face mounting pressure to innovate amidst intensifying competition, driven by the imperative to address challenges including vacant commercial spaces, skills shortages, and the demands of digitalization (BMWK, 2024; BMZ, 2024a, 2024b). To counteract this pressure, they can leverage both internal and external resources to bolster their capacity for innovation, fostering sustainability in the process (Chesbrough, 2003; Mergel, 2021). This pressure aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 9 and 11, which focus on industry, innovation, and infrastructure, as well as sustainable cities and communities, respectively (United Nations). Therefore, the implementation of a solution lab has proven to be a valuable source of external knowledge. It offers companies and local authorities the opportunity to develop new ideas and impetus. Moreover, the Solution Lab offers a practical and comprehensive approach to supporting European Union (EU) projects. One example of this is the MORO project in Seelow, which aims to contribute to causes such as the creation of attractive living and working opportunities in small towns for people of all ages (Deutsch-Polnisches Raumordnungsportal). Attracting young people to urban centers and maintaining urban infrastructure. By implementing a solution lab, the project facilitates the design of sustainable urban development strategies that meet the needs of diverse communities and aid in the attainment of broader EU objectives. This whitepaper provides an illustration of this concept by using two Solution Labs situated in Reutlingen and Seelow as examples.

2 A categorisation of open innovation in a scientific context

Over the past decade, an increasing number of companies have opted to outsource specific activities as a means to reduce costs and resources (Musteen, 2016). One example is innovation management, which no longer relies solely on internal knowledge but also involves interacting with external sources. Chesbrough formulated this approach as Open Innovation (OI), where openness is defined as the use of both internal and external actors to generate ideas and develop the company's own technologies (Chesbrough, 2003). According to this definition, the literature offers different interpretations of the concept of OI. Openness as defined by Laursen and Salter refers to the number of external sources of knowledge for an innovation (Laursen & Salter, 2004, 2006). Conversely, Henkel defines openness as the disclosure of internal ideas to external actors (Henkel, 2006). Dahlander has categorized these two views into 4 categories of OI, which is illustrated in Figure 1 (Dahlander & Gann, 2010)

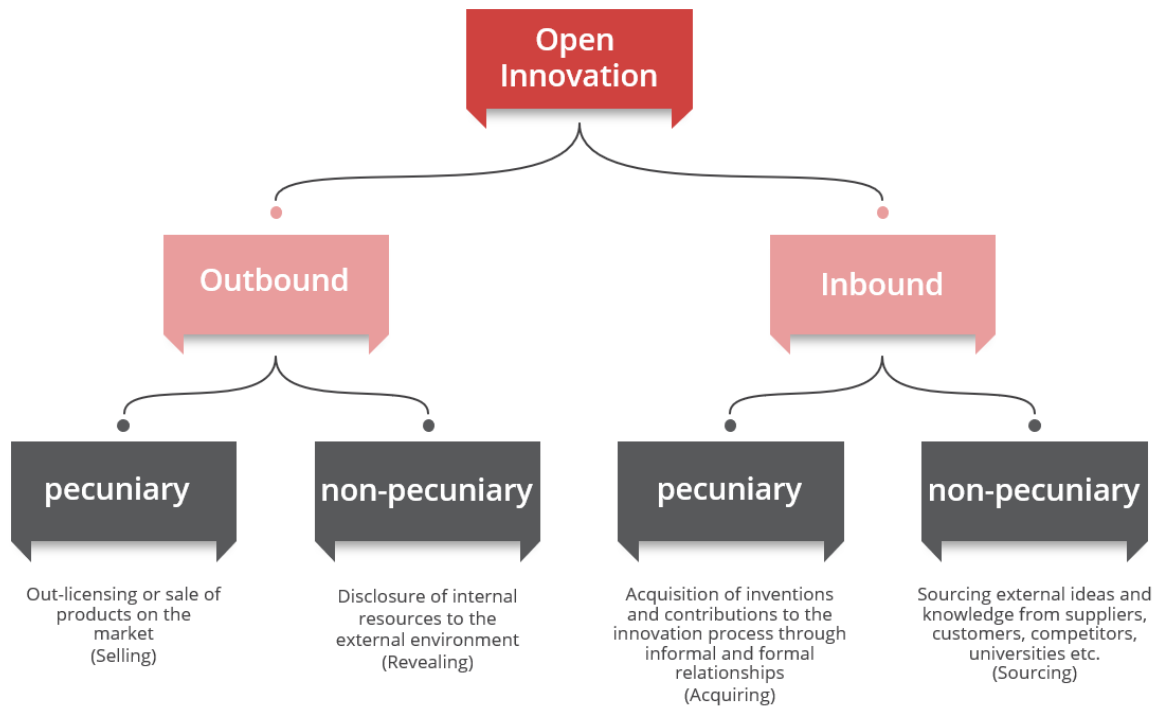


Figure 1: The organization of open innovation as outlined by Dahlander 2010 (own illustration)

