

---

## Intent to Practice: Enablers and Barriers of DEI-Driven third-place Innovation

---

### Marcos Medina-Tabares\*

Université de Lorraine, ERPI, F-54000, Nancy, France.  
E-mail: marcos.medina-tabares@univ-lorraine.fr

### Manon Enjolras

Université de Lorraine, ERPI, F-54000, Nancy, France.  
E-mail: manon.enjolras@univ-lorraine.fr

### Ferney Osorio

Université de Lorraine, ERPI, F-54000, Nancy, France.  
E-mail: ferney.osorio@univ-lorraine.fr

### Brigitte Schönberger

Institute of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Science, University of Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany.  
E-mail: brigitte.schoenberger@eni.uni-stuttgart.de

### Laurent Rollet

University of Lorraine, University of Strasbourg, CNRS, AHP-PReST, Nancy (France).  
E-mail: laurent.rollet@univ-lorraine.fr

\* Corresponding author

**Abstract:** This research examines how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles function as both enablers and barriers in the management of community-driven innovation initiatives. Through a meta-ethnography of 30 cases and empirical fieldwork in French ‘third places’, we identify what we term ‘lay management’: an unconventional, experience-based governance approach that reconciles strategic intentions with daily practice. Findings suggest that when DEI is integrated as a fundamental strategic orientation, it produces multi-dimensional territorial, social, and ecological value. Furthermore, the study reveals a framework of eight management enablers, such as needs-based facilitation and proximity management, and ten barriers shaping value-based innovation, including a lack of adapted management structures. Our findings contribute to strategic intent theory and innovation management by bridging organisational values with concrete practices. This offers practical insights for social economy managers, public authorities, and researchers navigating value-based innovation spaces and ecosystems oriented toward solving societal challenges.

**Keywords:** Value-based innovation management; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI); Third places; Territorial Innovation; Social and solidarity

economy; Strategic Intent.

---

## 1 Introduction

Management is defined as the coordinated activities to orient and direct an organization towards an objective (AFNOR 2025). All organisations that are interested in achieving goals are concerned with using management techniques and knowledge to follow their processes the best they can. The field of management is a well-established area of knowledge nowadays; however, its biggest contributions are addressed to traditional structures such as enterprises with profit orientation.

This situation has as a consequence a lack of an established and adapted approach to those organisations that are not oriented to the same values as “traditional” organisations (e.g. England 2020; Mahmoud et al. 2021). It creates a point of uncertainty about the validity and the efficacy of those methods to achieve their goals (Tanda and De Marco 2021).

However, the situation is not as simple as it is described. Even though mainstream management follow a path toward profit, scholars in management research are still looking for adaptation of their organisational doing, which are demonstrated by diversity, equity and inclusion management, that seeks to continue producing economic values, but in a “fair” way (Dixon-Fyle et al. 2023; Jones et al. 2020).

This research addresses the friction between traditional management logics and the ethical, political, and moral commitments of community-based innovation initiatives, using the framework of third places (Klein & Pecqueur, 2021), which are built on values of solidarity, cooperation, and inclusion.

### *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) management*

To address the limitations of profit-centric models, modern management increasingly positions DEI as a strategic framework capable of enhancing organizational capability and innovation quality (Nishii et al. 2018; Corbett et al. 2025). Rather than being a trade-off with efficiency, DEI functions as a capability-builder. By identifying and dismantling systemic barriers, organizations can unlock latent human capital and integrate heterogeneous forms of thinking, knowledge and experiences into their core processes.

This integrative function is particularly relevant in contexts characterized by complex, multi-stakeholder challenges. DEI-oriented management facilitates the synthesis of diverse knowledge bases necessary to address wicked problems, challenges where causes are opaque, actors are interdependent, and solutions cannot be evaluated by a single standard (Rittel and Webber 1973; Head 2022). In community-driven initiatives such as Third Places, this capacity to incorporate divergent perspectives does not merely serve as an ethical function, it constitutes a structural condition for the social relevance and territorial embeddedness of innovative outputs.

However, this potential is frequently undermined by what has been termed diversity washing: the reduction of DEI to symbolic rhetoric or standardized metrics deployed primarily to secure external legitimacy (Baker et al. 2024; Koch et al. 2025). Under such conditions, the organization projects an inclusive identity while its internal processes

remain structurally unchanged. DEI initiatives are thus reduced to surface-level adjustments that fail to address the underlying inequities they purport to remedy.

Preventing this decoupling between DEI discourse and organizational practice requires more than strategic intent; it demands situated, adaptive management practices capable of translating inclusive values into concrete action. It is precisely this translational challenge, from abstract commitment to embedded practice, that the concept of lay management, discussed in the following section, seeks to address.

### *Third places and DEI commitments*

The question about how community-driven innovation initiatives are managed remain underexplored, and it is worse in the case of third places. Existing research reveals a paradox: while these spaces operate mostly within the social and solidarity economy with strong ethical and political commitments, their management practices are often borrowed from for-profit organizations, creating tensions with their core values (England 2020). Some studies have identified the emergence of what can be termed "lay management", an unconventional, informal, and experimental approach to management developed through practice rather than formal training (England 2020). Yet this knowledge remains largely undocumented and untheorized in the academic literature.

