

# REPORT

September 2014



## Governing Urban Sustainability Transitions – Inspiring examples

Focusing on cities as locus of change, this dossier includes nine of the most recent applications of transition thinking in urban sustainability governance. Located in Europe, the examples include community arenas, neighbourhood transition labs, urban transition arenas and policy transition experiments. Next to the actual examples, the dossier introduces and shares lessons with regard to the governance of urban sustainability transitions and reflects broader on the transformative potential of communities engaged in local action for sustainability.

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**Title:**

Governing Urban Sustainability Transitions – Inspiring examples

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## A | Introduction

## A1 | Sustainability transitions in cities and their governance

*Julia Wittmayer, Chris Roorda*

### ***Introduction***

With more than half of the world's population living in cities, it is safe to say that cities highly impact our world's sustainability. In Europe, the share is even more than 70% and impacts can be felt in terms of resource consumption (e.g. energy, primary resources), decreasing food security, increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. However, cities also offer the opportunity for decisive local action to address these issues – both in terms of policy and societal action. Alternatives can emerge and be nurtured – they can be inspiring to others, or be translated for implementation at higher levels of governance. Actions at urban level can thus have global impact and cities are seen as critical arenas for addressing sustainability issues.

Many cities recognize this and have adopted ambitious sustainability targets and agenda's. City officers who take on these ambitions and their realization are confronted with the actual complexity of these sustainability issues. Rather than clear-cut, these can best be regarded as persistent problems: problems deeply embedded in society, involving a myriad of interrelated actors, domains and scale-levels and, with no obvious starting point at which to begin. To address these kinds of problems, instead of improvement or optimization, fundamental long-term changes are needed – sustainability transitions.

To explore, understand and explain the dynamics of fundamental, long term societal change, transition studies have emerged in the last decades as a new field of research. From a transition perspective the sustainability ambitions of European cities do ask for fundamental changes (not mere optimization) – a fact that is not acknowledged or understood by all. These fundamental changes are to incur in institutional frameworks, mind-sets and practices. They cannot be simply planned or directed, nevertheless this is a key assumption that politicians, city administrations, NGOs and businesses make. Putting it in extremes: they analyse and formulate clearly framed problems by dissecting them from their societal context, define clear targets aiming at short-term improvement or optimization and implement clearly laid out plans with milestones and SMART-goals.

While dominant, this approach does not take account of confounding issues beyond the primary focus of the intervention, nor dig behind the symptoms towards the underlying pathologies – and as such does not reach the targets and has unintended side effects. Often we do not know what the (underlying) problems are; let alone how to solve them. Even if we do understand the more complex and intangible challenges inhibiting interventions, addressing them involves multiple actors, domains and scale-levels. In addition, each of these interrelated actors brings forward different perceptions and (partial) knowledge of the problem context, increasing the complexity of both the problem understanding and the formulation of consensus solutions. What then, you might ask, can be done?

### ***Transition management***

Next to the aim of analysing and understanding transitions, part of the field of transition studies is about how actors (can) influence transitions – their governance. One of these governance

approaches is transition management, which is based on insights from complex systems, governance and sociological theories. Rather than about ‘managing’, it is about creating space by searching, learning and experimenting. Transition management aims at influencing the direction and pace of societal change dynamics in the context of contributing to sustainability.

The approach has been broadly applied in socio-technical systems such as energy and water. Recently, it is increasingly being used with the aim to influence sustainability transitions on the scale of regions, cities and neighbourhoods. It holds that transitions, rather than being managed, can be initiated, supported and accelerated by playing into existing dynamics and embracing complexity and uncertainty as opportunities rather than as something to ignore or control. Basic tenets for influencing transitions include:

- Insight into the system. The complexity of the challenge has to be fully acknowledged. Acquiring an insight into the dynamics and interlinkages of multiple domains, actors and scales is essential to identifying opportunities to address them integrally. Examine the challenges thoroughly by questioning assumptions, problem perceptions and dominant solution.
- System innovation in incremental steps. Apart from system improvements and optimisations, aim for system innovation. System innovation becomes feasible by taking small but radical steps, guided by a long-term perspective. Question mind-sets and allow ideas and actions that go against the current.
- Diversity and flexibility. The future cannot be predicted nor planned, so keep options open by exploring multiple pathways when working on strategies and actions. Anticipate resistance and barriers. Involve diverse perspectives to enable cross-fertilisation and prevent a mismatch between shared ideas of equally minded stakeholder groups. If an idea is to work, it needs to arise from consensus across a pluriform society.
- Co-creation. Neither local government nor any other single actor can address sustainability challenges on its own. Every day, all kinds of people and organisations make decisions that influence the future. Multiple stakeholders must be engaged beyond a role of input provision and it has to be acknowledged that everybody is a decision maker and can contribute from the own position and perspective.
- Creating opportunities for change agents. Achieving ambitious targets is difficult when, in one needs to account for vested interests and stakes. Look for actors who are already adopting new ways of thinking and doing (change agents), as they can be influential in mediating transitions. Actively engage and empower them to give them the resources and opportunities they need to realise innovations.
- Social and institutional learning. Learning is essential in societal change. Open up to actors with other backgrounds to gain better insights in challenges and opportunities for change. Work on short-term action in line with a long-term vision to learn about new practices and current constraints. Fulfil conditions such as time for reflection, mutual trust and openness to each other’s perspectives to support learning processes.

### **Putting transition management into practice**

These principles form the basis for a joint societal searching and learning process towards sustainability and have been operationalized into an iterative governance framework, the transition management cycle (see figure 1). It distinguishes a number of governance activities at different levels, namely strategic (problem structuring, envisioning), tactical (agenda setting, coalition forming), operational (experimenting) and reflective (monitoring, learning).

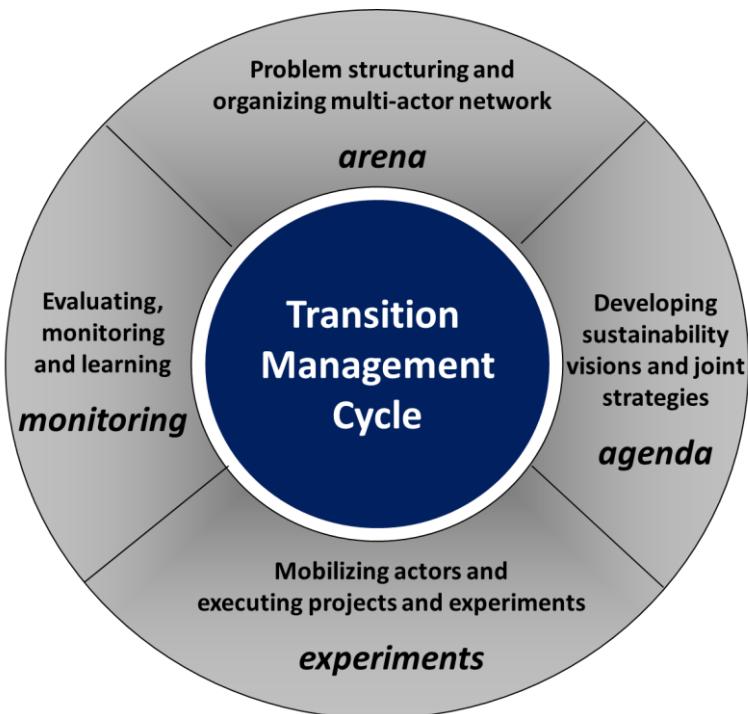


Figure 1: Transition management cycle (Loorbach 2010)

A central instrument in this approach is the transition arena, a setting that provides an informal but well-structured space to a small group of change-agents with diverse perspectives (businesses, government, research institutes, civil society). The arena aims to provide a space for shared societal learning, where the group questions and goes beyond the current status quo, interests and daily routines. The group engages in a series of meetings to jointly develop a new and shared visionary story which they can directly link to their own everyday practice. The arena group has a temporary character and subsequently works on structuring a transition challenge, drafting visionary images, developing transition paths and formulating a transition agenda that includes immediate short term actions. This process combines the search for long term strategies to transform existing structures, cultures and practices and with immediate action to realize on the short term new projects, collaborations and experiments.

Transition management aims to create a new interface between a myriad of societal actors: policy, civil society, business, and knowledge institutes. It is complementary to official decision making bodies and influences but does not replace them; outcomes can for example serve as inspiration for

strategic planning and regulation formulation. To local governments, transition management is also a learning process during which opportunities are created to build upon the transformative capacity of citizens, businesses, institutions and other organisations. Other actors, in first instance the arena participants, are provided with a space and opportunity to think and work beyond ‘business as usual’ and are stimulated to take ownership for the ambition of a sustainable city.

### ***The potential of transition management***

Transition management for addressing persistent problems harbours a number of mechanisms:

- Tangible outcomes of a transition management process are a shared narrative (i.e. understanding) about the past, the present and the future of the city as well as a shared language.
- Through such a process and the work in more operational experiments or in a more strategic arena group, innovations are bundled and new networks and constellations emerge. Examples are an increased interaction of top-down and bottom-up and between more status-quo oriented individuals and radical or moderate innovators.
- Through engaging in a common learning journey, actors from different backgrounds and perspectives do start leaving institutional barriers behind and search for new roles individually but also sketch these roles and relations for different institutions. These new roles and relations and the search for them are necessary in realizing the shared future vision.
- The search for new roles and relations also belongs to the shifting view on participation: rather than citizens or business participating in a decision making process of their municipality, transition management is about the participation of all in a societal learning process. Here participation might better be understood as the co-production of societal knowledge as well as on the long term new structures, cultures and practices. These processes create a joined understanding and responsibility for the challenges.
- Through engaging in the meetings of the transition arena group as well as in the preparation of this process, both tangible expressions of the learning journey, participants do gain a better understanding of the complexity and the societal context of the low-carbon challenge.

As such this process is firstly, all about learning from and with each other and enhancing reflexivity of the individual but also of organizations. And second, about empowering individuals who are taking part in this process. By clarifying that we all have our share in sustainability problems, and *thus* also do have an influence on their solution or in addressing them. This empowerment is not blind with regards to the structural context in which individual agency is acted out – rather it embeds the individual within the structures and vice versa.

### ***Taking up transition management***

Transition management has been taken up by a variety of actors, amongst which municipalities and universities are important. When municipalities do take the lead in organizing a transition management process, it means that they also need to work within their organization to create space

for new ways of working. These include building upon societal dynamics, more collaboration across departments, less SMART-formulated goals and targets and increased reflexivity.

