



Culture and Creativity for the revitalization of rural areas

Silvia Brandi — FarmLab, Austria
Das Land Steiermark — 4th Monday Session - 20 October 2025

- About myself
- What is the FarmLab
- SheMakes project (Horizon2020)



About myself...

1979 - Grew up in a small city in Italy

2004 - Graduated in architecture in Milan

2006 - Architect practitioner in Barcelona

2012 - Academic Coordinator at IAAC

2017 - General Manager at IAAC

2020 - Director Fixing the Future Festival

2020 - Co-founded FarmLab

2022 - Director Education Department
ABACUS in Barcelona

2025 - FarmLab turned Association



What is the FarmLab

- A **fab lab**, a laboratory for digital fabrication, node of the Fab Lab Network
- A **semi-self-sufficient small farm**, with heritage orchard and a flock of sheep
- A **creative rural hub** open to the local and international community
- A **living testbed** for rethinking how we live, make and share



The FarmLab is
a third space combining
tradition and
innovation with a
cultural mission
for the rural areas.



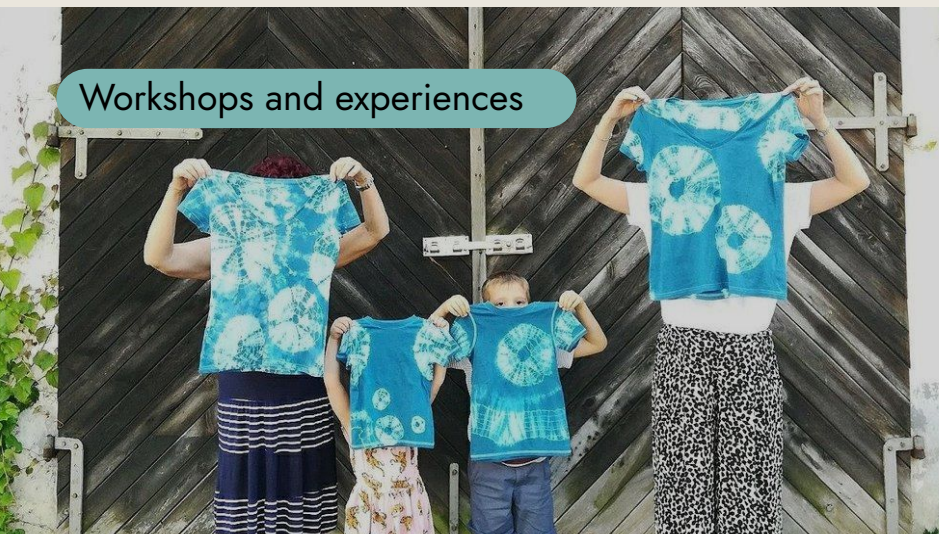
Research and artistic residencies



EU funded research projects



Workshops and experiences



Farm projects' development



A local node of global networks

The FarmLab is set in a remote location, but at the same time is an active member of important international networks, with which it shares projects, knowledge and values:

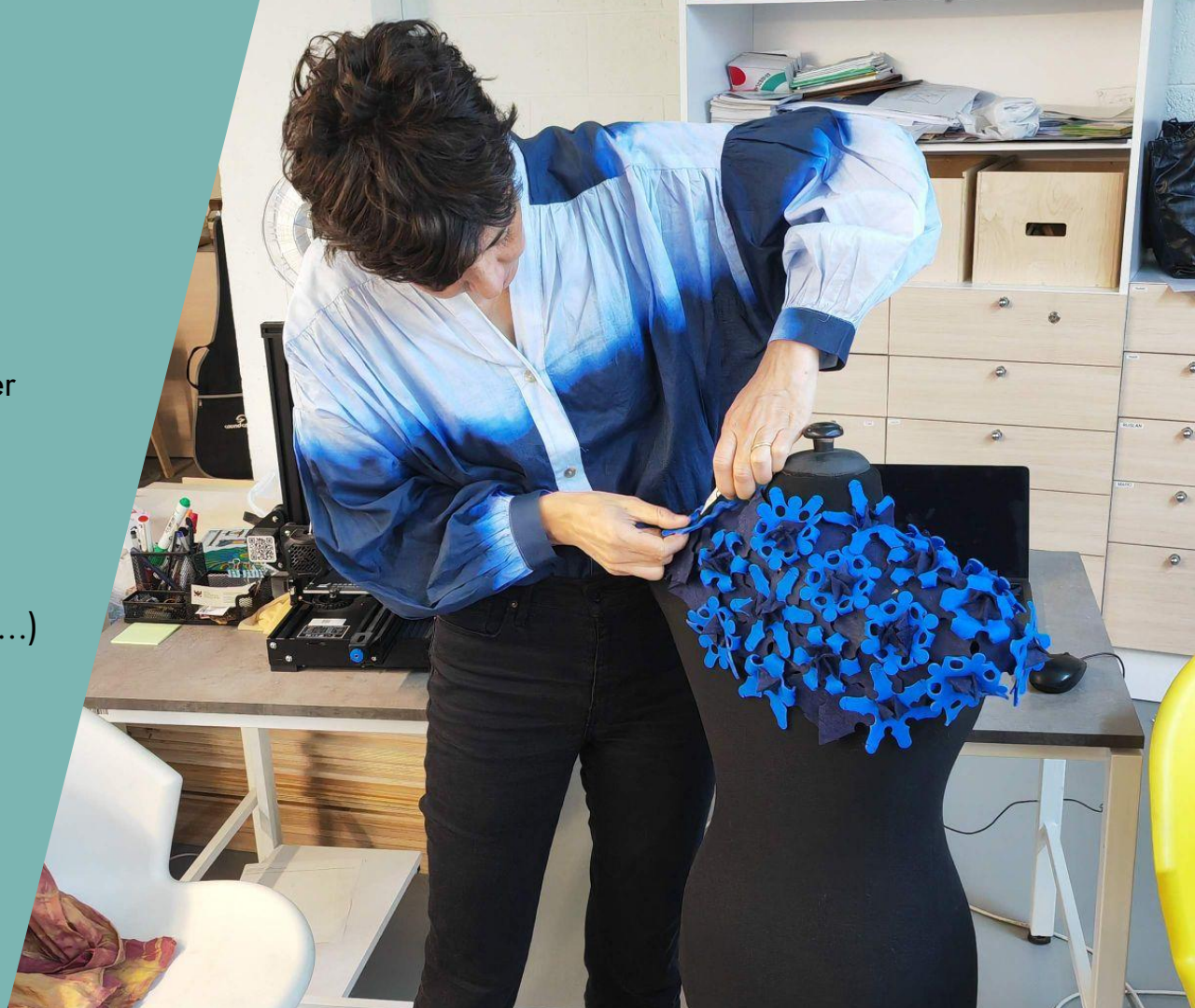
- [Fab Lab Network](#)
- [Fabricademy](#) and [Fab Academy](#) Alumni
- [European Creative Hubs Network](#)
- [Vulca - European Makerspaces](#)



The FarmLab as a Creative Hub

Creative Labs:

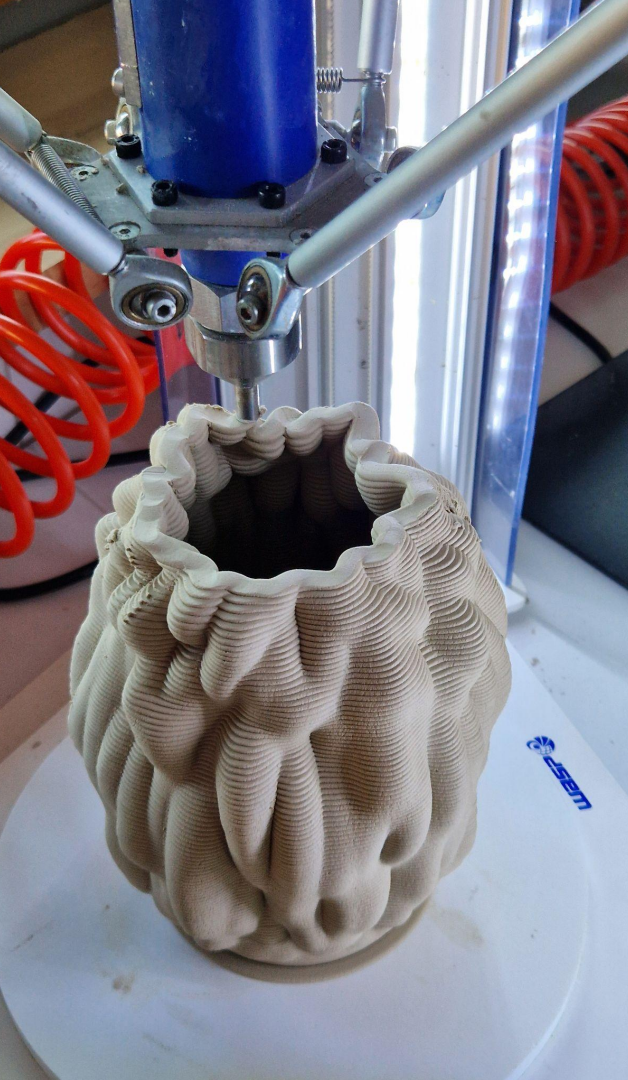
- Digital fabrication (CNC, Laser cutter, 3d printer,...)
- Ceramics (raku, 3d printing, obvara,...)
- Textiles (wool, digital couture,...)
- Woodworking (CNC, lathe, bandsaw,...)
- Biolab (natural dyes, indigo, bioplastic, root textiles...)





