The drawback of this OI is the multitude of different sources and the excessive number of alternatives that can be selected. For instance, the question of who should have access to internal information always arises. This depends on the innovation's goal, where suppliers, customers, or even competitors can be sources for exposing outcomes to third parties. However, to avoid unintended knowledge transfer that consumes capacity without adding value, the collection of external knowledge must be strictly limited. It is therefore important to address the right partners in order not to be slowed down or even set back in the innovation process (Laursen & Salter, 2006; Sapienza et al., 2004). Lichtenthaler then subdivided the different knowledge processes between exploration and exploitation (Lichtenthaler & Lichtenthaler, 2009), which is described in Table 1.

Knowledge process	Description
exploration	Includes innovation activities to leverage existing capabilities outside the boundaries of the organization
exploitation	Includes innovation activities designed to capture and use external sources of knowledge in order to improve on current developments

Table 1: The knowledge process by Lichtenthaler & Lichtenthaler 2009

To further address the drawbacks mentioned, Wallin and Krogh devised a five-step model for knowledge integration (Wallin & Krogh, 2010).

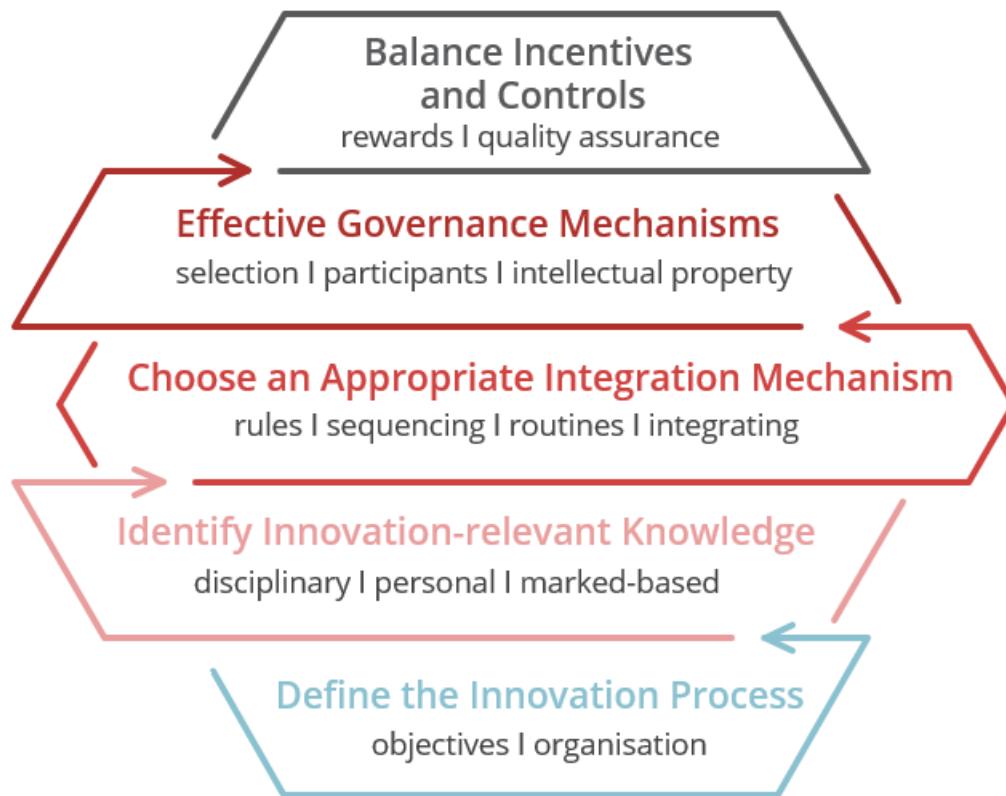


Figure 2: The five-step model of knowledge integration from Wallin & Krogh 2010 (own illustration)