When universities or research institutes do take the lead, it means that the researchers do need to leave the traditional role understanding of the distant, objective scientist behind. Rather, they engage in a number of different activities: next to the more traditional part of performing analysis, they also facilitate the process, act as knowledge brokers and motivate and empower participants as well as reflect on their own role in this process.

Transition management is a perspective that can be taken by a variety of actors for creating space for learning and change in their city. Cities are given an impulse that translates into a sustainability movement for the city.

#### ***Further reading on transition management in general:***

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- Roorda, C. and Wittmayer, J., (2014). *Transition Management in five European cities – an evaluation*. DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam. (online at drift.eur.nl)*
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## A2 | Local action for sustainability: from Local Agenda 21 to transition management

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### The 'local' as locus of change

Since the 1990s, the importance of the local level in addressing the challenges of sustainable development is growing. Due to an increasing percentage of the world's population living in cities, those become important to an even greater extent as loci of change for sustainability. Over the last 20 years, the so-called Local Agenda 21 (LA21) processes have had a significant impact in fostering the local level in working towards sustainability.

They emerged in the context of the [Agenda 21](#), which resulted from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio claiming an ever more pressing urgency with regard to socio-economic (e.g. poverty) and ecological (e.g. biological diversity, atmosphere) issues. The Agenda 21 was a voluntary action plan to be addressed by a "global partnership for sustainable development". It puts national governments in the driving seat for implementing the outlined actions and policies while linking with other governance levels and 'Major Groups' (e.g. local authorities, women, farmers). Local authorities were in the focus of Agenda 21, as was public participation, both as keys for effectively implementing and achieving sustainable development at the level closest to the people. As a consequence, LA21 processes surged around the globe, with some being still active today, while others have transformed over time or simply do not exist anymore.

Next to LA21, many other forms of local action for sustainability were initiated in the last decade. ICLEI<sup>1</sup> (2012) defined these local sustainability processes along three common characteristics: a multi-sectorial character, a long-term perspective and a local focus. This definition encompasses transition management processes in cities, towns and neighbourhoods – the focus of this dossier - as outlined more detailed elsewhere, see [A1 | Sustainability transitions in cities and their governance](#). Transition management is a reflexive governance approach to sustainability. It has been developed in the Netherlands about a decade ago and is getting exceeding attention ever since. It doesn't explicitly refer to LA21, and only recently was applied at the local level in cities and neighbourhoods. Its initial focus is on regional and national scale, mostly with a sectorial focus). Transition management is about creating a societal searching and learning process towards sustainability and as such embraces our future as being diverse and uncertain. Transition management is explicitly normative in seeking to foster *sustainability* transitions. Sustainability values (such as environmental integrity, societal cohesion, welfare and intergenerational justice) are safeguarded in the process but adapted to the local context.

When transition management is applied in cities or presented to local authorities, a question that keeps arising is about the relation between LA21 and transition management. Both LA21 and transition management aim at developing a more sustainable future by action on the local level. But there are significant differences. Both approaches are shaped by their specific historical context in

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<sup>1</sup> Local Governments for Sustainability, founded in 1990 as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives

which they emerged: the 90s and 2000's respectively. This article aims to compare both approaches following four areas:

- the nature of change,
- the contextualisation of sustainability,
- the changing nature of local governance and
- the roles of local actors.

### ***Comparing transition management and LA21***

#### ***Nature of change: From optimization to radical change***

Whereas both, LA21 and transition management recognize the need for fundamental change, it is only transition management that operationalises this starting point in its process methodology. LA21 processes are derived from a carefully negotiated UN-policy document, the Agenda 21. While it set out a course for action, it however missed to challenge and question the paradigms of the current economic, political and social systems. In contrary, the initial impulse for the Agenda 21 came from national governments and it followed the rather classical approach: drafting policy documents which outline activities for different groups. Consequently, the LA21 processes focus on consultation and consensus building, aimed at learning for local governments, increasing awareness of other stakeholders and determining sustainability targets. While some analysts think that LA21 has the potential to lead to fundamental change, they also show that this was not realized<sup>2</sup>.

Although LA21 and transition management share an understanding that a radical shift is needed – it is silenced in LA21 while it is the starting point in transition management. Transition management emerged from transition theory, which outlines that persistent problems need fundamental changes in structures, culture and practices of ongoing societal systems. Its perspective on the world is highly complex, uncertain and dynamic, thus allowing a multitude of pathways to sustainability. Transition management targets fundamental change, while both stimulating societal critique and challenging the status quo. It operationalizes this through a number of process elements, such as its focus on 'frontrunners'. These are actors that deviate from the mainstream and as such are seen to be able to initiate fundamental change.

#### ***Contextualisation of sustainability: From a focus on the environment to a broadened understanding of sustainability***

While both, LA21 and transition management share the importance of having a broad view on sustainability, the practice of LA21 shows a strong focus on environmental aspects.

The Agenda 21 defined sustainable development in terms of social, environmental and economic aspects. With this broad definition, the specification of targets remained with the local governments. In practice, however, LA21 processes in Europe focused mostly on environmental issues. Transition management takes sustainability as a key aspect in process and outcome, however neither defines the concept nor proposes possible targets. In transition management practice, four dimensions of

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Frans Coenen (2009) Local Agenda 21: 'Meaningful and Effective' Participation? In: Coenen, F.H.J.M., ed. Public Participation and Better Environmental Decisions. Springer, 165-182.

sustainability have been adjuvant in operationalizing sustainability: environmental thinking (awareness of nature and natural resources), social thinking (consideration and acknowledgement of self and others), time horizon (short and long term) and interregional thinking (connection with other parts of the world, near and far)<sup>3</sup>. In its practice, starting with a broad system analysis leads to taking account of the complexity and interlinkages of different topics and often to a broadening of an initial narrow focus on e.g. climate change.

Both approaches have in common that they do not choose only one viewpoint on sustainability (e.g. environmental, social *or* economic issues) - which discerns them from more managerial tools (e.g. those related to sustainable energy planning). Conceptually, both LA21 and later transition management propagate a shift in focus from more environmental related aspects to a broader concept of sustainability, which incorporates next to the environmental also the social and economic realm as well as wellbeing and prosperity.

#### *Conceptualising local governance: From planning to searching, learning and experimenting*

Rather than drawing up a policy plan to be implemented mainly through the local government as most LA21 processes, transition management is applied in contexts where the context and the challenge are recognised to be uncertain and complex and where therefore a more reflexive governance approach is needed.

Being mainly located at the level of local governments, LA21 is embedded in a policy context with a high pressure on determining goals and finding solutions which are practical and workable while having political support. The main output of these processes is the formulation of a 'blueprint' action plan through a process of consensus building and consultation alike. Furthermore, LA21 processes should result in learning for local governments to formulate best practices and a rising awareness for sustainability issues amongst the local society. Even though the process was started by local authorities, LA21 was often considered to be complementary to regular decision-making procedures rather than being more central to these processes. Currently (local) governments increasingly accept the need for new approaches to reach a more sustainable society.

They search for modes of governance that include the complexity, uncertainty and dynamism of sustainability challenges. Transition management focuses on creating this much needed space for alternative ideas, practices and actors through experimentation and takes uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity as starting points for learning processes for all actors involved. On that account, social and more broad societal learning is an important aspect of transition management. Both LA21 and transition management propose a cyclical model following an iterative process of problem analysis, visioning, pathway development, short-term actions and evaluation. However, the underlying principles thereof are quite opposed to the LA21's approach, e.g. in the visioning phase is aimed in transition management at letting go of current ways of thinking while in LA21's approach it is, much more straightforward and rational, aimed at target setting.

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<sup>3</sup> See Wittmayer, J., M. Mock, F. van Steenbergen, S. Baasch, I. Omann & N. Schäpke (2013) Taking stock – Three years of addressing societal challenges on community level through action research Pilot specific synthesis report. Deliverable 4.5. InContext: EU ENV.2010.4.2.3-1 grant agreement n° 265191. Online available here: [http://www.incontext-fp7.eu/sites/default/files/D4.5%20-%20Taking%20Stock-final\\_0.pdf](http://www.incontext-fp7.eu/sites/default/files/D4.5%20-%20Taking%20Stock-final_0.pdf)

### *Role of actors: From local governments to multi-actor processes*

In both LA21 and transition management, the question of who initiates and fosters a process differs a lot in different settings. Simultaneously, it is of essential importance for its form and possible outcomes. The Agenda 21 is an agreement which puts national governments in the driving seat and makes them responsible for implementation. This was often translated into national legislation requiring every local government to have their own local process, sometimes including funding. The spread of LA21 was going hand in hand with a certain level of institutionalization in local governments, such as LA21 coordinators or departments.

The implementation of transition management in urban context is less ‘top-down’ institutionalized. Transition management aims for a co-creation process with a broad variety of actors and ideas, also outside the local government or administrations. Thus far, most of the transition management processes have involved a significant (action) research component, being (co-) funded by local/national governments or EU-research bodies. Therefore scientific actors play a significant role, initiating the approach or coaching, supporting or accompanying urban policy makers to do so. Being complementary processes (rather than official decision making processes) they are essentially not fully dependent of support by the administration or council – although in the end they also do seek support for the perspectives and initiatives resulting from the approach. Moreover, the approach demands from local governments (especially when these are leading a transition management process) to also undergo a process of self-reflection on their role, organizational structure as well as their activities.

Comparing the two approaches illustrates the currently upcoming paradigm that the task of addressing sustainability issues should shift from being a task for institutions to being taken up by society: a multitude of actors. Eventually, all actors could drive development towards sustainability and especially non-governmental actors might gain more importance in setting the sustainability agenda.

### **Conclusion**

In this contribution, we set out to compare LA21 and transition management as being both expressions of the same search for a sustainable future globally through action on the local level. Both approaches are embedded in their specific histories of origin (in the 90s as result of a global policy document and 2000's as an approach from a scientific community respectively). In looking at both we indicated a number of shifts in the discourse and practice of local action for sustainability in the last decades.