Culture in rural areas

Culture and creativity should be part of the rural revitalization strategies:

- Attracting youth
- Keeping communities alive and cohes
- Preserving heritage practices and transmitting knowledge
- Fostering networking and sparking innovation





**Empowering future female innovators of the sustainable
fashion industry through inspiration, skills and networks.**

2020-2022

www.shemakes.eu



This project has received funding from the
European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation
programme under grant agreement No 101006203.



Shemakes project



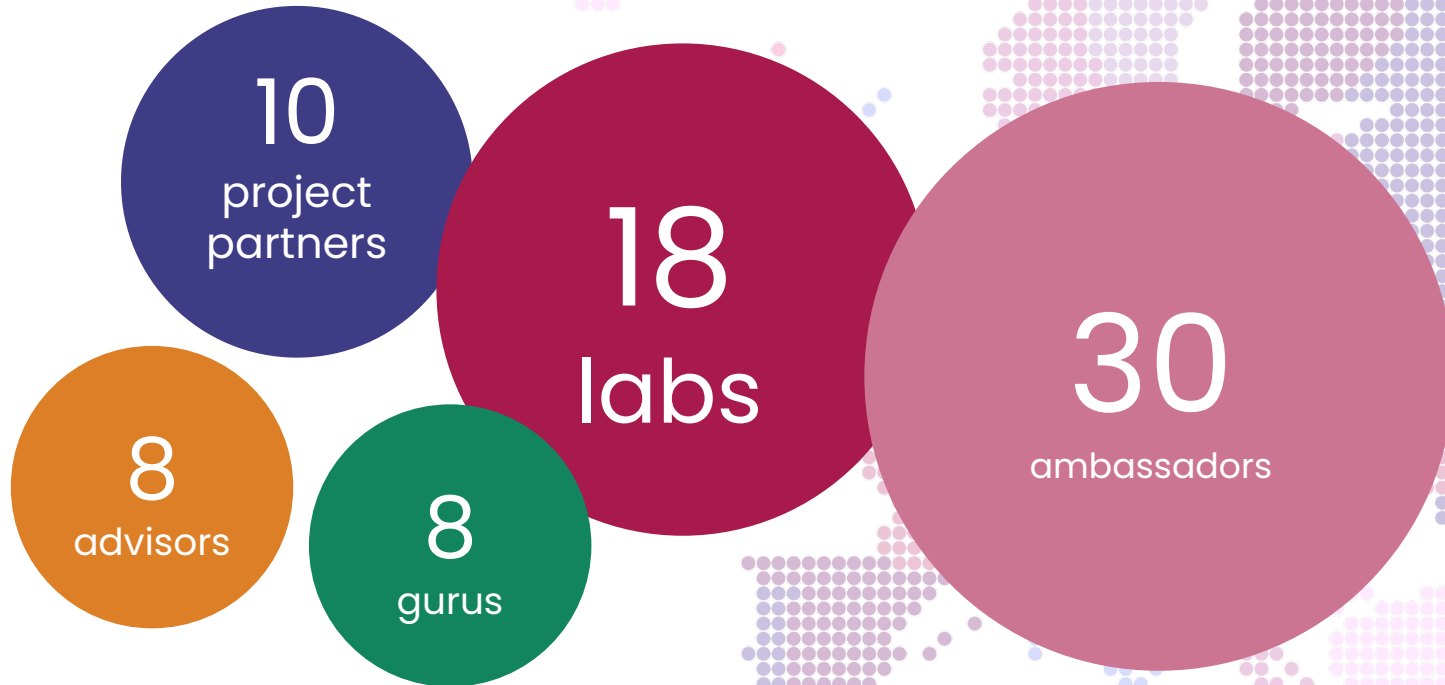
An **opportunity ecosystem**

- to bridge the gender gap in the textile and clothing industry
- co-designed to empower, inspire, mentor, teach and assist girls and women at various stages of development and ability
- based on hands-on tech activities, innovation services and engaged communities.



Shemakes network in 2022

The network has grown in various phases throughout the project.
Initial partners established a model based on vision, values and activities.
In 2022, we passed these on to be adopted, adapted and developed by new members.





Shemakes vision and targets

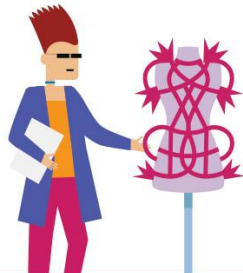
Together we transform women's
roles in textiles and clothing

Together we get inspired to lead
change in textiles and clothing

Our community of game changers



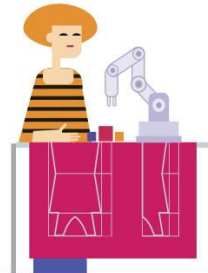
Girls who are
curious about
textiles and
technology



Young women
who want a new
perspective on
textiles and
clothing



Innovative
women with a
career in textiles
and clothing



Textile artists,
fashion designers,
entrepreneurs,
activists



shemakes.eu labs
and the
communities in
which they are
embedded

Collaboration with a range of people is essential
to how our community works together to transform the T&C sector.



Shemakes activities



Learning paths

Based on the Fabricademy curricula, we created practical workshops for 3 age groups that we call Curiosity, Discovery, Innovation.



Business engagement

Based on the TCBL model, we put young entrepreneurs in touch with businesses willing to test their ideas or products & mentor them to lead to success.



Community engagement

Holds local workshops that address gender inequality by creating opportunities for people to meet, learn and enable themselves. A transversal theme.



Lab to Lab activities

The wool theme was chosen to test a model of combined research and innovation on three aspects: designing textiles, making tools, mapping ecosystems.



Lab to Lab activities: exploring WOOL through 3 research lines

PLACE



Ecosystem mapping

DESIGN



Natural Dyeing

MAKE



(DIY) Tool making



PLACE - Ecosystem mapping



Raw material suppliers, Farmers
Associations, Farms, Dyes



Manufacturers (spinning,
weaving, dyeing, textile-making..)



Designers, Studios, Labs, Makers



Shops, haberdashery, Distributors



Cultural heritage centres
(museums..)



Wool waste management, end-of-
lifestakeholders, Recycling
centres



- From global to local
- Life-Cycle Thinking
- Cultural Heritage
- Open Access
- Hands-on and DIY