Regarding DEI integration, the literature shows that especially territorial innovation initiatives such as third places and living labs often adopt inclusive values as part of their foundational ethos (Klein and Pecqueur 2021; Lallement 2015).

Despite these insights, significant gaps remain. First, there is limited understanding of how abstract DEI principles translate into concrete daily management practices within third places (Garner-Moyer 2012). Second, there is insufficient knowledge about how practitioners translate their intentions into concrete daily actions on-site.

To better conceptualize this gap between values and practices, this research mobilizes the notion of strategic intent. Initially developed in strategic management, strategic intent refers to the projection of a desired future that orients organizational action without fully prescribing how it should be achieved (Hamel and Prahalad 2005). Rather than a fixed plan, it operates as a guiding ambition that allows for interpretation, experimentation, and adaptation in uncertain environments. This perspective is particularly relevant for community-driven innovation initiatives, where multiple actors, values, and constraints coexist (Osorio et al. 2025). In such contexts, strategic intent does not merely reside at the managerial level but is distributed, interpreted, and enacted through situated practices (Browder et al. 2023). It therefore provides a useful lens to examine how abstract DEI commitments are translated, negotiated, and sometimes transformed into concrete organizational actions.

In summary, while research has established the importance of third places in territorial innovation (Klein and Pecqueur 2021; Liefoghe 2023; Lebrun 2024) and has begun to explore the role of DEI in their functioning (Ottolini 2023), there remains a critical need to formalize the "lay management" practices that practitioners develop experientially, to understand how strategic intentions translate into action, and to create tools adapted to their specific needs and values.

Our proposal explores two dimensions of this organizational tension:

1. Navigating uncertainty and wicked problems: We investigate how these initiatives develop resilience within high complex environments where causes and solutions are often opaque. We focus on how they manage wicked problems, specifically the intersection of financial fragility, complex territorial anchoring in both rural and urban contexts, and the challenge of maintaining an engaged community.

- From abstract values to situated practices: In mainstream management, DEI is frequently reduced to instrumentalized tools, such as demographic quotas or top-down affirmative action policies (Garner-Moyer 2012). Such standardized approaches are often incompatible with the ethos of small local initiatives and fail to account for the nuanced, divergent understandings of DEI in community contexts (e.g. Renaut 2019).

The research focuses on the transition from ideological "desirability" to the development of organizational practices. We seek to identify the specific social and managerial enablers that allow these initiatives to transform abstract DEI commitments into concrete actions that strengthen organizational objectives. This research identifies management enablers and barriers, assesses the influence of inclusive values on innovation, and provides practical tools for alignment.

## 2 Methods

This research was conducted under the interpretivist paradigm (Giddens 1993) because our aim is to understand perspectives, subjectivities and practices of stakeholders as a valuable source of knowledge rather than establishing cause-and-consequence relationships. Also because as the literature establishes it, it is appropriate to answer how questions (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Therefore, the methodological design followed two phases: a meta-ethnography design and qualitative field research.



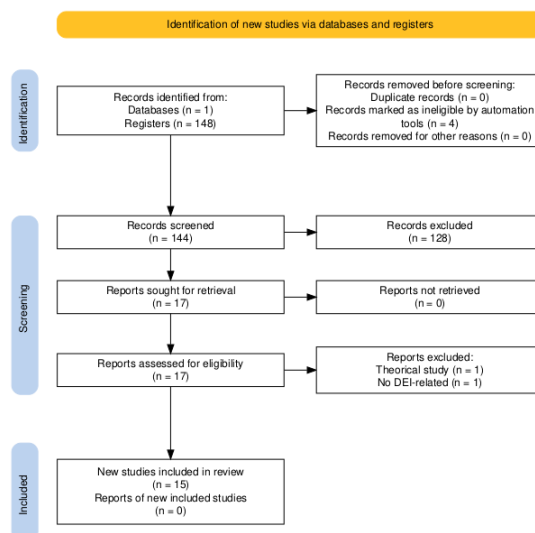
**Figure 1** Methodological approach.

### *Meta-ethnography*

Meta-ethnography is a literature review method that aims to propose better interpretations of phenomena in our world and seeks to enrich human discourse and action (Noblit and Hare 1999). Unlike literature review methods that aim to build a corpus of true knowledge, meta-ethnography views knowledge as interpretations of human phenomena (Noblit and Hare 1999). Therefore, our objective is to construct a narrative of what we currently understand about these community-driven innovation initiatives.