When taking the perspective of our world as being complex, uncertain and dynamic as a starting point, a governance based on mere planning, controlling, accountability, certainty and the like is unable to address these problems. Fundamental shifts in dominant ways of working, thinking and structuring are said to be needed. However, as advocates of transition management – and in general reflexive governance - suggest processes of searching, learning, and experimenting are better suited in doing so. This change in perspective requires indeed a new understanding of local government and

governance, recognizing that multiple other actors are involved, who can influence a wide range of processes and set the agenda towards sustainable development on the local and the global level alike. Both LA21 and transition management have their own mode of thinking about local action for sustainability, however both are promoting a shift in focus to broadening the concept of sustainability: towards including next to environmental concerns the social and economic realm, i.e. wellbeing and prosperity, and the interdependencies between them.

We might conclude eventually that current ways to approach sustainability challenges are diverse: from planning approaches to processes of searching, learning and experimenting. Both modes do provide answers to different ranges and types of questions though, and co-evolve with emergent understandings of the context in which they are used and are embedded within their specific historical background. What does that mean now for policy making? In drawing up a caricature of both approaches, an answer would be: When needing to address complex societal challenges, through fundamental changes on system level, transition management processes might be more adequate. In settings, where the challenge is more clear-cut and framed, a local administration might use an LA21 process to involve other stakeholders in the drawing up of concrete plans that could be implemented by their local governments. Rather, what we see is that there is a variety of processes that are referred to as LA21 processes, and these include processes that can be labelled co-creation rather than participation processes only. When it comes to making our cities and the world more sustainable and finding the right balance between environmental aspects and social justice, an adequate and workable solution might be, to combine different elements of both approaches – LA21 and transition management – in a productive and copious way so as to take the best out of the two worlds. This can be done by shifting back and forth between more top-down based planning strategies *and* searching, learning and experimenting strategies in making our cities and the world more sustainable and a place worth living for other generations to come.

#### **Further reading on Local Agenda 21:**

Coenen, F. , 2009. *Local Agenda 21: ‘Meaningful and Effective’ Participation?* In: Coenen, F.H.J.M., ed. *Public Participation and Better Environmental Decisions*. Springer, 165-182.

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*Transition management has also been implemented within local communities of neighbourhoods, villages or smaller towns. The adapted methodology for this specific context is referred to as ‘the Community Arena’ and takes societal challenges of the community as a starting point. In these examples the processes have been started and facilitated by action researchers with differing involvement of the local municipalities.*



## B | Community arenas

### **Further reading on transition management for communities:**

- Wittmayer, J., M. Mock, F. van Steenbergen, S. Baasch, I. Omann & N. Schäpke (2013) *Taking stock – Three years of addressing societal challenges on community level through action research Pilot specific synthesis report*. Deliverable 4.5. InContext: EU ENV.2010.4.2.3-1 grant agreement n° 265191.
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## B1 | The community arena in Finkenstein, Austria

*Julia Wittmayer, Ines Omann, Bernadette Kirner*

### **Context**

Finkenstein am Faaker See is located in Austria, on the border to Slovenia and Italy. It is one of the largest communities in Carinthia (one of the 9 Austrian Länder) with regard to population and area. About 8,500 people live in Finkenstein - distributed over 28 villages and settlements and divided into a Slovenian-speaking minority and a German speaking majority. The main economic sectors are tourism and (small-scale) industry; agriculture also plays a role. Similar to other (particularly rural) areas in Austria, Finkenstein currently hardly knows participatory governance.

In this context, action researchers initiated a transition management process in 2012 which was an adapted methodology for the use in local communities, referred to as 'the Community Arena'. This methodology was drawn up and implemented as part of an EU-FP7- research project, InContext (grant agreement 265191) which aimed to better understand how sustainable behaviour is shaped by an interplay between external factors (e.g. social norms, policies, and infrastructure) and internal conditions (e.g. values and beliefs). As part of this overall research question, the process in Finkenstein focused on quality of life.

The process was received with skepticism in the beginning by the conservative and rather right-wing parties (three of them exist in Finkenstein). It was to be co-funded by the city and was approved by the city council by a small margin (51%). Conservative and right-wing party members remained critical throughout the process, with only one exception.



*Figure 1: Finkenstein am Faaker See*

### **Process**

The basis for the system analysis and the identification of frontrunners in Finkenstein was a pre-preparation phase of desk research and about 65 interviews. A press release was published in local newspapers and an official project kick-off meeting was held in January 2012 to outline aims and process. The attendance of over 100 inhabitants demonstrated a keen public interest in the initiative.

The transition team in Finkenstein was made up by the researchers who drove the process. In addition institutional and political stakeholders formed a ‘supporting group’. This group met in March 2012 to clarify members’ expectations and discuss the project process.

The community arena was convened between March and June 2012. The research team made an effort to identify and select engaged citizens who reflected the diversity of Finkenstein, while not being representatives of the predominant political or institutional system. Fifteen community members were selected based on their diverse backgrounds in terms of place of residence, age, gender and professional or educational background. During the first meeting, using the dynamic facilitation method, the main topics of interest were identified as follows: environment, energy, mobility/tourism, economy, agriculture, local supply, social topics and population. The arena’s second meeting focused on vision building. It resulted in a collage of pictures representing Finkenstein 2030, as desired by the participants, a theatre play, a fictional interview with a local newspaper and the definition of a set of core guidelines for the vision.

The third meeting started with a discussion between arena participants and supporting group representatives over possibilities for citizens’ involvement in political processes. In response, more space was given to the envisioning process, during which abstract long-term visions were separated from short-term wishes and demands. At the beginning of the fourth community arena meeting a shared vision was articulated and measures defined which were necessary to achieve this vision. In addition to the guiding principles for the vision, a logo was created representing the joint vision. The words used to formulate the vision were chosen to represent some of the values central to the community arena members – translated from German it says: “We shape Finkenstein for the benefit of citizens and nature in freedom, with joy and love of life.” This visioning process of the arena inspired the supporting group to set up two working groups with broader community participation to follow up on two of the main themes (e.g. economy).

Overall, nine thematic working groups were formed to develop measures for realizing the vision and one to two community arena participants were recruited to coordinate them: “Sustainable Economy” (with three subgroups covering tourism, local businesses and local retailers); “Environment and Sustainability”; “LifeEnergy” / “Lebensenergie” (systemic perspective); “Social Affairs”; “Participation”; “Energy supply” (later merged with WG ‘Environment & Sustainability’); “Culture”; “Kanzianiberg” (integration and traditions); and “Mobility” (later merged with WG ‘Environment & Sustainability’).

A public event in early August aimed at the dissemination of the common vision and the expansion of the transition network. Community members could join the working groups and provide feedback on the work done so far. To further extend public involvement in and knowledge of the project, a short report and a call for participation were published in the community newspaper. During the summer, the working groups were busy organizing themselves and discussing which topics they should focus

on. Finding a suitable way to work together (frequency of meetings, hosting, decision-making in working group, etc.) took quite a lot of time and energy for some of the groups. In September, a meeting open to all citizens and the members of the supporting team was organized aiming for connecting the activities carried out by the different working groups, stimulating communication between them, identifying where support was needed and raising motivation. During this meeting the working groups updated each other, and agreed on a mode of working together and communicating with each other. After this meeting, each working group convened several meetings, developed measures and made efforts to integrate more community members. A password-protected space was created on the project website, making available all working group minutes and documents, and a newsletter was sent out in October, which reported on the past and upcoming activities of the working groups.

In November, a next public project meeting aimed at exchanging information about possible measures, and taking decisions about these including a consistency check with the common vision. Measures considered to be incomplete were returned to the appropriate working group for revisions. In the following we outline a number of selected measures by each of the working groups of which most have been implemented; some are still in progress (as of May 2014).

One of the activities of the working group ‘Participation’ is the ‘Town Reporter’ with two workshops in January and March 2013. The participants of these workshops acquired basic knowledge about writing articles for the community newspaper. The aim was to write the community newspaper in a more participatory way with contributions of a higher quality. Another activity of this working group was the organisation of two workshops in February 2013 titled, ‘Your community needs you!’. They were sponsored by “Kärntner Gemeindebund” and concentrated on ways to engage in community life, and on personal strengths and weaknesses, time management, etc. A third activity – hosted in April 2013 – was a public workshop on participation. The goal was to introduce different models and methods of participation and public engagement and to inform citizens of Finkenstein about their possibilities for participation in local decision making.

The working group ‘Social Affairs’ has four (ongoing) parallel running activities. The group started off with designing an information brochure on services, facilities and traditions in Finkenstein for new and long-established citizens. It has been printed and sent to all households in Finkenstein and can as well be downloaded from the [community website](#). To close the gap between people who grew up in Finkenstein and those who moved in later, ‘Hello Neighbour’ is an initiative of monthly meetings where people from the working group ‘Social Affairs’ invite neighbours to an informal meeting in a restaurant and encourage them to invite other people along as well (snowball effect). Due to a lack of kindergarten places and child care in general, a team of the ‘Social Affairs’ group together with other parents have contacted the mayor and developed a plan to increase the number of places for children. This ‘Action Group Kindergarten’ is still ongoing. Another initiative is the creation of low-budget meeting spaces for young Finkensteiners - ‘Spaces to Meet’- without forced consumption and where they are amongst themselves.

The working group ‘Sustainable Economy (Energy)’, started an initiative called ‘Terra amicitiae – application for a climate and energy model region’. In collaboration with the neighbouring communities Arnoldstein and St. Jakob im Rosental, Finkenstein forms a region that aims for energy independency and for improving sustainable transport. The application was accepted with measures

being currently in progress. The working group ‘Environment and Sustainability’ hosts an ongoing initiative called ‘Event Series Sustainability’, which organized already four public talks – and two more to come – from experts on main topics in the area of sustainability (nutrition, mobility, housing, etc.) to increase sustainability awareness of topics and share best practices. Finally, the working group ‘Culture’ runs an ongoing initiative called ‘Culturing’, which is a cooperation initiative among the diverse clubs, associations, choirs, music groups etc. that exist in Finkenstein to use synergies in their work, to attract and integrate young people and to contribute to a good life via art and culture

In February 2013 a final evaluation meeting took place. Participants articulated their need for someone to take over the coordinating role (e.g. internal and external communication, organization of meetings, etc.) of the research team. Those actively involved in the project elected eight representatives to comprise the ‘coordination team’ in a ‘sociocratic election’<sup>4</sup>, which was organized and facilitated by participants of the community arena. At present, this elected unpaid coordination team consists of four persons leads the process of realizing the vision for Finkenstein 2030 and organizes primarily the interplay of the working groups for the coming two years. The coordination team also plays a pivotal role between the working groups and the community representatives, where it acts as a spokesperson. If its members want to be re-elected again, they might volunteer another time, however there are no clear rules concerning the election process so far.