Particular attention should be paid to step 4, where the management of OI projects takes place. Important governance issues can be the choice of partners, copyrights or the sharing of profits and losses. In their pursuit of novel ideas and knowledge, firms strive to position themselves as broadly as possible. As previously alluded to in the Wallin and Krogh model, the choice of partners is crucial and has a major influence on the new ideas and knowledge acquired. Approaching the wrong partners at this stage will result in a significant increase of work for innovation management, for example by bringing in unnecessary knowledge. The careful selection of suitable partners is crucial for a company's success in achieving its innovation objectives. Various sources may be pertinent depending on the company's goals. For instance, companies perceive suppliers and competitors as external actors with whom new knowledge can be acquired and new ideas can be generated. Consultants, universities and public research organisations are also involved in the innovation process and additional sources for OI (Fey & Birkinshaw, 2005; Jeppesen et al., 2007; Stefan & Bengtsson, 2017). The involvement of customers can also be particularly rewarding, as they sometimes drive their own innovations on existing products, which the company can then adopt (Hippel, 2006). As early as 1991, Freeman discovered that corporate R&D laboratories could take external ideas and turn them into an advantage for the company (Freeman, 1991).

In light of this, several empirical studies have demonstrated that firms tend to adopt inbound innovations at a significantly higher rate than outbound innovations, when comparing Dhalander's two main categories (inbound and outbound) (Bianchi et al., 2011; Chiaroni et al., 2011; Lyu et al.,

2019). In context of this and the Solution Lab concept, we focus in the next section on inbound, non-pecuniary innovation.

3 The relationship of SMEs and larger firms to Open Innovation

In today's ever-changing business environment, companies need to adjust promptly to prevent falling behind. This will be ineffective if they choose to isolate themselves. Organizations need to engage with the external environment to acquire new ideas, technologies and resources in order to stay competitive amidst their peers (Cassiman & Valentini, 2016; Chesbrough, 2003; Laursen & Salter, 2006; Parida et al., 2012). Many companies are therefore seeking novel ideas and new knowledge to stimulate their own R&D (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006; Lin et al., 2020). This search is undertaken by companies in a variety of sectors, such as healthcare, IT, but also in important areas of public policy or academic entrepreneurship (Siegel & Wright, 2015). In some cases, the application of OI approaches is even worthwhile for governance and social innovation (Gascó, 2017; Mergel, 2021; Nambisan, 2009).

The benefits OI offers for SMEs have already been widely documented in the literature (Leckel et al., 2020; Lichtenthaler, 2008; Rasool et al., 2019; Torchia & Calabrò, 2019; Usman et al., 2018; West et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2016). OI has a positive impact on innovation performance, which includes both incremental and disruptive innovation (Parida et al., 2012; Peris-Ortiz et al., 2018; Wang & Xu, 2018). This gives OI an important role within the firm and in innovation management (van Hemert et al., 2013; Wynarczyk et al., 2013). However, it is important to acknowledge that the use of OI decreases with the size of the company and differences between smaller and larger companies become evident (van de Vrande et al., 2009). This is primarily attributed to the fact that there are variations in the use of OI depending on the size of the company. For instance, unstructured innovation processes and insufficient internal capacities can result in limited innovation management in SMEs (Lichtenthaler, 2008). Similarly, smaller firms due to their limited knowledge base and lack of internal resources, face challenges in their ability to innovate (B. Bigliardi & F. Galati, 2016; Bernardi & Azucar, 2020; Bertello et al., 2022; Radziwon & Bogers, 2019; Santoro et al., 2018). Through the application of inbound OI, SMEs can effectively address and resolve these innovation management problems, ultimately benefiting the entire organization (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006; Gassmann, 2006; Laursen & Salter, 2006; Lee et al., 2010; West et al., 2006). For example, this approach can help small companies to compensate for a lack of knowledge or to reduce development costs hence improving the product development process (van de Vrande et al., 2009).