Article identification followed systematic review protocols. The PICO method (Methley et al. 2014; Ramsden 2025) formalized the research question and keywords: Third places and Living Labs, Management, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and Territorial, Social and Ecological Effects, plus relevant synonyms. Living Labs were included specifically to mitigate the identified lack of peer-reviewed data available exclusively for the management of third places. This comparative framework is theoretically grounded in the work of Klein

and Pecqueur (2021), who argue that both entities are variants of social experimentation in real-time and in real places. Both innovation spaces are anchored in a territorial perspective of innovation, sharing a fundamental intent to facilitate the engagement of diverse actors around common objectives. Consequently, they act as strategic sites to reveal and value local resources, moving beyond purely economic logic to produce a triple dimension of value: social, economic, and environmental



**Figure 2** PRISMA for the meta-ethnography.

Web of Science was searched in March 2025 for publications from 2000 to February 2025. Inclusion criteria, based on established protocols (Luong et al. 2023; Tranfield et al. 2003), required studies to: (1) be in English or French; (2) appear in scientific journals, book chapters, or conference proceedings; (3) examine third places or living labs; (4) address DEI dimensions; and (5) have explicit management implications. From 148 initial references, 144 met language, date, and publication type criteria. Articles were screened against four thematic criteria (Focus, DEI, Management, and Effects), resulting in 15 retained studies after a full-text review of 17 initial candidates.

The corpus analysis followed meta-ethnographic principles (Noblit and Hare 1999; Luong et al. 2023) combined with the analysis techniques from grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Each article was read in depth, followed by open coding to identify themes, then axial coding to assemble themes into categories. Finally, categories were analysed to identify relationships, meanings, similarities, and differences across studies.

### *Qualitative field work*

The fieldwork employed theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007) to intentionally select cases that could illuminate the research question about DEI integration in third place management. Two primary sites were selected for their explicit DEI commitments: Fab Lab “Les MacGyver,”<sup>1</sup> (*Les MacGyver* from now on) operated by Association Jean-Baptiste Thiéry with an explicit focus on disability inclusion; and “La

<sup>1</sup> <https://jbthiery.asso.fr/le-fablab-les-macgyver/>

Fabrique des Possibles”<sup>2</sup> (*La Fabrique* for now on) in Vandœuvre-lès-Nancy, centered on digital inclusion.

The sample was expanded through snowballing, adding three secondary cases (anonymized as Tiers-lieu A, B, and C) and establishing connections with the Réseau Tiers-Lieux Grand Est<sup>3</sup>. This approach allowed for both in-depth understanding of primary cases and broader validation across diverse third place contexts, including rural and urban settings, and various explicit and implicit DEI focuses ranging from disability to ecological transition.

Data collection combined three qualitative techniques (Leavy 2017) conducted between February and September 2025. Eight sessions of participant observation were carried out, including three sessions with the Réseau Tiers-Lieux Grand Est, multiple visits to the two primary sites, and one visit to an international third place. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with key actors including staff from third places in development and operational managers. Additionally, two detailed field visits allowed for comprehensive site observation and informal exchanges. The data collection followed a structured protocol adapted from the "Strategic Intent" framework (Osorio et al. 2025), which examines five dimensions: strategic intention, creation process, physical embodiment, usage process, and innovation results. The physical embodiment dimension was enlarged towards “territory” to include a broader insight on the area. This multi-method approach enabled triangulation of data sources and provided both breadth through observation and depth through interviews.

The collected data was analyzed using the process of open, axial and selecting coding proposed by grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 2015). First, open coding identified initial themes and subjects from field notes, interview transcripts, and observational data. Second, axial coding assembled these themes into broader conceptual categories, such as management practices, barriers, and enablers. Finally, selective coding established relationships between categories and connected them to the theoretical framework, allowing patterns to emerge regarding how DEI principles translate into concrete management practices

### *Triangulation of methods*

Triangulation followed a sequential design where meta-ethnography findings (15 studies, 30 initiatives globally) were complemented and validated through Grand Est fieldwork. A systematic cross-analysis compared enablers and barriers identified in both phases, revealing that global patterns remained valid in the local context despite methodological difference. Overlapping findings, such as needs-based facilitation and trust-based management, were consolidated; while fieldwork added context-specific insights like "lay management" and insights on the found effects. This process yielded a unified framework of eight enablers and ten barriers demonstrating convergence between international literature and regional practice.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fabriquedespossibles.fr/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://tierslieuxgrandest.org/>

### 3 Findings

After the research process, we obtained three main results. First, the conceptualization of **"lay management."** In the meta-ethnography, we found that third places and living labs experiment within their territories. This can take the form of formal projects, such as partnering with a local university to deliver courses on the premises of the third place (Bourke et al. 2022) or launching a call for initiatives targeting a specific issue (Tanda and De Marco 2021). It also manifests through the sale of food grown in a community garden (Kanosvamaha 2024) or the collective use of means of production, such as painting (England 2020).