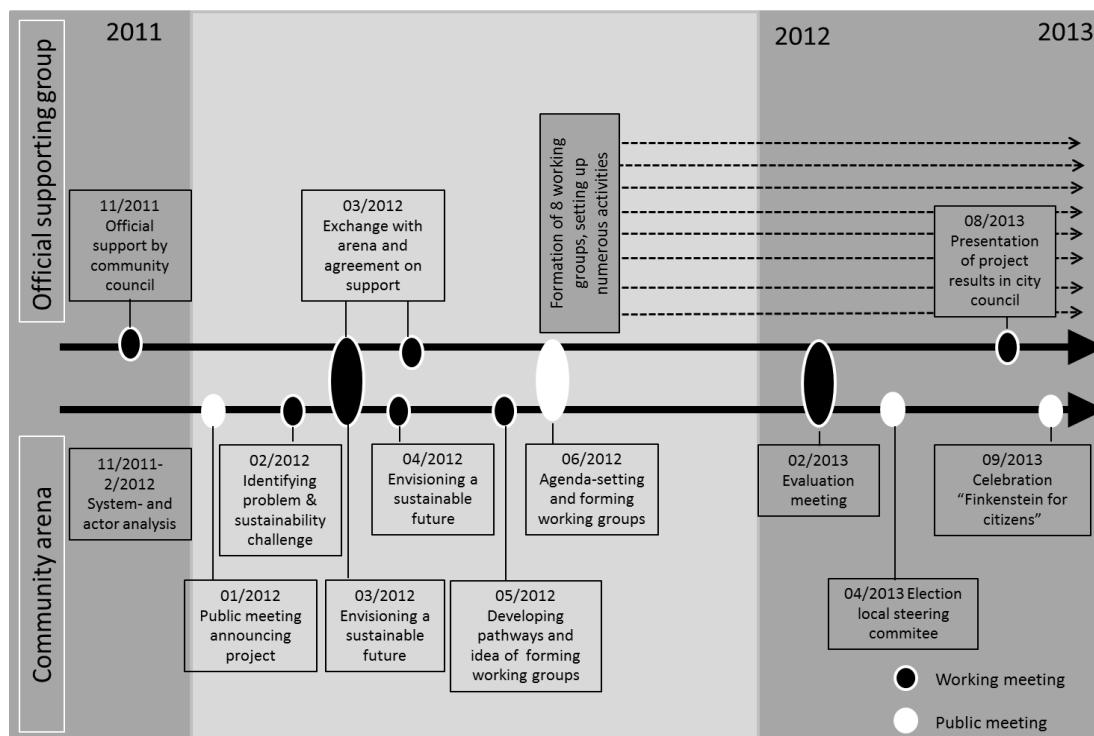


Figure 2: Overview of the community arena process in Finkenstein (Source: Wittmayer et al. 2014)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A sociocratic election is an intermediate form between consensus and majority vote, allowing all voters to temporarily block decisions in case of strong concerns.

<sup>5</sup> Wittmayer, J.M., N. Schäpke, F. van Steenbergen, I. Omann (2014) Making sense of sustainability transitions locally. How action research contributes to addressing societal challenges. Critical Policy Studies. Online first. DOI: 10.1080/19460171.2014.957336

### **Outcome**

In Finkenstein, the transition management process has led to a number of direct and tangible outcomes. Throughout the process about 150 people have been involved either through public meetings, interviews or being part of either the transition team or the community arena. Direct legacies of the process are the [vision document](#), the coordination team and the seven working groups as well as the already implemented measures outlined in table 1.

The curiosity and interest of the community in such a new kind of process was immediately clear during the well-attended public launch event. Next to inhabitants also institutional actors such as local policymakers and politicians showed high interest. They co-funded the process and were directly involved in the process through being part of the supporting team and as such were and continue to be important in linking citizens to administration and vice versa.

The participants appreciated the diversity in terms of age, gender, professions, as it gave them the possibility to gain new perspectives and unconventional insights, an important condition for social learning. The implementation of the community arena methodology led to new local networks with unique compositions and was identified as being very important by the participants themselves. A participant described the networks as offering a platform for discussing ideas and worries about the shared living space.

Participants indicated that they generally believed that they could have an impact on the local environment, though some were skeptical of such claims. This was mainly due to their high expectations about the process to involve large segments of the public and lead to many measurable outcomes. These concerns were addressed throughout the process, which emphasized that transitions occur in small steps and need time. Participants also reported that they learned about their possible impact, their roles and the roles of others in the project. This increased awareness led many participants of the community arena to change their attitude towards the future. They stated that they could encounter future developments in a more relaxed way and put a greater focus on the present after experiencing that they can actively influence developments.

The wish to have an impact on the community also led to an increased interest in local politics – some of the arena members organized themselves as a group to participate at a local council meeting. Additionally, two participants decided to stand as candidates for the local council. Participants also reported an increased self-reflexivity through contact with other (possibly formerly unknown) people. Some participants described themselves as being more open and having fewer prejudices in interactions with others. These second order learning processes are complemented by more first order learning processes, which center on concrete skills, e.g. facilitating meetings and working respectfully together in diverse groups.

### **Further reading on Finkenstein:**

- Schäpke, N., Omann, I., Mock, M., Wittmayer, J., von Raggamby, A. (2013) *Supporting sustainability transitions by enhancing the human dimension via empowerment, social learning and social capital*. In Quist, J., Wittmayer, J., Umpfenbach, K. and Bauler, T. (2013) *Pathways, Transitions and Backcasting for Low-Carbon and Sustainable Lifestyles. Sustainable Consumption Transitions Series, Issue 3 Proceedings of SCORAI Europe & InContext Workshop, 7-8 October 2013, Rotterdam. The Netherlands*.
- Wittmayer, J.M., F. van Steenbergen, D. Loorbach, M. Mock & I. Omann (2013) *Exploring the transformative potential of communities*, In Quist, J., Wittmayer, J., Umpfenbach, K. and Bauler, T. (2013) *Pathways, Transitions and Backcasting for Low-Carbon and Sustainable Lifestyles. Sustainable Consumption Transitions Series, Issue 3 Proceedings of SCORAI Europe & InContext Workshop, 7-8 October 2013, Rotterdam. The Netherlands*.
- Wittmayer, J., M. Mock, F. van Steenbergen, S. Baasch, I. Omann & N. Schäpke (2013) *Taking stock – Three years of addressing societal challenges on community level through action research*. Pilot specific synthesis report. Deliverable 4.5. InContext: EU ENV.2010.4.2.3-1 grant agreement n° 265191.
- Wittmayer, J.M., N. Schäpke, F. van Steenbergen, I. Omann (in press) Making sense of sustainability transitions locally. How action research contributes to addressing societal challenges. Critical Policy Studies. DOI: 10.1080/19460171.2014.957336

## B2 | The community arena in Carnisse – Rotterdam, The Netherlands

*Julia Wittmayer, Frank van Steenbergen*

### **Context**

Carnisse is a neighbourhood of the harbour city Rotterdam, the Netherlands. In 2007, Carnisse (as part of Rotterdam South) was listed as one of the 40 neighbourhoods nationwide that the national government labelled as ‘neighbourhoods of extra interest’ (‘aandachtswijken’). These neighbourhoods are all seen as having problems in multiple domains (social, physical and economic) and receive special attention and funds from the national government.

The sub-municipality of Charlois, of which Carnisse is part, had agreed in 2009 (in the proposal writing phase for a European funded project) to have a transition management approach being implemented in Carnisse. The transition management process started in 2011 and was implemented by action researchers. At that time the context of Carnisse was strongly influenced by the economic crisis and the accompanying government budget cuts. In Carnisse specifically, old welfare structures were being dismantled, such as public facilities (e.g. the educational garden or the community centre), the local inhabitant organisation, the welfare organisation or the sub-municipality. Next to this the neighbourhood had a long history of institutional participatory processes and interventions by professionals and/or researchers, which contributed to the already present sentiment of weariness and distrust of ‘outside’ involvement which was based on the image of a ‘deprived neighbourhood’. Rather than sharing this image, many inhabitants of Carnisse expressed their frustration with this negative picture and were eager to relativize it by pointing to the many initiatives that were arising from within the community.

In this context, action researchers initiated a transition management process in 2011 which was an adapted methodology for the use in local communities, referred to as ‘the Community Arena’. This methodology was drawn up and implemented as part of an EU-FP7- research project, InContext (grant agreement 265191) which aimed to better understand how sustainable behaviour is shaped by an interplay between external factors (e.g. social norms, policies, and infrastructure) and internal conditions (e.g. values and beliefs). As part of this overall research question, the process in Carnisse aimed at enhancing the transformative potential of the community and the empowerment of individuals by addressing the question of how life in Carnisse will be in 2030.



*Figure 1: Amelandseplein in Carnisse*

## Process

In the period from August 2011 to February 2012, the transition team<sup>6</sup> was doing the system and actor analysis which included review of secondary literature, interviews, attending meetings and getting acquainted with the locality. On the basis of the system analysis, the researchers formulated the transition challenges for the neighbourhood in terms of developments:

- from short term acting to open spaces for future thinking,
- from cramped and nostalgic to resilient and innovative, and
- from controlled risk limitation to learning from alternatives.

The actor analysis led to the selection of about 15 inhabitants and professionals to be included in the actual community arena process. These change agents were selected because they either had a strong connection with, were active in or had a future vision for the neighbourhood – as a group they came from a diversity of networks and perspectives. The final process design was informed by a meeting with five change agents and resulted in an adjusted process design where deliberative participatory arena meetings were started in parallel (rather than consecutively) with a more action- and implementation-oriented experiment (the re-opening of a closed-down community centre). While the deliberative process was focusing on an invited group of participants, the action-oriented process was open to everyone. These two processes were eventually linked by taking the community centre as a symbol of the current and possible future state of Carnisse. The researchers also decided to not include local policy makers in the deliberative processes but rather to focus on empowering the local population to establish a strong narrative about the future of Carnisse.