In addition, the use of OI for SMEs can even enhance the likelihood of developing new products (Spithoven et al., 2013). For SMEs, incorporating OI into their business strategy can turn out somewhat easier. Reduced bureaucracy and more flexible decision-making processes result in faster and simpler communication with external stakeholders (Christensen et al., 2005). For this reason, it is also crucial for companies to encourage effective networking as a basis for their OI activities (Xiaobao et al., 2013). If companies are able to create synergies between their own products and external ideas, profitable, disruptive innovations to solve predefined problems can emerge (Dahlander & Gann, 2010; Jeppesen et al., 2007). Occasionally, the ideas generated can result in the creation of new companies (Bogers et al., 2017). Furthermore, even after a firm has been founded, OI can significantly contribute to the innovation process by enabling collaboration with established firms or by taking advantage of a wide range of training opportunities (Dahlander, 2007; Greul et al., 2018; Gruber & Henkel, 2006). OI has positioned itself in the innovation landscape as a way to address customer needs, spread risks in the innovation process, reduce

costs and enhance presence in social networks (van de Vrande et al., 2009). Simultaneously, OI ensures greater customer satisfaction and a broader and ever-growing knowledge base within the company (Lichtenthaler et al., 2009).

4 Universities in the context of Open Innovation

The relevance of universities in the innovation process of companies has been proven repeatedly, demonstrated through empirical evidence in the past. Their knowledge transfer to companies leads to higher productivity and stronger economic growth. Universities can therefore be seen as key actors in the innovation process (Apa et al., 2021; Kobarg et al., 2018; Reynolds & Uygun, 2018). In addition to providing education for future employees, they also make a significant contribution to industrial innovation by generating new scientific knowledge and developing modern infrastructures (Pavitt, 1991; Salter & Martin, 2001). Bodas Freitas has divided the linkages between universities and industry into two categories, namely (1) those consisting of formal partnerships with the administrative structures of the faculties and the Knowledge Transfer Department, and (2) personal partnerships with individual researchers or research groups at universities (Bodas Freitas et al., 2013). Based on this categorisation, the types of partnerships can also be distinguished. Universities often provide not only intellectual property licensing but also research services and opportunities for research collaboration. Given developments in recent years, the latter partnership models that have emerged have become considerably more prominent (Al-Tabbaa & Ankrah, 2016; Perkmann & West, 2015).

In the context of OI, universities can be a great asset as external knowledge carriers by influencing innovation performance and thus the speed at which innovation occurs (Stefan & Bengtsson, 2017). This has also been demonstrated in studies by Brettel, Cleven and Inauen, Schenker-Wicki, among others (Brettel & Cleven, 2011; Inauen & Schenker-Wicki, 2011). By involving universities in the innovation process, a company shifts its focus towards more inventive innovation management, increasing its chances to acquire pre-industrial knowledge (Fabrizio, 2006; Fleming & Sorenson, 2004; Shinn & Lamy, 2006). This enhances the odds of disruptive innovation and facilitates the commercialisation of new products towards a profitable market launch (Mohnen & Hoareau, 2003; West et al., 2006). As a result, the university as an external actor has the potential to exert positive influence on the innovation process and ensure the long-term competitiveness of a company (Brettel & Cleven, 2011).

5 The Solution Lab as an open innovation method

Having examined the significance of Open Innovation for both businesses and universities in the preceding chapters, the following section delves into Solution Labs as an innovative method for addressing current economic and societal challenges. A Solution Lab is a methodical and innovative approach developed since 2015 to tackle contemporary challenges faced by businesses, institutions, and municipalities (Hutt, 2022). Solution Labs, which are closely associated with the commonly referred to "Living Labs" in academic literature, aim to foster innovative concepts that are infused with an entrepreneurial mindset, by leveraging creativity, established methodologies, and external expertise (Hossain et al., 2019). It brings together diverse talents in interdisciplinary teams to develop sustainable solutions through a week-long collaborative process. Solution Labs, as another form of Living Labs, serve as an environment for user involvement in innovation and development and aim to foster innovative ideas with an entrepreneurial spirit by using creativity, best practices, and external expertise to solve complex

societal and economic problems (Følstad, 2008). This introduction provides insights into how Solution Labs work and their important role in tackling such challenges.