In all cases, a theoretical vision underlies the intentions observed: third places and living labs facilitate meetings between actors and promote their commitment to common objectives. However, beyond this organizational logic, the motivation to broaden participation is sometimes based on a moral imperative of "doing it right." While they could operate otherwise, they share an imperative that to "set a wider table" is perceived as the fairest, most legitimate way. As one study's participant says:

"My thought is [that] even if it isn't cost-effective, it's the right thing to do. We should be doing this. It's ethically, morally, the right thing to do" (Bourke et al. 2022, 99–100)

In this context, the intention behind the group acts as a bridge between the project piloting these spaces and the possibilities of innovation offered by third places and living labs as open, flexible, and experiential environments. For these intentions to become a materialized transformation, a management capable of guiding these value creation processes is necessary. However, after our meta-ethnography, this appears to be a relatively complex situation. On the one hand, the management style adopted often depends on the organizational origin of the third place or living lab: those within for-profit organizations adopt a management style oriented toward profitability, with its attendant advantages and specific constraints (England 2020; Mahmoud et al. 2021). On the other hand, because of their atypical functioning, these spaces also develop the aforementioned form of management, which has not yet been documented in the literature in depth.

This management is often related to DEI principles, and even if not formalized, DEI-based management can act as a strategic orientation tool, facilitating a better understanding of territories and more coherent action toward intended objectives. Lay management is, therefore, an unconventional, non-codified, and experimental form of governance built through daily experience rather than traditional management frameworks (England 2020).

Our second outcome is evidence of the multi-dimensional effects of DEI-driven innovation in third places and living labs. Through the meta-ethnography, we found that the DEI values of these spaces have territorial, socio-economic, and ecological effects.

At the territorial level, the DEI approach has led to a better understanding of the dynamics of exclusion as well as the invisible barriers identified in three initiatives (Ahmed et al. 2017; Boersma et al. 2022; Bourke et al. 2022). A second effect is the role of DEI as a social media enabler, with five studies reporting that they succeeded in creating links between actors who would otherwise probably never have met (Boersma et al. 2022; Kanosvamaha 2024; Mazer et al. 2015; Soma et al. 2024; Tanda and De Marco 2021). For example, in the case of Amsterdam, these networks played a key role in the integration of disadvantaged populations within the neighborhood alongside crisis response actors (Boersma et al. 2022). In Montreal, a self-assessment questionnaire revealed that the stakeholder integration process had strengthened mutual understanding between researchers and participants, paving the way for new collaborations (Mazer et al. 2015).

Finally, an experiment in territorial planning affirms that they can also be effective (cost-benefit) solutions to engage stakeholders in territorial projects (Tanda and De Marco 2021).

Regarding socio-economical effects, firstly, two studies indicate that users claim to have felt an improvement in their well-being thanks to their participation, though these statements have not been qualitatively enriched (Bourke et al. 2022; Kanosvamhira 2024). We observed this same insight in our field study, especially in *Les MacGyver*, where the manager reported positive effects on users who visit the space for therapeutic purposes, alongside the creation of spaces for caregivers and families of people with disabilities that allow them to reunite and connect.

Secondly, the meta-ethnography included a study hypothesizing beneficial effects on health, particularly by reducing the risks associated with CO<sup>2</sup> exposure through their educational process (Abhijith et al. 2024). This development of skills was also identified in both third places through training for using available technologies (ranging from basic computer use for bureaucratic purposes to laser cutting and 3D printing) offered to migrants, neurodivergent individuals, persons with reduced mobility, and other historically excluded publics. Thirdly, a third place could create jobs for a vulnerable population and contribute to local food security (Kanosvamhira 2024). Fourthly, another place could reduce production costs thanks to the pooling of resources, which reduced the economic risks for entrepreneurs, benefiting populations that are historically disadvantaged or distant from these resources (England 2020).

Ecological effects are the least reported in the articles analyzed. In Canada, a DEI approach in a living lab project allowed for the introduction of environmental justice within the project (Soma et al. 2024). Lastly, one case hypothesized that sharing the means of production reduces the carbon footprint of entrepreneurs, as they do not need to individually buy the tools necessary for their activity (England 2020). In our field stage, a final effect was identified: the re-usage and upgrading of historical buildings. This could be seen in both cases. *La Fabrique* is located in a residential building built in the 1960s, and *Les MacGyver* is settled in an ancient chapel. From our observation phase, we concluded that this is a widespread practice in the region, which may have positive ecological effects by ensuring reuse and avoiding the impacts of destruction and reconstruction.

However, some limitations were identified. One study reports that only half of the users of a living lab achieved a significant result (Tanda and De Marco 2021). Furthermore, among all the articles analyzed, only one mentions the implementation of an impact assessment as part of the project, and the results of this assessment were not reported (Ahmed et al. 2017).

Our third outcome is a framework identifying eight management enablers and ten barriers shaping DEI-driven innovation in third places. Regarding enablers, in the meta-ethnography we identified 6, while during our fieldwork phase we found 8.

First one is portrayed in the literature as prioritizing collective action towards feasible and interesting objectives for all the actors involved (Soma et al. 2024; Quadros Aniche et al. 2024; Ahmed et al. 2017). Our cases of study complemented this idea with having a shared governance and collective decision-making power. For example, in *La Fabrique*, members meet to discuss the progress of ongoing actions, share new ideas for the venue, and express their needs. This weekly meeting allows for collective decision-making, but also for a form of mutual commitment around facilitation. Thus, the third place is run collectively by the member associations, which makes facilitation integrated into the very functioning of the place.