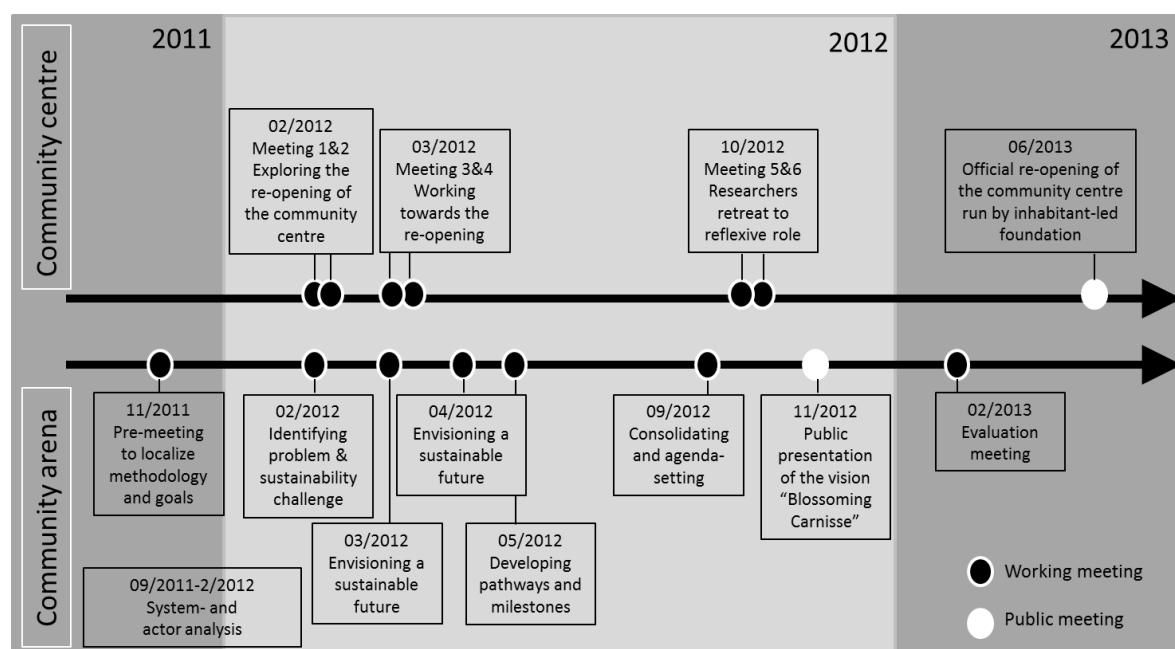


Figure 2: Overview of community arena process in Carnisse (Source: Wittmayer et al. 2014)<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Consisting of two active members, i.e. action researchers plus five more people which were either researchers at a distance, or locally relevant partners.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

During the first meeting in February 2012, the researchers presented a first problem framing based on their analysis in Carnisse. An intensive discussion led to the identification of six main topics, namely the (non-)power of policy actors, the rich and turbulent history of the neighbourhood, the wider economic climate and the government budget cuts, the state of housing, diversity in Carnisse, and the connections between different groups and topics. These topics were closely linked to the developments of the closed-down community centre. In the two following meetings, participants were talking about their emotions, needs and relations with regard to the community centre and drew up a vision for the neighbourhood in 2030 in which the community centre played an important role. The vision is called 'Blossoming Carnisse' and tells the future of the neighbourhood along six visionary images: 1) ...to living with each other, 2) ...to a green sustainable oasis, 3) ...to diverse housing styles, 4) ...to a local social economy, 5) ...to places for everybody, and 6) ...to working together for blossoming. In May 2012, a forth community arena meeting was held where for each of the six images exemplary pathways were developed in small group work. In a last step, images and pathways were connected with current activities in the neighbourhood related to either one of these images. In November 2012, the vision was presented to a broader audience in the neighbourhood during an official community forum. This presentation was co-organized with the sub-municipality of Charlois and connected the community vision to the overall policy context of Charlois.



*Figure 3: Logo for the future of Blossoming Carnisse*

The parallel process which was more action-oriented approach, focused on the community centre, which was closed in January 2012 due to the bankruptcy of the welfare-organization which had run it for decades. A number of inhabitants and professionals had indicated in their interviews that they were concerned about the closure of the community centre and the researchers invited them to a first meeting in February 2012. During this meeting a local action group was formed to work towards re-opening the community centre under community self-management. After four initial meetings, the core of the action group stayed in contact through e-mail and telephone, and worked on a number of strategies. It drew up a business plan, collected more than 300 signatures through a petition and searched for contact with or were approached by different representatives of the sub-municipality, the welfare organization and the larger municipality. In October 2012, the researchers withdrew from the process which was by then focusing on establishing the day-to-day management of the community centre and sharing progress with the broader public. At that time the Municipality of Rotterdam had accepted ownership of the building and had become a party with which to negotiate for a rental agreement. At that point the community centre was open and running

'unofficially', and researchers were only involved in the background from a (reflexive) monitoring stance. In the beginning of 2013, the action group established a foundation, which as a legal entity re-opened the community centre officially in June 2013. The board members, three volunteers, are managing the community centre, fulfil most of the daily tasks supported by other volunteers and continue the dialogue with the municipalities.



Figure 4: The future image "... places for everybody"

In February 2013, an evaluation meeting took place where the participants of both, the arena process and the experiment, evaluated the process and the outcomes and formulated future ambitions.

### **Outcomes**

Starting this process, the researchers had the ambition to enhance the transformative potential of the community and to empower individuals by addressing the question of how life in Carnisse will be in 2030. During the course of the process, from September 2011 until February 2013, around 150 inhabitants, policy officers, politicians and other professionals became involved either through interviews, by taking part in the visioning or experimenting process or through the public event. Direct legacies of the process are the [vision-document](#) as well as the re-opened [community centre](#) offering countless activities for children and their parents, for elderly people as well as for all the different religious and ethnic groupings within Carnisse.



Figure 5: Arena meeting in Carnisse

Previous participation processes focusing on informing and consulting the public, were judged critically by residents and recent municipal budget cuts increased these sentiments. Both local policy makers and inhabitants of Carnisse were sceptical of whether the community arena process, which essentially is a process with an open rather than closed agenda could deliver the concrete results they were seeking. In the evaluation, participants stated that the open agenda of the process gave them the feeling of being able to choose what to put on the agenda, rather than having a certain policy agenda being “imposed” on them. The felt they had a choice and that the process was meaningful to them, because they could put forth topics important to them – both aspects of intrinsic motivation and empowerment. They joined the process so as to either gain a better picture of their living environment or to (re-)open the community centre. Others felt that joining is part of their responsibility as a citizen. During the process they also learned about the state of the neighbourhood and its developments as well as specific skills (e.g. speaking in front of a larger audience, negotiating with policy makers, mobilizing other inhabitants, fundraising). Participants also stated that they saw things differently now, e.g. that a group of inhabitants can make a difference although they do not have ‘formal’ power and that they could operate more independently from institutions.

While the experimentation culminated in the re-opening of the community centre in June 2013, the deliberative process has come to a pause with the last officially organised evaluation meeting in February 2013. The arena group did not meet afterwards in the same constellation. Nevertheless the body of thought introduced through the arena meetings, took root in Carnisse and work is done on several of the pathways. Next to the re-opening of the community centre, other experimentations have been started under the umbrella of ‘Blossoming Carnisse’. The welfare organization supported inhabitants to initiate a local swap-shop and one arena participant is (together with a group of professionals and the inhabitants organization) developing the idea of an internship position through which the neighbourhood would attract new ‘social work’-talent. A year after the first public presentation, one of the directors of the sub-municipality is acknowledging the strengths of the vision and its importance for the neighbourhood – while the vision has not had a direct influence on local decision-making. With the sub-municipalities being abolished in spring 2014, Blossoming Carnisse has the potential to influence the directions of the new policy-making organ which is being

instituted (the so-called ‘area commission’). Currently, the spirit of ‘Blossoming Carnisse’ is still present in and around the active work of the community centre.

#### **Further reading on Carnisse:**

Schäpke, N., Omann, I., Mock, M., Wittmayer, J., von Raggamby, A. (2013) Supporting sustainability transitions by enhancing the human dimension via empowerment, social learning and social capital. In Quist, J., Wittmayer, J., Umpfenbach, K. and Bauler, T. (2013) *Pathways, Transitions and Backcasting for Low-Carbon and Sustainable Lifestyles. Sustainable Consumption Transitions Series, Issue 3 Proceedings of SCORAI Europe & InContext Workshop, 7-8 October 2013, Rotterdam. The Netherlands*.

Transitiearena Carnisse (2011) Bloeidend Carnisse: De buurt zijn wij & wij zijn de buurt.

Van Steenbergen, F. & Wittmayer, J. (2012) Carnisse in transitie? Een verkenning van het verleden, het heden en de toekomst van een Rotterdamse wijk. 30 oktober 2012. DRIFT-uitgave. E 2012.05.

Wittmayer, J.M., F. van Steenbergen, D. Loorbach, M. Mock & I. Omann (2013) Exploring the transformative potential of communities, In Quist, J., Wittmayer, J., Umpfenbach, K. and Bauler, T. (2013) *Pathways, Transitions and Backcasting for Low-Carbon and Sustainable Lifestyles. Sustainable Consumption Transitions Series, Issue 3 Proceedings of SCORAI Europe & InContext Workshop, 7-8 October 2013, Rotterdam. The Netherlands*.

Wittmayer, J., M. Mock, F. van Steenbergen, S. Baasch, I. Omann & N. Schäpke (2013) Taking stock – Three years of addressing societal challenges on community level through action research. Pilot specific synthesis report. Deliverable 4.5. InContext: EU ENV.2010.4.2.3-1 grant agreement n° 265191.

Wittmayer, J.M., N. Schäpke, F. van Steenbergen, I. Omann (in press) Making sense of sustainability transitions locally. How action research contributes to addressing societal challenges. Critical Policy Studies. DOI: 10.1080/19460171.2014.957336

Wittmayer, J.M. & N. Schäpke (2014) Action, Research and Participation: Roles of Researchers in Sustainability Transitions. Sustainability Science. Online first. DOI: 10.1007/s11625-014-0258-4

## B3 | The community arena in Agniesebuurt – Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Frank van Steenbergen

### Context

Agniesebuurt is home to around 4100 residents and is often characterized as a “vulnerable” neighbourhood (or as one of the acronyms like ‘deprived’ or ‘marginalized’) in the North of Rotterdam. It is located near the central train station of the city, and it is rather atypical compared to other neighbourhoods in Rotterdam. It has two distinguishing features: a) 80% of the homes are owned by one social housing corporation named Havensteder, b) there are no traditional citizens organisations or public facilities (like e.g. educational garden, community centre) which are funded and/or maintained by the district municipality. These features gave the district municipality the feeling that they could not get a grip on what was going on in this neighbourhood and whom to involve when it comes to the future development of the neighbourhood. Simultaneously, this future development was under pressure due to recent budget cuts and the economic crises as a whole. For example, the largest financial stakeholder, the social housing corporation, had seen several layoffs and a long-term hold on investments. With the main party in the neighbourhood being paralysed, the district municipality was left with the question: who could be an initiating party in the neighbourhood in tackling and adapting to future challenges? What would be appropriate actions that should be undertaken? In addition, the district municipality was under enormous pressure and was being dismantled in early 2014 (this decision was made public in May 2013).