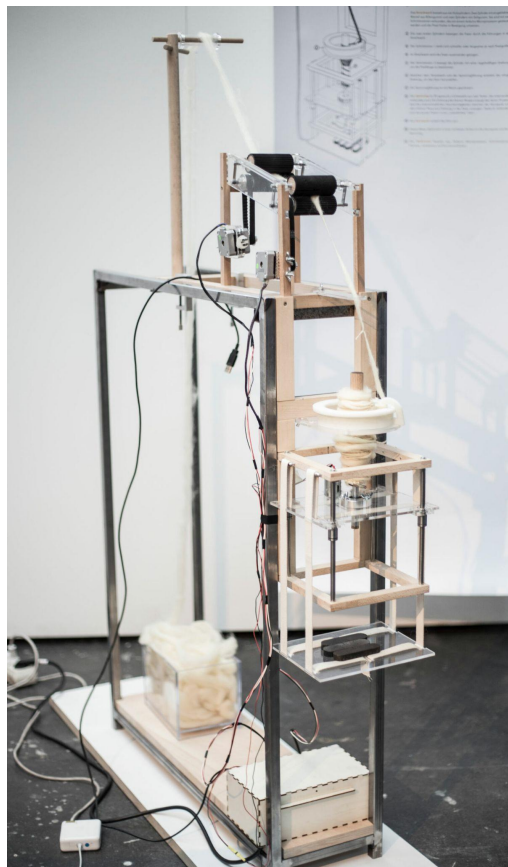


DESIGN – Dyeing and Printing





MAKE - Little Wool Factory



sh**mak**s



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101006203

2, 16 & 23
May, 2022

WOOL MONDAYS

Hybrid events
to rethink wool through
exchange & experimentation

shemakes.eu/woolmondays



Participating labs



Iaac



waag
technology & society

ual: centre for
circular design



ICELANDIC
TEXTILE CENTER



Shemakes Learning Paths, three different age targets

Curiosity

Target age
8 to 18

Working with **schools, after-school programs and museums** to find and nurture future talents as well as create aspirations, trust and joyful moments for **kids**.

Discovery

Target age
18 to 25

Working with academies, **university** or institutes in order to **incorporate Fabricademy modules into existing curricula** and align **skills** acquired with emergent needs of T&C ecosystems.

Innovation

Target age
25+

Working with T&C professionals to create '**routes to job**' for women, ranging from self-taught, alternative to more traditional career paths.



1. Curiosity path

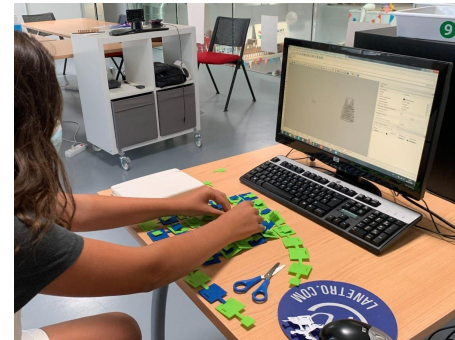
Curiosity

Target age
8 to 18

Working with **schools, after-school programs and museums** to find and nurture future talents as well as create aspirations, trust and joyful moments for **kids**.



Fabricademy for kids



Make your own garment



Remix the school



E-monster



2. Discovery path

Discovery

Target age
18 to 25

Working with academies,
university or institutes in order to
**incorporate Fabricademy
modules into existing curricula**
and align **skills** acquired with
emergent needs of T&C
ecosystems.



Bacterial dyes



Rewool



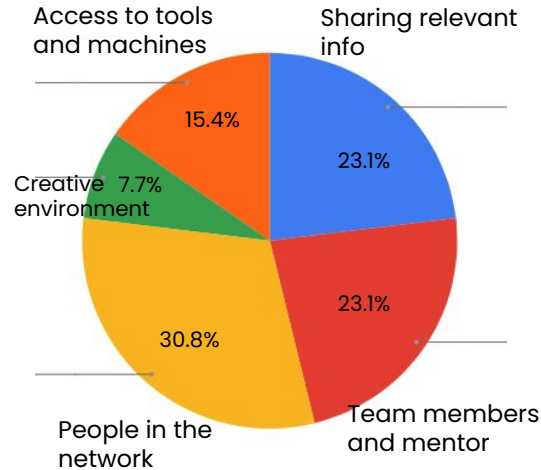
Leather moulding



Resin biocomposites



Lab enabling environment

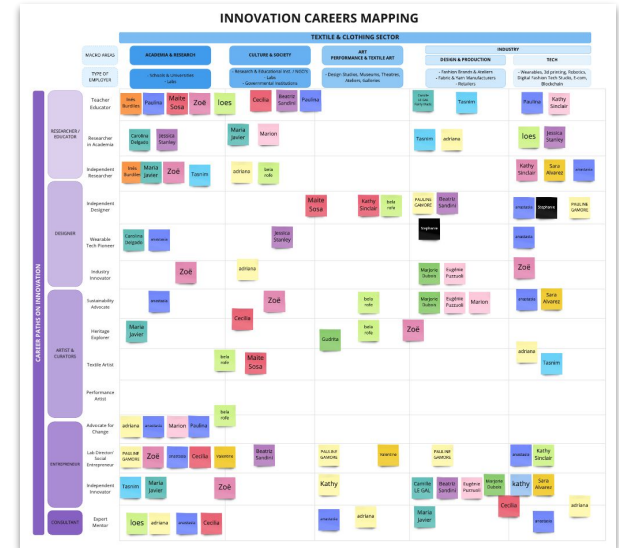


Surveys to
understand the career
path of each women
innovator and how the
opportunities and limits
have shaped their current
profile.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OcfN4cdbZY&feature=emb_title