Second, is needs-based facilitation to ensure accessibility for diverse audiences. This was only seen in the field work in both third places. It consists in having an adaptability capacity to each public. In *La Fabrique*, for example they

“told us that they had been invited to lead a fabrication workshop, but that the public was in wheelchairs and could not access the Fab Lab. The solution: to move. They took the transportable machines with them and led a successful keychain manufacturing workshop”. [Excerpt from the field diary]

Third is meeting in a climate of trust and on an equal footing, which was both identified in the literature (Soma et al. 2024; Quadros Aniche et al. 2024; Boersma et al. 2022; Bourke et al. 2022) and in the fieldwork as a form of proximity management grounded in clear communication and a welcoming posture. This includes a posture of speaking in a jargon-free language, welcoming and listening, often supported by small convivial practices such as sharing drinks, food, or inviting them to upcoming events.

Fourth is recognition of local histories and territories as part of project identity. This was only identified in fieldwork and was a shared asset in all third-places. This lays on a shared vision of third-places as “a territory”, as said by facilitator of one of the educational sessions of the *Réseau Tiers-Lieux Grand Est*. In concrete terms, sometimes this translates into creating a third place with the resources available locally, that very often, these resources include buildings to be renovated, rehabilitated or cleared, which is the case for *Les MacGyver* who is located in an former chapel; but that also includes deeper reflections on what does it means to be in territories being part of vulnerable neighborhoods or in the countryside.

Fifth was identified in the literature as levelling the playing field so that all stakeholders can effectively participate (Soma et al. 2024, 12) and in the fieldwork as openness to local contributors. In *La Fabrique* they publish the monthly agenda, provide the contacts of employees and associations involved in the project, are active on social networks, and offer free coffee, among other things. They actively try to attract those who wish to join the place.

Sixth was identified in the literature as encouraging engagement (Quadros Aniche et al. 2024) and in the fieldwork as network-based action. In both cases they try to establish networks of third places, but not limited to them: specialized, professional or thematic networks are also very valuable, and also animate them with, for example, monthly activities and platforms as *Reseau Tiers Lieux Grand Est* tries to do.

Seventh was identified in the literature as leaving room for spontaneity (Abhijith et al. 2024; Boersma et al. 2022; Bourke et al. 2022), which is seen as an important source of collaboration; and in the fieldwork as enabling knowledge sharing and collective problem solving. In both cases they are meaning to be open to adaptability and having a problem-solving mindset.

Finally, eight enabler was found in the literature as to allow people to discover third places and living labs and to understand the issues they address (Ahmed et al. 2017; Quadros Aniche et al. 2024) and in the fieldwork as the active showcasing of achievements. For example, *Les MacGyver* has participated in various interviews, fairs, competitions and, assessing impact of their action. *La Fabrique* also had a significant experience: their exhibition on women in digital technology was solicited in another city. Both cases show that showing their work generates satisfaction and motivates them to continue.

The literature and empirical fieldwork identified ten primary barriers to DEI within third places. The first obstacle involves a significant lack of specialized DEI skills among practitioners, a gap noted both in recent scholarship (Quadros Aniche et al. 2024) and

throughout the analyzed field sites. Closely related to this lack of expertise is a second barrier: the paralyzing pursuit of a "perfect" DEI approach. In several case studies, the constructive sentiment of "we could do better" evolved into an excessively demanding vision of equity that effectively blocked practical action. Third, the persistent exclusion of specific audiences remains a challenge (Ahmed et al. 2017; Quadros Aniche et al. 2024), with fieldwork highlighting accessibility issues stemming from the historical buildings in which many third places are housed.

A fourth set of barriers concerns the difficulty of mobilizing diverse actors (Soma et al. 2024) alongside participant fatigue, organizational silos, communication breakdowns, and implicit hierarchies (Boersma et al. 2022; England 2020; Kanosvamaha 2024; Quadros Aniche et al. 2024; Tanda and De Marco 2021). Notably, fieldwork revealed specific difficulties in recruiting local neighbors to participate in these spaces. Fifth, even when a community is present, there is often a lack of proactive initiative in proposing activities. This is further compounded by the sixth and seventh barriers: chronic project overload and the absence of adapted management structures. An eighth barrier, confirmed by both literature and fieldwork, is an energy-intensive and politically precarious economic model. Primarily reliant on subsidies, this model fosters a sense of powerlessness and diminished collective capacity (Boersma et al. 2022; de la Peña et al. 2018; England 2020; Kanosvamaha 2024; Quadros Aniche et al. 2024; Soma et al. 2024; Tanda and De Marco 2021).