In 2012 transition researchers were asked to design a tailor-made TM-approach to tackle this challenge at a symbolic site: a neglected public square / playground that should be redeveloped. The aim of the project was threefold: 1) to map out the level of participation of the local communities, 2) to engage with active citizens and entrepreneurs who want to envision and work towards a sustainable future for the neighbourhood and 3) use the playground as a means for more spin-offs of co-creation processes in the near future.

### Process

As in Finkenstein, see [B1 | The community arena in Finkenstein, Austria](#), and Carnisse, see [B2 | The community arena in Carnisse – Rotterdam, The Netherlands](#) and [C1. Veerkracht – a transition lab in Rotterdam, The Netherlands](#), these researchers again experimented with Transition Management on the scale of an urban neighbourhood. However, this time the focus was on the micro-scale of a public square. The redevelopment of this square/playground was framed as a transition experiment<sup>8</sup>: a project that takes a societal challenge as a starting point. There were the economic and ecological crises, the interplay between governmental reform and vibrant and active communities and the withdrawal of the welfare state. For the district municipality the experiment could provide an understanding of the neighbourhood and its transformative potential. The aim of the transition experiment, the physical redevelopment of the square, was twofold:

<sup>8</sup> See for more information on ‘transition experiments’: Suzanne van den Bosch and Jan Rotmans (2008). Deepening, Broadening and Scaling up. A framework for steering transition experiments. Essay 02, Delft/Rotterdam: Knowledge Centre for Sustainable System Innovations and Transitions (KCT).

- To map out the level engagement and social ties of inhabitants in and with the neighbourhood, and to explore whether the square could be self-maintained by neighbouring inhabitants or a hybrid group of inhabitants and social entrepreneurs.
- To test whether it could create spin-off co-creation processes for future neighbourhood development and engagement. This co-creation (between governmental services, district municipality, politicians, housing corporation and local entrepreneurs, inhabitants and communities) was seen as crucial for meeting future demands.



*Figure 1: Arena group*

With these aims in mind, the transition researchers choose for a participatory approach and used some of the elements of the transition arena-methodology. This led to 6 subsequent phases:

- Phase 1 (March 2012 – July 2012): Setting up parameters for co-creation with the district municipality and an architect. The transition team also includes a representative of the housing corporation Havensteder.
- Phase 2 (May 2012 – September 2012): Transition analysis: in-depth interviews (about 11) and informal talks with residents, several observations and desk study.
- Phase 3 (October 2012 – July 2013): Participatory group sessions with residents, (social) entrepreneurs, public officials, group of kids (ages 4 – 12), group of youngsters (ages 14 – 18), the transition team and other local stakeholders (see figure 1). Groups fluctuated between 15 – 35 participants. In these sessions, researchers started with setting the scene from a broad historical perspective on the whole neighbourhood and in the following sessions narrowed down to collecting ideas and desires from inhabitants for the square. Ideas were translated into several designs and were presented to the inhabitants and users of the square. The sessions were facilitated by an architect, a public official and a transition researcher.

- Phase 4 (March 20013 – September 2013): Consisted of realizing funds, formalizing the design for the square, finding ways through bureaucratic-relations, etc. This phase was an ongoing endeavour throughout the whole process, but was most intense in these months.
- Phase 5 (End of 2013 – current): The physical development and realization of the square (the square is almost finished, when writing this piece in June 2014).
- Phase 6 (ongoing): This phase is focused on using the previous phases to create spin-offs and look for options for self-maintenance of the square. It is hampered by the fact that the involvement of transition researchers stopped at the end of 2013 and that in the meanwhile the district municipality has been dismantled. Currently a new local government structure is being set up at this district level.

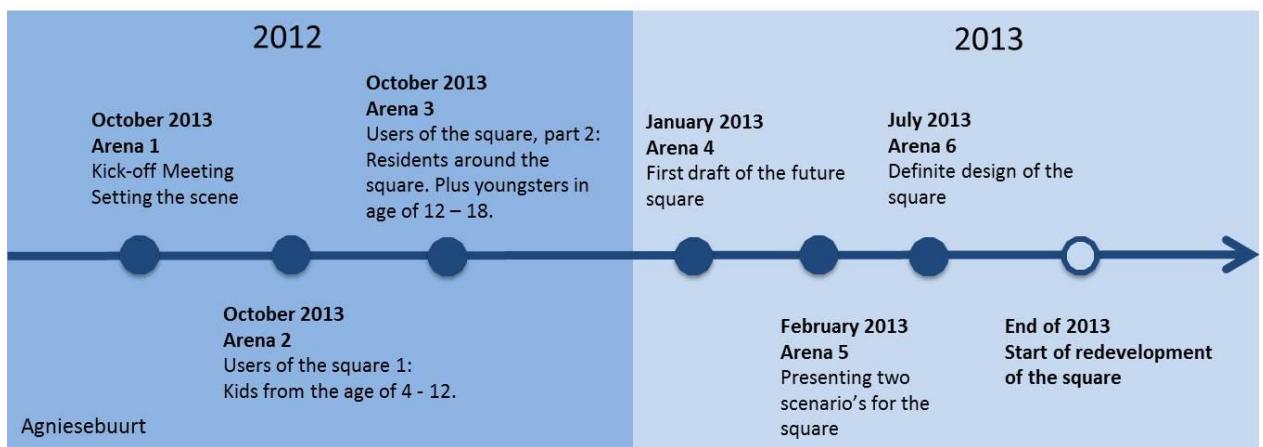


Figure 2: Overview of phase 3: participatory group sessions

### Outcomes

The transition experiment in Agniesebuurt had several outcomes. First, and foremost, it led to the physical redevelopment of a neglected and unknown public square without a formal name (it is referred to as the Schout Heynric-square since it is located at the Schout Heynric-street). It is now being built as a green, safe and playful square for neighbourhood residents of all ages. Three guiding principles were formulated during the participatory sessions and were intensely discussed: the square should be green (more trees, more urban gardening and less parking), child friendly (especially for the ages 4 – 12) and it needed to be safe (no drugs, vandalism and harassment). In the end residents were very proud of the definitive square (“is this really going to be our square? It’s so beautiful?”, a resident asked during the sixth session). It remains to be seen if there also enthusiastic about the end-result (since the square is not formally completed).



Figure 3: Schout Heynric Square

Next to this main result, it also proved insightful for other outcomes, such as casting light on the historical dimension of the square and the Agniesebuurt as a whole. The long-term dynamics put current developments in perspective, for example the absence of formally organized residents organisations and collectives of active inhabitants or entrepreneurs. These were actually dismantled during the 1990s but were very active and militant (e.g. squatting and organizing protests) in the previous decades and some individuals were still active (in the neighbourhood or other parts of Rotterdam). Although these more traditional structures were absent, there was a lot of activity in the neighbourhood such as several community activities aimed at e.g. a healthy and green environment and the self-maintenance of a community centre. There was also a lot of willingness and engagement to develop new ideas for future activities and developments in the neighbourhood. So the assumption the district municipality had in the beginning (little activity and invisible community initiatives) proved to be ill-informed.



Figure 4: Arena meeting with children

Other outcomes where insights in the symbolic relevance of such a small square: what are the micro-dynamics? How can one ‘read’/perceive this square? How is this square experienced by different type of actors? And how is it used and how does it work? Take for instance the session with the main users of the square (kids from the age of 4 – 12), which provided a glimpse of the mind of a child (nothing about safety or green, they wanted a cola-fountain and a swimming pool with a gigantic slide). Lastly, the experiment proved to be symbolic in the sense that researchers and other people involved could connect it to broader discussions concerning urban and neighbourhood development (and broader societal issues as a whole). To take something this tangible and concrete, made that different local stakeholders could relate to these discussions. It proved to be a means to relate short term action to long term change and to connect the micro setting of a local square to a global context. It however remains unclear until this date whether the redevelopment of the square is capable of creating more spin-offs that play into these debates and discussions about the future development of Agniesebuurt and/or the city of Rotterdam as a whole. Yes, it can be used as a symbol, but how powerful is it indeed? Does it endure?

***Further reading on Rotterdam-Agniesebuurt:***

*Deelgemeente Noord Rotterdam (2014) Noord is Noord. Een boekje vol inspiratie.*



## C | Neighbourhood transition lab

## C1. Veerkracht – a transition lab in Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Frank van Steenbergen, Julia Wittmayer

Veerkracht Carnisse is a four year project in the Rotterdam neighbourhood of Carnisse. Veerkracht stands for resilience and it is a consortium project with a wide range of transdisciplinary activities aimed at empowering local inhabitants of this neighbourhood.

### **Context**

Carnisse is a neighbourhood of the harbour city Rotterdam, the Netherlands. In 2007, Carnisse (as part of Rotterdam South) was listed as one of the 40 neighbourhoods nationwide that the national government labelled as ‘neighbourhoods of special interest’ (*‘aandachtswijken’*). These neighbourhoods are all seen as having problems in multiple domains (social, physical and economic) and receive special attention and funds from the national government. For more background information about Carnisse, see [the article on the community arena in Carnisse]. In line with this trend also the Veerkracht Carnisse-consortium is funded by the national government for the period from 2011 to 2015. The money is distributed via the municipality of Rotterdam<sup>9</sup> who acts as the sponsor.