**Inspiring
Interviews and
profiles
from Women
Innovators**



Career mapping



3. Innovation path

Exploring the stories of the women innovators in wool





Shemakes impact per activities

- The **74** activities in our **Learning paths** engaged **900** participants
- **Business services** involved **230** women innovators
- Our **community** engaged **820** participants
- Multiple **Labs** collaboratively researched the **WOOL** value chain & activities attracted more than **300** participants



Shemakes open documentation



Shemakes ▾ Network Topics Learning Events Blog ▾ @ f t v

Learning

Learn with shemakes! Explore our activities, divided in modules, that our labs have developed to be held with specific target groups and desired outcomes for participants such as greater innovation and technical competence, greater awareness of gender issues, or greater competitiveness on the job market.

Shemakes has **three "learning paths"** as well as **two other groups of people who we involve in our activities**. In line with project goals, the "learning path" modules (the first three below) have specifically been developed with women in mind and they serve to encourage girls and women to learn skills or get involved in areas more typically associated with boys and men. In particular, these skills create a relationship between technology and textiles, working from the very basics of using laser cutters and creating soft circuits to more complex projects like digital modular design or the creation of new materials from resin or other biomaterials. The additional two areas you can explore below address whole communities, who explore gender issues in the textile and clothing industry together to create a roadmap towards improvement, and entrepreneurship, which helps women embarking on their own business paths to be more successful.

All of our activities are detailed in our [Open Toolkit](#) to make them **replicable in your own laboratory**. Although developed for girls and women, the activities are of course open to anyone and everyone.

Curiosity Path

 8-18 years

Learning with kids, teachers, schools and community centers. The Curiosity Path activities have been developed for female primary and secondary school students aged 8-18. They may be formal, informal or after-school activities in a safe environment.

[+ Read More](#)

All the shemakes activities are documented online and therefore replicable or easily adaptable.

Open documentation is essential to what we do because it allows all of us to continue the work of shemakes even after the 2-year project officially ends.

The website section shemakes.eu/learning leads to complete documentation at <http://fabricademy.fabcloud.io/shemakes/handbook>

Thank you!



www.farmlab.at



farmlab.at@gmail.com







Innovation Path activities by

Investigation on women entrepreneurs in wool business



Objective:

To identify the stakeholders and understand the challenges and opportunities of the wool business in the Southeast Austria.



Description:

Through research, network and a survey we identified 3 relevant success stories of women entrepreneurs in wool business. We visited them and video interviewed them to understand their trajectory and tell their stories.



Team leading: the FarmLab



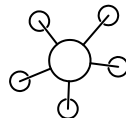
Key learnings:

New wool business is a women business, with a new generation of female entrepreneurs who are leading the way to innovation.



What's next?

The vision, values, activities and services, and the communities established live on!
What can you do with shemakes now?



TCBL



Use the documentation

The learning materials will remain online and you can replicate them in your lab or community. Hold a gender workshop in your office, get a bunch of women to make bioplastics in your lab, it's up to you.

Connect with people

Get in touch with labs, gurus and ambassadors to develop your own gender-related projects.

Join us

Shemakes participants will become part of the non-profit TCBL Association, which will continue nurturing and building the opportunity ecosystem established during shemakes. Fabricademy offers regular courses and labs can become teaching hubs.

In a nutshell

3 days in May

- > 16 parallel events, online and local
- > 9-14 shemakes labs involved
- > 150 participants during the 3 days
 - 50 online participants + >100 participations in local events
- >+ 100 participants in connected events (Belgium and UK events)

Strengthen inter-lab research collaboration

Cooperation with local stakeholders and international network

Open Source knowledge:

- One Wool Ecosystem Map in progress
- A handbook with a serie of tutorials and workshops to be replicated

A better understanding of current research gaps

New opportunities for collaboration



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101019303

2, 16 & 23 May, 2022



WOOL MONDAYS

**Hybrid events
to rethink wool through
exchange & experimentation**
shemakes.eu/woolmondays

Participating labs





Core labs participating

- IAAC – coordination + lead for PLACE – MAKE group – Local events
- WAAG – lead of DESIGN group – local events
- REDU – content contributions – local events
- ONLFAIT – content contributions – local events
- LEON – a local event
- FARMLAB – content contributions
- Green Fabric– local events





Overview of Lab-to-Lab Research



ual centre for circular design



Wool Mondays

For online targets



Rethinking wool event
Wool Mondays

For 40 reach of targets



Little Wool Factory
Bacterial Dye

For 25 reach of targets



Circular Wool UK – Online
symposium

For 67 reach of targets



Lab-to-Lab Research by

Wool Mondays



Objective:

To contribute to the collective and diverse research around the Wool Mondays from the perspective and capacity of a small farm in the Austrian context.