5.1 Motivation

The motivation behind the establishment of Solution Labs lies in the necessity to develop innovative solutions for complex challenges faced by companies, institutions, and communities. The complexity of the challenges at hand is a major factor that often demands multifaceted solutions. These labs offer a structured framework for analyzing such intricate issues and devising creative strategies to address them. Moreover, Solution Labs address the prevalent issue of limited resources and time constraints. Many organizations may not have the staff or time to allocate to extensive innovation-efforts beyond their daily operations. Solution Labs offer an efficient way to foster innovation without overburdening already stretched resources (Evans et al., 2015). Central to the motivation behind Solution Labs is the aim to foster creativity and innovation. By bringing together participants from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, these labs create an environment conducive to generating novel ideas and approaches. The interdisciplinary collaboration that occurs within Solution Labs enables a holistic approach to problem-solving, drawing on the varied expertise and perspectives of the participants. Overall, the establishment of Solution Labs aims to create a collaborative space for innovation, where complex problems are analyzed, and innovative solutions are developed to tackle the evolving challenges of the modern world (Gascó, 2017).

5.2 Selection of participants

The selection process for participants in Solution Labs is crucial for ensuring the success and effectiveness of the innovation process. Several key criteria are considered when choosing individuals to take part in these collaborative endeavors. First and foremost, participants are selected based on their qualifications and expertise relevant to the specific challenges being addressed in the Solution Lab. This may include academic background, professional experience, technical skills, or industry knowledge. For instance, if the challenge pertains to market entry strategies in Asia, individuals with experience or cultural understanding of the Asian market may be prioritized. In addition to technical qualifications, soft skills play a significant role in the selection process. Attributes such as teamwork, openness to new ideas, communication skills, and adaptability are highly valued. Since Solution Labs emphasize interdisciplinary collaboration, participants must demonstrate an ability to work effectively in diverse teams and adapt to different working styles and perspectives (Hutt, 2022). Another important consideration is the cultural background and diversity of the participants. A diverse group of individuals brings various perspectives and insights to the table, enriching the innovation process and fostering creativity. Furthermore, previous experience in similar environments, such as involvement in student associations or voluntary activities, may also be considered during the selection process. This demonstrates a proactive attitude towards collaboration and innovation, which are essential qualities for success in Solution Labs. Ultimately, the goal of the participant selection process is to assemble a well-rounded and complementary team that can effectively tackle the challenges presented in the Solution Lab. By considering a combination of technical expertise, soft skills, cultural diversity, and experiences, organizers aim to create an environment conducive to innovation, collaboration, and problem-solving (Hossain et. al., 2019).

5.3 Method

The Solution Lab method combines the Tribe Organization approach with Scrum principles to foster seamless collaboration and communication among and between groups. It draws inspiration from the Scrum framework, as integrated within the squad structure of the Spotify model, highlighting the shared emphasis on self-organization, continuous improvement, and team empowerment. This amalgamation aims to cultivate an environment where participants can achieve optimal autonomy while maintaining effective coordination, ultimately fostering innovation and productivity within large organizations.

The Spotify model, introduced by Kniberg and Ivarsson (Kniberg & Ivarsson, 2012), has gained influence among proponents of agile methodologies and thus forms the basis for agile methods used in several other organizations. In studies of knowledge sharing using the Spotify model, patterns for knowledge exchange have been identified by cultivating Spotify Guilds, highlighting the importance of fostering a culture of participation in general and establishing communities of practice. Previous research on the Spotify model has also revealed a new approach to agile tailoring, referred to as Heterogeneous Tailoring. Two key features characterize this approach: first, each squad (i.e., team) is empowered to select and tailor its development method, and second, each squad is aligned with other squads and common product development goals (Salameh & Bass, 2022). In conclusion, large-scale agile projects present challenges, such as maintaining teams' autonomy and aligning self-organizing teams. The Spotify model represents an example of large-scale agile method tailoring, emphasizing the creation of autonomous teams or squads. These squads are encouraged to tailor their agile practices while being aligned with common product development goals. The Spotify model employs an adaptive structure, comprising Tribes, Squads, Chapters, and Guilds, to promote collaboration, mitigate dependencies, and facilitate knowledge sharing. However, while the Spotify model serves as a valuable framework, organizations must tailor agile methods to their unique values, strategies, culture, and project-specific requirements (Salameh & Bass, 2020).

