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SPECIAL ISSUE: IMPACTS OF REAL- WORLD LABS IN SUSTAINABILITY TRANSFORMATIONS

Real-world laboratories (RwLs) aim to support sustainability transformations. As symbolized by the swing, RwLs are particularly well suited to this: they are lively, close to everyday life; they open free and experimental spaces and sometimes make the impossible possible. This Special Issue illustrates the pivotal role of understanding impact as a foundational element for RwLs in spearheading the Great Transformation. The 15 papers in this Special Issue, which present multiple cases, comparative case studies, longitudinal studies, and in-depth case studies, offer a detailed examination of impact through different lenses, showcasing successful RwL initiatives in the areas of energy and mobility transitions or urban development, to name just a few. They discuss mechanisms and conditions conducive to impact creation, highlighting achievements such as the initiation of novel collaborative practices and governance models. In addition, the contributors to this Special Issue explore the complexities of, and challenges associated with, impact realization and understanding, including the influence of political and power issues. They also outline future directions for enhancing the effectiveness of RwLs and propose methodological advances for RwLs to improve process and impact design through systemic and social theoretical perspectives.



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