Neighbourhood development in the Netherlands has a rich tradition and has known several waves of popularity for policy- and market based interventions. Throughout these waves of attention the geographic entity of ‘the neighbourhood’ has become increasingly popular. For example, in the last decades several regeneration strategies have been carried out in deprived areas. Most of these strategies can be typified as being top-down policies with a strong emphasis on physical and economic pillars. For example the strategic demolition and renewal of housing that often displaces poorer residents and results in an influx of more affluent people in a neighbourhood (i.e. gentrification). The focus is typically on safety and security (as testified by indicators such as the safety and security index of Rotterdam) and on efforts to increase the level of (experienced) social cohesion (e.g. through the support for street barbecues). Not only the constant questioning of the effectiveness of such policy- and market based interventions, also the economic crisis and the accompanying budget cuts put these kinds of interventions under severe pressure. In addition, the Netherlands is seeing the surge of the ‘participation society’, ideas related to the ‘Big Society’ in the UK.

This however brings a city like Rotterdam in a predicament: How to develop neighbourhoods like Carnisse? How to invest in such neighbourhoods? Or: How to engage inhabitants and facilitate community initiatives? What we encounter in Carnisse is that dominant actors nervously cling on to the old way of thinking and developing: They combine top-down developing with a call for ‘active citizenship’ as an answer to the budget cuts. In parallel, we witness a growing social movement of

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<sup>9</sup> The process of negotiating and lobbying between the consortium and the city of Rotterdam took almost four years. With the municipality of Rotterdam drastically cutting costs, there was a rather long period of uncertainty about whether this funding would be accorded or not. Only in August 2011 was an agreement reached. The funding was matched with EU-funding under the FP7-project InContext (Grant Agreement: 265191) which allowed the team to include some extra activities, to stay longer in the neighbourhood and to be more flexible with regard to playing into local dynamics..

inhabitants and social entrepreneurs reclaiming public spaces. They engage in innovative practices in the urban public sphere, like for instance urban gardening, community bonds, local currencies, co-creation of public squares and self-maintenance of community buildings. These niche trends are based on alternative paradigms other principles and appear to be better suited to current civic demands and socio-economic and ecological circumstances.

Veerkracht Carnisse is a transition lab that tries to find answers to the questions above, by connecting the search for new ways of neighbourhood developing, with questions of local democracy and governance, the establishment of new networks, and innovating practices. The underlying question of Veerkracht is: What is the transformative capacity of social innovation on the scale of an urban deprived neighbourhood? In answering this question Veerkracht also tries to explore pertinent societal questions when it comes to the more social aspect of sustainability and connections with broader debates around social cohesion, inclusiveness, empowerment and future demands and rights.



*Figure 1: Overview Veerkracht*

### **Process**

Veerkracht Carnisse started in 2011 and ends in the midst of 2015. It is a consortium of four partners: Rotterdam Vakmanstad, Creatief Beheer, Bureau Frontlijn and DRIFT:

- [Rotterdam Vakmanstad](#) (Skillcity) focuses on working with primary schools and their pupils in deprived neighbourhoods. The children develop certain skills (i.e. verbal, handicrafts, intellectual, mental) through lessons in judo, cooking, gardening and philosophy. These skills are considered relevant for their societal participation and integration. The main methodology is called 'Fysieke Integriteit' (Physical Integrity) and is applied in three primary schools in Carnisse.
- [Creatief Beheer](#) (Creative Maintenance) focuses on the revitalisation of neglected public spaces in cooperation with the local population. The aim is to stimulate self-maintenance of public spaces, such as squares or parks by encouraging and facilitating local inhabitants. They develop 'citynature', parks and gardens and steadily build more green and healthy urban neighbourhoods. In Carnisse, they run a community garden (de Carnissetuin) and transformed a neglected tennis court in an educational garden. The main methodology is called 'Tuinman in de wijk' (Gardener in the neighbourhood).

- [Bureau Frontlijn](#) (Frontline Office) is a project organization of the municipality of Rotterdam that searches for solutions for families with multiple problems in deprived city neighbourhoods and districts. They work via a so called ‘frontline approach’ putting experiences of individuals central. They have a strong focus on care, youth and education. They visit families in their own homes and support them in developing capabilities and skills (e.g. household administration, children upbringing skills).
- [DRIFT](#) is a research institute at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam focusing on (action) research, consultancy and education on sustainability transitions. As part of this consortium, DRIFT researchers apply and further develop the transition management methodology as described in this dossier [especially: reference to Carnisse community arena]. In addition, it (reflexively) monitors and builds a methodology of the Veerkracht-project.

All organizations can be seen as niches in their respective domains, not only in Rotterdam. They engage in practices and uphold principles that are not the mainstream. The Veerkracht project responds to the call for transformative and innovative practices that can address the challenges in deprived neighbourhoods in Rotterdam. It connects the local day-to-day with broader societal issues. The goals of are 1) to boost the resilience of the neighbourhood, 2) to empower children, families and communities and 3) to gain insights in necessary reforms of the current policy-regime. These goals were rather broad and in the negotiations with the founder and the sponsor, the consortium resisted these goals being broken down in numbers only. They demanded a space for experimentation, to prove that their individual methodologies but also their combined effort can lead to the goals set. The shared target group of the combined actions is the youth and their direct families and (institutional) networks in Carnisse.



*Figure 2: Gardening in the Carnissetuin*

The Veerkracht-project is divided in the following six phases. The start-up phase (September 2011 – November 2012) was about doing an analysis and exploration of Carnisse. Activities were getting acquainted, doing data-analyses, interviews, mapping actors, individuals, networks, needs, interests, etc. Phase first (November 2011 – January 2012) build on this and was about starting up network activities and exploring what kind of activities would be fitting for Carnisse. It was also about building relations of trust and asking questions like: What are the most fruitful activities and how do we launch these? How can we deploy the resources most effectively? And how can we connect to ongoing projects and initiatives in Carnisse? The second phase (January 2012 – May 2012) was about starting up core activities, such as the activities on the educational garden, primary schools, community centre, community arena, tennis club, parental coaching, etc. In the third phase (May 2012 – mid 2013) Veerkracht tried to broaden the network and increase the portfolio of activities, while in phase 4 (Mid 2013 – mid 2014) synergy was applied in several successful activities of the project, while others were scaled up (get more people involved). The last, and current, fifth phase (mid 2014 – mid 2015) is about creating certain methods and make activities transferable to inhabitants, professionals and civil servants. In other words: how can we sustainably embed the activities in the context of Carnisse?

The arrival of Veerkracht in 2011 came at a salient moment in Carnisse. Against the background of budget cuts and failures of previous participatory processes in Carnisse, the framing of Veerkracht proved difficult. Why did this consortium receive money while the inhabitants were confronted with budget cuts everywhere? They had just seen two of their community centres being closed down and several of their welfare and youth workers laid-off. Expectations with regard to the work of the Veerkracht consortium was critically scrutinized. The open nature of project (in terms of outcome) also led to a certain amount of scepticism by local policy makers (What is new or different? What will the process deliver in concrete results?). Other barriers in the process of getting the Veerkracht project approved and started were the bureaucratic accountability relations (e.g. conflicting interests) and the high fluctuation amongst decision makers.



Figure 3: Doing homework

Starting up the core activities (phase 2) helped making Veerkracht more visible in the neighbourhood and gain the trust of the local communities, though the sphere of competition and mistrust was still tangible. Some activities were seen as a sort of add-on to current activities in the neighbourhood, e.g. the development of a community garden, a participatory process focusing on the future quality of life of Carnisse [link to Carnisse community arena] and primary schools activities. Other activities were more welcomed such as an intervention supporting local change-agents to re-open the community centre, or the reopening of the Carnissetuin in a cooperative manner (the latter in phase 3).

Since the beginning of phase 4, Veerkracht has a more clear reputation in Carnisse: it is increasingly seen as a hub for new networks and innovative activities. Currently, the Veerkracht consortium is trying to arrive at more synergy between all the activities in Carnisse as well as figuring out how to transfer and embed their current activities in Carnisse.

### ***Outcomes***

Because of the practice oriented approach the main outcomes that are anticipated are tangible and direct outcomes for the people in Carnisse, like the reopening of the Carnissetuin and the community centre. But also, results like the greening of several streets in Carnisse, the parental coaching of dozens of families, several completed lessons by numerous classes in 'ecosophy' or the future vision of Carnisse 2030 ('blossoming Carnisse'). Next to these countable outcomes, monitoring interviews show that there were also more indirect outcomes like the creation of new networks in Carnisse, participants of Veerkracht activities acquired new skills and capabilities, inhabitants and professionals acquired new insights and knowledge about the neighbourhood. Next to these tangible project outcomes, the practice of Veerkracht also offered a number of additional insights. Firstly related to the internal collaboration of the four niche-parties which wasn't always constructive. Since the four partners, like other niche players, are used to a rather hostile environment (aiming to conserve the mainstream), they have internalized the need to prove themselves and to dismiss others (whether this be opposites or kindred spirits). They often expressed this competition in a discursively violent way, complicating the internal collaboration in the consortium. In two years' time there has been a significant increase in the synergies within the consortium and the activities. However, due to differences in viewpoints and experiences there is still a lot of ground to be won here.



*Figure 4: In the glasshouse*

A second insight is related to the growth and development of niche-practices. The Veerkracht-project shows us that innovation on local scale is a discursive act, rather than a practice based one. With all niche parties, discursively building a need for their practices as well as the novelty thereof, the carrying out of these practise is left to either interns or in-experienced practitioners. Whether this choice is actually part of the novel practice or not, it makes the new practice prone to criticism by others, which in its turn feeds the competitive and radical discursive nature of these niches.



*Figure 5: In the garden*

Thirdly, the Veerkracht project is a vivid example of the contradictions and the fluidity of urban transitions. The clash of paradigms and principles between alternative niches and the mainstream regime is painfully apparent: inclusiveness, cooperation, network-structure, community-based and organic development contrasts with controlling, accountability, administrative elite, vertical-structured, managing problems and repression. The Veerkracht-project show signs of a network-type intervention striving for a balance between self-organization, community-based and professional-led

projects. As such Veerkracht is a transition lab for a number of issues: new kinds of neighbourhood development, financial constructions, evaluative evidence, changing roles and relationships between actors (such as local government, 'civil society', communities, entrepreneurs) etc.