Scrum, on the other hand, is an agile software development framework introduced in 1986 by Hirotaka Takeuchi and Ikujiro Nonaka (Takeuchi & Ikujiro Nonaka, 1986). It promotes incremental and iterative development, challenging traditional sequential approaches. Key principles of Scrum include adapting to changing requirements and market conditions, emphasizing real-time decision-making based on actual events. Scrum is flexible and can be applied to various projects, especially those with rapidly changing or emergent requirements. It does not prescribe specific engineering practices but focuses on continuous process improvement through transparency, inspection, and adaptation (Sachdeva, 2016).

In the Spotify model, Scrum is used to support teams in developing products or services. This typically involves the use of development teams utilizing iterations called sprints to complete specific tasks within a fixed timeframe, usually two weeks. The Scrum framework consists of roles like Scrum Team, Product Owner, and Scrum Master, along with artifacts like Product Backlog and Sprint Backlog. Key activities include Sprint Planning Meetings, Daily Stand-Up Meetings, and Sprint Review Meetings. Scrum encourages self-organization, collaboration, and adaptability, aiming to deliver high-quality software efficiently. However, successful implementation requires addressing challenges such as team fatigue and burnout, adapting to changing requirements, and ensuring effective communication and coordination among team members and stakeholders (Morandini et al., 2021).

5.4 Solution Lab Process

About two weeks before the Solution Lab commences, participants gain access to the “Starter Kit” containing all essential information. Approximately one week before the lab, the kick-off meeting, ideally led by the customers, such as city representatives or the management of a company, takes place. Here, the lab's schedule and methodology are explained, and the topics are introduced. Additionally, participants receive materials and literature necessary for addressing the respective challenges.

The first day of the Solution Lab focuses on understanding the challenge and forming teams. On the second day, creativity, and the development of initial ideas, as well as the selection of the best solutions, take center stage. Simple visualizations and designs are created. The third day is typically the most labor-intensive for participants: Selected ideas, concepts, and graphics are elaborated upon, and presentation preparation begins. The following morning is also dedicated to this task. In the afternoon of the fourth day, the presentation of results to customers and experts occurs. This pivotal day represents the culmination of efforts leading up to the Solution Lab. On the fifth day, feedback from the previous day is incorporated, and the final presentation, or a report, if requested by the customer, is prepared. The day is also reserved for consolidating results, documenting all discarded ideas, and conducting evaluations. Figure 4 illustrates the schedule and the associated activities.

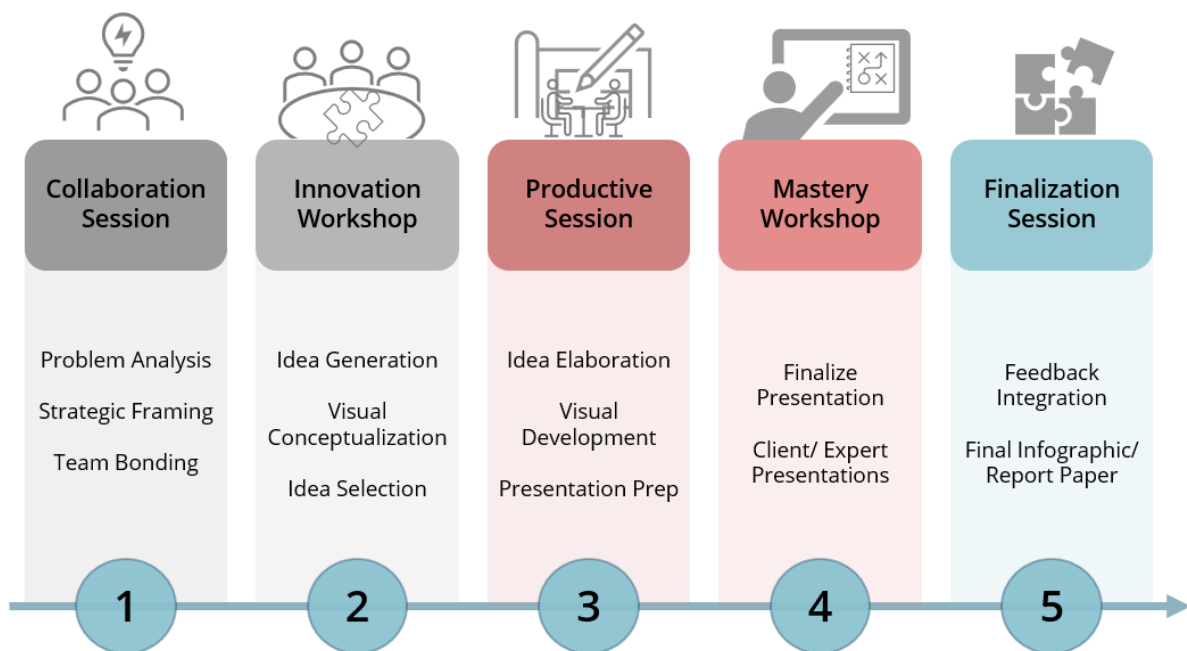


Figure 3: Timetable of the Solution lab (own illustration)