Description:

Place: we presented the Southeast Austrian context, highlighted the stories of 3 women entrepreneurs, and introduced the FarmLab's mission and facilities.

Design: we presented our research about dyeing our wool with different kinds of bark, and held an online workshop about it.

Make: we presented the local tradition of nomadic shearers, and our project to develop an open source drum carding machine.



Team leading: the FarmLab



Key learnings:

Wool business is living a challenging moment in Europe, but there is plenty of projects, ideas and opportunities to rethink this business.

Each of the topics of the Wool Mondays deserves to be an independent in depth research.



Lab-to-Lab Research by

Rethinking wool event



Public event to rethink how to produce local wool in a society of overproduction and overconsumption. Can we reactivate local production sites in order to be autonomous?



Two days of lectures and workshops around Belgian wool production



Team leading: lab and ambassador



Show the process of wool transformation during 4 workshops and talk about the wool ecosystem in Belgium with 4 conferences about natural dyes, wool industry, wool mini mill and She makes



Lab-to-Lab Research by



Little Wool Factory workshop



From 21st of April until 7th of May ITC hosted a series of workshops with the guidance and knowledge from ambassador, Petra. The Little wool factory workshop was hosted to connect people to the processes of the wool industry with DIY tools from open source for spinning and weaving made with out of wood with a laser cutter.



Our Little wool factory workshop was one of our best attended workshops. The diversity within the group was interesting in terms of profession, age and place of residence. Three sheep farmers in the region attended and so did textile designers from Reykjavík and our international artist. A lot of knowledge exchange took place, which was a very beautiful thing to witness.



Team leading: The Icelandic Textile Center and ambassador



The little wool factory puts the spotlight on the importance of understanding the whole process of working the wool, which builds people's respect for the wool.



Lab-to-Lab Research by



Bacterial Dye Workshop



The staff at the ITC has good knowledge of natural dyes. However the knowledge of how to color wool with bacteria was a new knowledge we wanted to explore and invite others to learn with us..



The Bacterial dyeing workshop was done in collaboration with Biopol, a marine biotechnology company that has all necessary equipment. The one day on site workshop



Team leading: The Icelandic Textile Center and ambassador



Unfortunately, the bacteria we worked with did not survive its long trip from Barcelona to Iceland but even so it was interesting to learn the process.

Even though the workshop did not work out as planned, participants showed interest in returning to another workshop later and are very interested in this new way of dyeing wool as it is a big tradition in Iceland



Lab-to-Lab Research by

Circular Wool UK

ual ■ centre for
circular design



Exploring research, creativity, innovation and systemic design around circular wool UK practices through a design research lens



A 2.5 hour online symposium where CCD invited 12 multi disciplinary academic researchers, lecturers and industry experts to share their research and findings



Centre for Circular Design,
Chelsea College of Arts, UAL



Inspiring and exchanging knowledge around wool in the UK context



Contribution to project

VALUES

*Collaborative
Sustainability
Crafts
Knowledge exchange*

GENDER

*Many inspiring womens.
Women as leaders in the
research and field
Interesting stereotypes
stories hidden in current
and past practices*

NETWORK

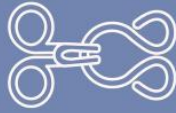
For more research
playgrounds between
labs
Local – global cooperation

Our values



Equal

Women participate and are rewarded equally in T+C education and work



Collaborative

Working with others sharing similar values



Welcoming difference

Valuing all women and girls and their contributions independent of their backgrounds and gender self-identification



Empowering

Women and girls to lead change in T+C and not be held back by gender stereotypes



Inspiring

Women and girls about the opportunities in textiles and clothing

Everyone in our network shares, operates by and spreads the same values.