The ninth barrier was identified exclusively through fieldwork and pertains to the spatial limitations of these environments. Third places often struggle to host conflicting events simultaneously; for instance, at *Les MacGyver*, planners must carefully manage the schedule because the naturally noisy environment of a fab lab can be problematic for the children who frequently visit. Similarly, at Third Place C, conflicts emerged between office-based work and manual activities, particularly when paint fumes interfered with both labor and safety. Finally, geographical location acts as a tenth barrier to resource access (Ahmed et al. 2017; Bourke et al. 2022; Mazer et al. 2015; Poldma et al. 2017). This was particularly evident in the rural sites of the *Réseau Tiers-Lieux Grand Est* and Cases A, B, and C, whereas the two primary urban case studies did not report this specific geographic constraint.

**Table 1** Synthesis of enablers and barriers to DEI in third places.

<i>Synthesis of Analysis</i>	
Enablers	Barriers
1. Facilitating third places according to the needs of each person.	1. Have a very demanding vision of DEI.
2. Have a handyman attitude.	2. Lack of DEI skills.
3. Maintaining a climate of trust in management.	3. Participating but moderately engaged community.
4. Welcoming to all who want to contribute.	4. Accessibility problems, especially for people with reduced mobility.
5. Honoring the stories of their bearers and the territory of the third place.	5. Difficulties in recruiting neighboring audiences.
6. Encouraging networks.	6. Project overload.
7. Putting the "together" at the heart of the making.	7. Lack of an adapted management model.
8. Be a demonstrator of the possible.	8. Not recognizing the limits of hybridization
	9. An energy-intensive and politically uncertain economic model.
	10. Constraints and issues related to location and territory.

Source: Made by authors.

## **4 Discussion**

This research contributes to the field of innovation management in two main ways. First, it makes a methodological contribution by adopting a meta-ethnographic approach. This interpretivist approach is widely used for evidence reporting in other disciplines, however, it is not common in innovation management (Tranfield et al. 2003). In consequence, the choice of using these methods supports the implementation of evidence-based action in innovation management research and practice, which is in line with the principles outlined by Tranfield et al. (2003).

Second, the study provides an empirical contribution by observing and documenting the translation of organizational intent into concrete practices that acts as enablers and barriers. This approach contributes to the ongoing development of strategic intent theory and advances qualitative experimental approaches within the field of innovation management (Osorio et al. 2025).

This research offers practical implications for several categories of stakeholders. Managers of social and solidarity economy organizations benefit directly from the findings, as a better understanding of the gap between managerial intentions and the epistemological limits of traditional management approaches enables them to better align their actions. Moreover, the results provide operationalizable insights that can evolve into practical tools, supporting a transition from implicit and experimental managerial practices toward more explicit, shared, and evidence-based management knowledge. This work is currently being developed further in the form of a serious game, specifically designed to strengthen managers' confidence and reflexivity in value-based management.

Public and territorial authorities also gain from this research. As ESS organizations have increasingly become a focus of public policy in several countries, the findings offer a clearer understanding of their specific contexts. Public actors benefit from evidence on how these spaces function as catalysts for social networks and territorial development, as well as from insights into how their effects can be maximized and what barriers they face, two critical elements for informed public action.

Finally, researchers benefit from a validated methodological approach and from a theoretical bridge between strategic intent and the practical implementation of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in innovation spaces, providing a foundation for further research in this area.

## **5 Conclusion**

This research addressed the misalignment between traditional, profit-oriented management logics and the ethical, political, and moral commitments of community-based innovation initiatives, specifically using the case of third places. These initiatives carry strategic intentions that prioritize "doing together" through values such as autonomy, solidarity, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). While mainstream management frequently reduces DEI to explicit, rigid tools like quotas and positive discrimination, our findings suggest these approaches are neither suitable for small-scale local initiatives nor do they account for the nuanced, divergent understandings of what "inclusion" means in practice. Instead, third places integrate these principles as a fundamental "strategic switch" that seem to align daily practices with social and environmental goals, producing a triple dimension of value: social, economic, and environmental.

The research process yielded three primary results that enhance our understanding of value-based territorial innovation. First is the conceptualization of "lay management". It is

an unconventional, non-codified, and experimental form of governance built through practitioner experience and "bricolage" rather than traditional managerial frameworks. Second, a meta-ethnography of 15 articles evidenced multi-dimensional effects: territorial impacts include the identification of invisible exclusion barriers and the catalysing of social networks; social benefits encompass socio-emotional support and job creation for vulnerable groups; and ecological outcomes involve environmental justice and reduced carbon footprints through tool-sharing and building rehabilitation. Finally, as a primary actionable output, this study proposed a framework identifying eight management levers and ten barriers that shape innovation in this context, providing a foundation for a management model specifically adapted to the Social and Solidarity Economy.

## 6 Acknowledges

The authors would like to thank the ORION program for its contribution to the funding of MMT research internship. This work has benefited from a French government grant managed by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche with the reference ANR-20-SFRI-0009. Also, it was partly supported by the french PIA projet « LUE-SIRIUS », reference ANR-20-IDES-0008. Finally, we are deeply grateful to the Lorraine Fab Living Lab©, Réseau Tiers-Lieux Grand Est, Association J.-B. Thiéry and their Fab Lab Les MacGyver, and La Fabrique des Possibles.