6 The results of the Solution Labs

6.1 The Solution Lab in Reutlingen

Solution Lab Reutlingen was set up by the city of Reutlingen and GWG - Wohnungsgesellschaft Reutlingen mbH to develop sustainable concepts for the Gerberviertel neighbourhood in Reutlingen (GWG Reutlingen). Reutlingen aims to prepare the district for the future, taking advantage of its central location. At the same time, GWG Reutlingen is trying to increase rent levels and reduce vacancies (Reutlinger General-Anzeiger, 2023a, 2023b). Both the local authority and GWG Reutlingen have identified the Solution Lab as an OI approach to finding new and innovative solutions.

The Gerberviertel, located in the city centre, was historically known for its tanning industry. In recent decades, the district has transformed from an industrial centre to a socially deprived area with a rising crime rate and high vacancy rates. As a result, the city set itself the goal of rebuilding the area in a sustainable and future-oriented way. The objective is to create an appealing location for both businesses and residents.

The Solutions Lab team consisted mainly of students, young scientists and pupils. This is due to the fact that both the city of Reutlingen and the GWG Reutlingen were interested in addressing a knowledge gap with regard to the ideas and visions and perspectives of younger generations. The aim of the Solution Lab was to create a comprehensive concept for the future in which the latest scientific findings from the universities could be put into practice. A survey of decision-makers from the city of Reutlingen, the GWG Reutlingen and local residents served as a basis to ensure that the needs of local residents were also taken into account. Three main themes were identified, each addressed by a team: (1) the area of art and culture, (2) neighbourhood design, and (3) support structure. Three teams with different qualifications worked separately on their respective areas for four days. On the fifth day, all concepts from the three teams were summarised in a future concept for the Gerberviertel. In the first and second field, musicians and sociology students have developed concepts to promote cultural diversity within the neighbourhood. For instance, events such as music circles for people of all ages or neighbourhood festivals have been organised to cater to the needs and preferences of the residents. To enhance the neighbourhood's appeal to potential residents and businesses, a team of architects and designers collaborated on the outdoor design. Access to nature was severely restricted by the neighbourhood's industrial past, which resulted in many enclosed open spaces. The team proposed converting asphalted squares into natural open spaces, small parks, and playgrounds. In addition, the neighbourhood streets should incorporate plant islands and seating areas, which could enhance the quality of life for local residents. The area should also be a showcase for the Swabian Alb biosphere reserve in Reutlingen, with the potential to attract economic sectors such as tourism. To achieve these goals, the third team created a support structure to ensure the project's permanence. A team of economists, sociologists, and industrial designers collaborated to align the interests of residents, businesses, and the city. They plan to establish a self-supporting citizens' association that will receive financial support from the state of Baden-Württemberg and the federal government. The funds will be used to ensure the financial stability of the proposed concepts and establish a foundation for future development.

To attract start-ups and entrepreneurs and ensure long-term economic growth, a concept has been developed to create an innovation ecosystem in the neighbourhood. The central point of this ecosystem will be an empty restaurant, which will be reopened with the assistance of the

citizens' association. The restaurant will serve as a meeting place for residents and a destination for tourists. Establishing this business as a multifunctional flagship of the Gerberviertel at the centre of the future concept that has been developed and is intended to symbolise the future.

In summary, the city and GWG Reutlingen have gathered new ideas from young people through the Solution Lab. This has enabled them to draw on external sources of knowledge and, at the same time, to consider the needs of residents and customers in continuing to develop the Quarter. GWG Reutlingen was able to increase its innovative performance, benefit from university knowledge and simultaneously save costs and resources. In conclusion, the results show that the Solution Lab in Reutlingen is a successful example of the implementation of the open innovation approach through a Solution Lab, while taking SDG goals 9 and 11 into consideration.

6.2 The Solution Lab in Seelow

Seelow's aim and motivation to host a Solution Lab was to enhance the appeal and liveliness of its downtown area. Rooted in a vision to transform Seelow's city center into an attractive hub for residents and visitors alike, the Solution Lab endeavors to amplify the city's potential as a nexus for German-Polish artistic, cultural, and economic activities. Seelow, a small town with approximately 5,600 inhabitants, serves as a crucial educational, administrative, and cultural center within Märkisch-Oderland (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, 2023). Despite its significance in these aspects, Seelow faces challenges in stimulating commercial activity, particularly within the private sector.

Consequently, revitalizing the downtown area and forging connections with nearby attractions such as the Seelower Höhen and Märkisches-Oderland landscape are of utmost importance. Additionally, Seelow's close partnership with Kostrzyn nad Odrą underscores its commitment to cross-border collaboration, leveraging EU programs like INTERREG and MORO to enhance urban vitality (Deutsch-Polnisches Raumordnungsportal; Kreisstadt Seelow).

The lab in Seelow had three primary objectives. Firstly, it aimed to address the decline of traditional retail by revitalizing business premises in the town center. Secondly, it focused on redesigning the market square to establish a central hub. Thirdly, it proposed the concept of implementing mobile coworking spaces in the town center to offer remote workspaces for individuals commuting from nearby cities like Berlin. To address these objectives, strategies were formulated within three distinct groups, each assigned according to their respective competencies, with the purpose of devising implementation plans. This involved conducting brainstorming sessions, including research on successful strategies from comparable towns, and actively involving stakeholders in the development of adaptable business models and funding solutions customized specifically to Seelow's needs. Using the example of the first group, which focused on revitalizing vacant commercial spaces and generating new business ideas, a strategy can be demonstrated within the five-day period.

Initially, the exchange with Seelow's town planner provided insights into ongoing projects with short-term plans for the near future of Seelow and identified areas with vacancies for potential use. Subsequently, during the city tour with the mayor, additional information was gathered regarding imminent business closures and opportunities within the city center. Through engagement with the municipality, economic development authorities, and local entrepreneurs, along with a comprehensive understanding of the city, the group discovered that Seelow harbors a significant presence of children and adolescents, evident by its five schools. This led to



discussions with teachers, principals, and students, with the purpose of gathering insights into how Seelow should evolve to become more appealing to young people.

In the subsequent days, the team shifted their focus to brainstorming sessions to translate the collected insights into tangible practical usage concepts and business ideas. These ideas were presented in the concluding presentation on the fourth day. One of the ideas developed was a boxing gym, designed specifically to cater to the mental well-being of teenagers. This concept derived from conversations with the youth about their needs, challenges and experiences. and could have been realized spatially within a centrally located shopping market that is soon to be closed. Another concept for a central establishment was an innovation space for students, where regular lectures by companies, universities, and entrepreneurial figures could take place. This would enable young individuals to engage with career paths from an early age. Additionally, this provides an opportunity for companies to introduce and present themselves, thereby fostering the retention of apprentices within the region.

In conclusion, the Solution Lab initiative implemented in Seelow as part of Open Innovation has had both positive and negative components. On the positive side, the process has highlighted vacancies and impending business closures in the city center, indicating ongoing economic challenges. Thus, it has made an effective effort to counteract the decline of traditional retail. These efforts have led to the development of business models and financing solutions and foster a collaborative environment between stakeholders.

On the negative side, while efforts have been made to engage with the youth population and provide bespoke facilities such as the proposed boxing gym and innovation space, there is still a need for sustained efforts to ensure long-term engagement and retention of young talent in the area. Despite these challenges, the Solution Lab has provided a foundation for further innovation and revitalization in Seelow and offers valuable insights for future initiatives.

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Contact and further Information

Universität Leipzig
Faculty of Economics and Management Science
Chair for the Management and Economics of Innovation
Data-Driven and Impact-Oriented Entrepreneurship Research Unit
Grimmaische Straße 12
04109 Leipzig

Phone: +49 341 231039-100
E-Mail: innova@wifa.uni-leipzig.de
Web: www.uni-leipzig.de

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Editors

Dr. Kevin Reuther
Prof. Dr. Thorsten Posselt

Authors

Max Wegener
Luisa Biering
Lena Victoria Möller