## References and Notes

- Abhijith, KV, Prashant Kumar, Hamid Omidvarborna, Ana Paula Mendes Emygdio, Ben McCallan, and David Carpenter-Lomax. 2024. 'Improving Air Pollution Awareness of the General Public through Citizen Science Approach'. *Sustainable Horizons* 10 (June): 100086. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.horiz.2023.100086>.
- AFNOR. 2025. *Management de l'innovation - Principes Essentiels et Vocabulaire (ISO56000:2025)*.
- Ahmed, Sara, Bonnie Swaine, Marc Milot, et al. 2017. 'Creating an Inclusive Mall Environment with the PRECEDE-PROCEED Model: A Living Lab Case Study'. *Disability and Rehabilitation* 39 (21): 2198–206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2016.1219401>.
- Baker, Andrew C., David F. Larcker, Charles G. McCLURE, Durgesh Saraph, and Edward M. Watts. 2024. 'Diversity Washing'. *Journal of Accounting Research* 62 (5): 1661–709. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-679X.12542>.
- Boersma, Kees, Rinske Berg, Joris Rijbroek, et al. 2022. 'Exploring the Potential of Local Stakeholders' Involvement in Crisis Management. The Living Lab Approach in a Case Study from Amsterdam'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 79 (September): 103179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2022.103179>.
- Bourke, Alan, Clara Tascón, James Vanderveken, and Emily Ecker. 2022. 'Rethinking Postsecondary Access and Engagement for Low-Income Adult Learners Through a Community Hub Partnership Approach'. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* 34 (02): 02. <https://doi.org/10.56105/cjsae.v34i02.5669>.
- Browder, Russell E., Cole J. Crider, and Robert P. Garrett. 2023. 'Hybrid Innovation Logics: Exploratory Product Development with Users in a Corporate Makerspace'. *Journal of Product Innovation Management* 40 (4): 451–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpim.12654>.

- Corbett, Charles J., Sriram Narayanan, John Aloysius, et al. 2025. 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Operations Management: Critical Linkages and Research Opportunities'. *Production and Operations Management* 34 (3): 310–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10591478251318107>.
- Corbin, Juliet, and Anselm Strauss. 2015. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 4th edn. San Jose State University, USA. <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/basics-of-qualitative-research/book235578>.
- Dixon-Fyle, S., C. Huber, M. del Mar Martínez Márquez, S. Prince, A. Thomas, and V. Hunt. 2023. *Diversity Matters Even More: The Case for Holistic Impact*. McKinsey & Company.
- Eisenhardt, Kathleen M., and Melissa E. Graebner. 2007. 'Theory Building From Cases: Opportunities And Challenges'. *Academy of Management Journal* 50 (1): 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.24160888>.
- England, Lauren Elizabeth. 2020. 'Managing Making and Makers in Open-Access Craft Studios: The Case of Turning Earth'. *Social Enterprise Journal* 16 (2): 159–77. World. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-03-2019-0014>.
- Garner-Moyer, H el ene. 2012. *R eflexions Autour Du Concept de Diversit e.  clairer Pour Mieux Agir*. Association Fran aise des Managers de la Diversit e. <https://www.afmd.fr/reflexions-autour-du-concept-de-diversite-eclairer-pour-mieux-agir>.
- Giddens, Anthoy. 1993. *Las nuevas reglas del m todo sociol gico. Cr tica positiva de las sociolog as interpretativas*. 1st edn. Translated by Salom n Merener. Amorrortu editores.
- Hamel, Gary, and C. K. Prahalad. 2005. 'Strategic Intent'. *Competitive Strategy, Harvard Business Review*, July 1. <https://hbr.org/2005/07/strategic-intent>.
- Head, Brian W. 2022. *Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Understanding and Responding to Complex Challenges*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94580-0>.
- Jones, Graham, Bernardita Chirino Chace, and Justin Wright. 2020. 'Cultural Diversity Drives Innovation: Empowering Teams for Success'. *International Journal of Innovation Science* 12 (3): 323–43. World. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJIS-04-2020-0042>.
- Kanosvamhira, TP. 2024. 'Exploring Urban Community Gardens as "Third Places": Fostering Social Interaction in Distressed Neighbourhoods of Cape Town, South Africa'. *LEISURE STUDIES*, ahead of print, July 31. WOS:001280444300001. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2024.2383481>.
- Klein, Juan-Luis, and Bernard Pecqueur. 2021. 'Living Labs et tiers-lieux : r v lateurs d'une red finition du d veloppement territorial ?' *International Social Sciences and management Journal*, no. 5 (December): 5. <https://doi.org/10.34874/IMIST.PRSM/ISSM/29256>.
- Koch, Thomas, Sandra Mechler, and Nora Denner. 2025. 'The Diversity Washing Dilemma: When Signaling Diversity Enhances Image and Credibility – And When It Backfires'. *Public Relations Review* 51 (4): 102609. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2025.102609>.
- Lallement, Michel. 2015. *L' ge Du Faire. Hacking, Travail, Anarchie*. 1st edn.  ditions du Seuil.
- Leavy, Patricia. 2017. *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. The Guilford Press.
- Lebrun, Amandine. 2024. 'Les Tiers-Lieux, Entre Zone Autonome Temporaire et Start-up d' tat'. *Revue Des R gions Arides* 1 (49): 195–204.
- Liefoghe, Christine. 2023. 'Tiers-lieux et d veloppement territorial : des initiatives locales   la co-construction d'une politique nationale'. *Revue d' conomie R gionale & Urbaine*, no. 5 (December): 693–713. <https://doi.org/10.3917/reru.235.0693>.

- Luong, Victoria, Margaret Bearman, and Anna MacLeod. 2023. 'A Beginner's Guide to Meta-Ethnography'. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* 15 (1): 46–47. <https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-22-00958.1>.
- Mahmoud, Israa H., Eugenio Morello, Chiara Vona, et al. 2021. 'Setting the Social Monitoring Framework for Nature-Based Solutions Impact: Methodological Approach and Pre-Greening Measurements in the Case Study from CLEVER Cities Milan'. *Sustainability* 13 (17): 17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13179672>.
- Mazer, Barbara, Dahlia Kairy, Andréanne Guindon, et al. 2015. 'Rehabilitation Living Lab in the Mall Community of Practice: Learning Together to Improve Rehabilitation, Participation and Social Inclusion for People Living with Disabilities'. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 12 (4): 4. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph120404439>.
- Methley, Abigail M., Stephen Campbell, Carolyn Chew-Graham, Rosalind McNally, and Sudeh Cheraghi-Sohi. 2014. 'PICO, PICOS and SPIDER: A Comparison Study of Specificity and Sensitivity in Three Search Tools for Qualitative Systematic Reviews'. *BMC Health Services Research* 14 (1): 579. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-014-0579-0>.
- Nishii, Lisa H., Jasmien Khattab, Meir Shemla, and Rebecca M. Paluch. 2018. 'A Multi-Level Process Model for Understanding Diversity Practice Effectiveness'. *Academy of Management Annals* 12 (1): 37–82. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0044>.
- Noblit, George W., and R. Dwight Hare. 1999. 'Chapter 5: Meta-Ethnography: Synthesizing Qualitative Studies'. *Counterpoints* 44: 93–123.
- Osorio, Ferney, Ferran Giones, Laurent Dupont, and Mauricio Camargo. 2025. 'Innovation Labs Strategy: Unfolding the Multifaceted Role of Strategic Intent'. *Technovation* 141 (March): 103170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2025.103170>.
- Ottolini, Lucile. 2023. *PISTIL Recherche Action -Rapport Final PISTIL Insertion Sociale et Insertion Professionnelle Dans Les Tierslieux Recherche Action Collaborative -Rapport Final*. UMR Lisis. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8211552.svg>.
- Peña, FB de la, JZ Manapat, and IEEE. 2018. 'Empowering Women Thru Plastics Recycling: A Livelihood Project for Women in Marginalized Communities'. Paper presented at 2018 IEEE GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE (GHTC). *University of the Philippines System*. WOS:000459814200007.
- Poldma, T., H. Carbonneau, S. Miaux, et al. 2017. 'Lived Experiences and Technology in the Design of Urban Nature Parks for Accessibility'. In *Universite de Montreal*, edited by M. Antona and C. Stephanidis, vol. 10279. WOS:000456927000026. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58700-4\\_26](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58700-4_26).
- Quadros Aniche, Laura, Jurian Edelenbos, Alberto Gianoli, et al. 2024. 'Contextualizing and Generalizing Drivers and Barriers of Urban Living Labs for Climate Resilience'. *Environmental Policy and Governance* 34 (5): 490–523. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.2097>.
- Ramsden, Bryony. 2025. 'LibGuides: Nursing: PICO and Clinical Questions'. <https://hud.libguides.com/c.php?g=89502&p=577283>.
- Renaut, Alain. 2019. *Egalité et Discriminations. Un essai de philosophie politique appliquée*. Le Seuil. <https://shs-cairn-info.bases-doc.univ-lorraine.fr/egalite-et-discriminations-un-essai-de-philosophie-politique-appliquee--9782020815611>.
- Rittel, Horst W. J., and Melvin M. Webber. 1973. 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning'. *Policy Sciences* 4 (2): 155–69.
- Soma, T., K. Park, T. Shulman, et al. 2024. 'Living Labs as Transformative Incrementalism: Lessons Learned on the Role of a University Living Lab in Mobilising Just Sustainabilities on

- Campus'. *LOCAL ENVIRONMENT*, ahead of print, June 1. WOS:001238136300001. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2024.2360721>.
- Tanda, Adriano, and Alberto De Marco. 2021. 'A Review of an Urban Living Lab Initiative'. *Review of Policy Research* 38 (3): 370–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ropr.12419>.
- Tranfield, David, David Denyer, and Palminder Smart. 2003. 'Towards a Methodology for Developing Evidence-Informed Management Knowledge by Means of Systematic Review'. *British Journal of Management* 14 (3): 207–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.00375>.