### **Further reading on Veerkracht:**

Bureau Frontlijn (2009) *Meegroeien van achterstandsgroepen*. Gemeente Rotterdam, Bureau Frontlijn. Rotterdam

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Creatief Beheer (2012) *10 jaar Creatief Beheer. 2012 het jaar van de Tuinman (M/V)*. Creatief Beheer, Rotterdam

Oosterling, H. (2010) *Woorden als daden. Rotterdam Vakmanstad/Skillcity 2007-2009*. Jap Sam Books, Heijningen

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Oosterling, H. & Griffioen, A. ed. (2013). *Wat heet lichamelijke opvoeding? Ecosociale educatie op de Brede school*. Jap Sam Books, Heijningen

Van Steenbergen, F. & J. Wittmayer (2014) *Wijkteams als heilige graal? Zes aandachtspunten voor gemeenten in transitie*. DRIFT-uitgave. E2014.01.

Van Steenbergen, F. & J. Wittmayer (2014) *Blind geloof in wijkteams vraagt om nuancingering*. Sociale vraagstukken online.

Van Steenbergen, F. & Wittmayer, J. (2012) *Carnisse in transitie? Een verkenning van het verleden, het heden en de toekomst van een Rotterdamse wijk*. 30 oktober 2012. DRIFT-uitgave. E 2012.05.

Veerkracht website: [www.veerkrachtcarnisse.nl](http://www.veerkrachtcarnisse.nl)

*Transition management has also been used in medium-sized cities in North-Western Europe for supporting these cities in reaching their CO<sub>2</sub>-mitigation targets. This process was funded by European Interreg IVb funding, as part of the MUSIC project. Transition management was implemented by the municipalities with guidance by a transition coach.*



## D | Urban Transition Arenas

***Further reading on transition management (for climate mitigation) in cities:***

Nevens, F., Frantzeskaki, N., Loorbach, D., Gorissen, L. (2013). *Urban Transition Labs: co-creating transformative action for sustainable cities*, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 50, 111-122.

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Roorda, C. (2013) *Transitiemanagement voor duurzame stedelijke ontwikkeling. Ervaringen van vijf Europese steden*. Gebiedsontwikkeling.nu.

Roorda, C. and Wittmayer, J., (2014). *Transition Management in five European cities – an evaluation*. DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam. (online at drift.eur.nl)

Roorda, C., Wittmayer, J., Steenbergen, F. van, Frantzeskaki, N., Loorbach, D and Henneman, P. (forthcoming). *Transition Management In Urban Context – guidance manual*. DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

Wittmayer, J., Frantzeskaki, N., Van Steenbergen, F., Roorda, C. & P. Henneman (2012) *Towards an urban change agents' analysis method: Experiences from five European cities*. DRIFT Working paper 1/2012.

## D1 | Aberdeen in transition: a journey towards 2050

Chris Roorda, Julia Wittmayer

### Context

Aberdeen is the third largest city of Scotland, home to over 210.000 inhabitants. Industrial activity was historically characterised by the fishing, paper, ship-building and textile industries, and currently revolves around the activities of the North Sea oil and gas industry: it is the oil & gas capital of Europe. The city is also known for being the 'Granite City', with the majority of its buildings being made from granite sourced from local quarries.

The Aberdeen City Council aims to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions by 42% by 2020 (relative to 2008). A sustainability vision for Aberdeen was presented in 2011 and inspired policy officers, but not the population. Between 2011 and 2015, participation in the MUSIC project gave Aberdeen the opportunity to work on its ambitious climate agenda together with change-agents from the city. A transition management approach was implemented in tandem with other policy efforts, such as the implementation of a carbon management plan, an adaptation plan and a sustainable energy action plan.



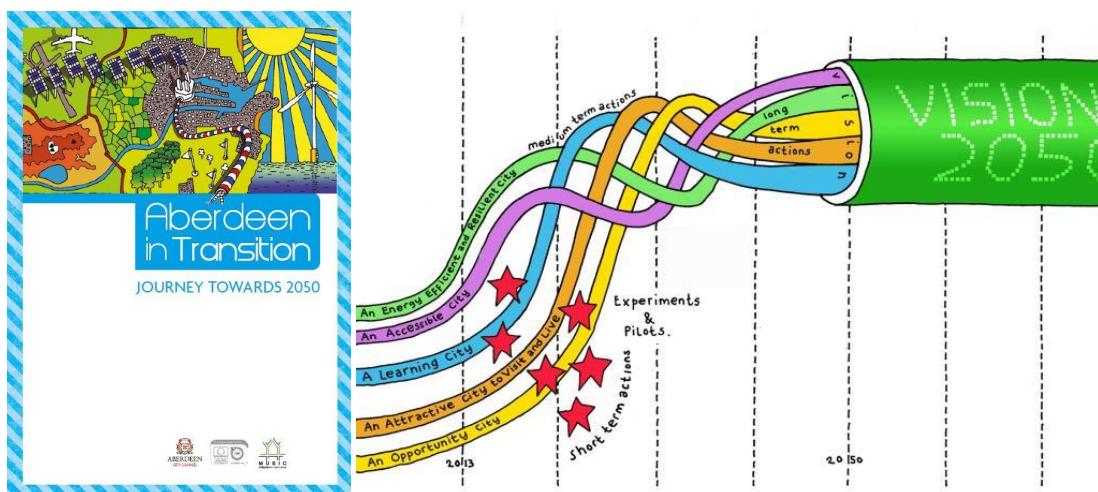
Figure 1: Scenery of Aberdeen

### Process

In May 2011, a project team was formed, consisting of three officers from the environmental policy department and an external transitions expert from DRIFT. At the offset the team worked extensively on a systems analysis: collecting data from existing policy documents and plans, performing an actor analysis and conducting interviews with potential process participants. Subsequently, the team analysed the data they had collected, in order to draft a historical analysis and an overview of the challenges at hand. While working on this, they shifted perspectives: from aiming to anchor the oil-industry for the city's prosperity, towards seeking possibilities to maintain and expand the city's prosperity beyond oil dependency.

Informed by the actor analysis and subsequent interviews, the project team invited participants from the city to form the ‘arena group’ that would play a central role in the transition management process. The selection was based on whether the potential participants fulfilled all or most of the following criteria: (1) affected by or strongly affect the energy transition (2) able to provide information, resources & expertise (3) can control & influence implementation (4) can provide innovative ideas and activities (5) can potentially play a role in the energy transition. At the first two arena meetings in June and September 2011, participants were asked to reflect on the systems analysis and to identify principles for guiding action and co-operation towards a sustainable Aberdeen. The discussions acknowledged the need to decouple the city’s growth from carbon growth. Some participants questioned whether “oil rules the city” and argued for building a new socio-economic fabric extending beyond the current linkage of urban growth with the fossil fuel based energy industry. Mobility was also introduced as a major topic for discussion. After the first meeting, the project team reconsidered the composition of the arena group for two reasons: doubts were raised whether the participants fitted to the profile of change-agents, as the selection had a bias towards actors already strongly involved in the energy sector; and policy officers and academic actors were overrepresented. Therefore, efforts were made before the second and subsequent meetings to invite new and more diverse participants.

The guiding principles were revised and enriched in the third and fourth arena meetings that took place in October 2011 and May 2012. The arena group identified two time horizons: 2030 to increase the urgency for possible actions, and 2050 to imagine the era when the oil industry has left Aberdeen. The group agreed upon five principles: Aberdeen as an opportunity city; Aberdeen as an attractive city to visit and live in; Aberdeen as a learning city; Aberdeen as an accessible city; Aberdeen as an energy efficient and resilient city. For each guiding principle, a narrative was created from a synthesis of statements, ideas and arguments from the arena group, which together embody a vision that described the practices, lifestyle and features of a sustainable Aberdeen in 2050.



*Figure 2: Visualisation used in the Aberdeen 2050 vision*

By the end of 2011, a number of changes had taken place in the project team. The project leader left and was initially replaced by a substitute; it was only by the end of 2012 that a new one was appointed. At the same time, the transitions expert was replaced by a colleague and an additional external process facilitator from Robert Gordon University Aberdeen was hired. The modified team then took up the process by working on agenda-setting and further engagement.

Three subsequent arena meetings used the backcasting methodology to identify, select and elaborate pathways that bridge the envisioned future to the present. In May 2013, an agenda-setting meeting marked the shift from development to implementation. The meeting involved 20 additional actors invited by the arena participants. Using the pathways as a starting point, a portfolio of 52 ideas for transition experiments was compiled, six of which were taken forward by project groups (see outcomes).

Between May and August of 2013, each of the project groups met to further develop their respective transition experiments, ahead of a joint project group meeting (September 2013). Furthermore, a steering group was set up to oversee the future progress of the Aberdeen MUSIC project, consisting of 5 arena participants and 5 members of the Environmental Policy team from the Aberdeen City Council. This group also performed a mapping exercise to recognise what projects, organisations and strategies were active across Aberdeen, and to which ones the process could be linked.

In December 2013, the ‘Sustainable Aberdeen Summit’ was organised to present the work from the Aberdeen MUSIC project. This event brought together over 50 stakeholders from different backgrounds – business and transport through to policy and education. The aim of the summit was to share the project’s vision and guiding principles, and to communicate the underlying narrative and philosophy – inspiring people in their own work, setting up networks and forming new projects, and contributing to transition experiments brought forward by the arena group. The Summit also saw the launch of the magazine publication, ‘Aberdeen In Transition: Journey Towards 2050’, which summarizes the problem definition, vision and the portfolio of the transition experiments that had been developed.

### **Outcomes**

The transition management process in Aberdeen has laid the foundations for new partnerships and initiatives. By the end of 2013, it had engendered six project groups, each of which aims to elaborate one of the transition experiments that had been prioritised in the agenda setting meeting. These groups involve arena participants and newly engaged actors, and are facilitated to a limited extent by the city administration, which stays in contact with participants, provides space for meetings, suggests relevant contacts and organizes inter-group exchanges by means of a newsletter and joint meetings.

Three of these project groups focus on education: one on primary education (developing an education package for primary school pupils on energy and sustainability), one on secondary education (assisting high school students and their families to monitor and ultimately decrease their energy use), and one for secondary school and higher education (promoting sustainable living for students). The other three project groups work on a ‘remote working hub’ (a series of trial days

testing the concept of remote working hubs), ‘transport’ (developing an e-forum on sustainable transport), and ‘celebrate the streets’ (developing an event on low carbon transport and alternative uses for streets).

The participants dubbed 2014 the ‘implementation year’, and it is expected to show more tangible outcomes. In spite of the loss of momentum in 2012 and the doubts raised by the arena group about the lack of resources (time, capacities) for implementation, the process has spurred spin-off projects and brought together a (still growing) network of committed actors to realize these.

The transition management process has led to a new way of thinking about the sustainable future of Aberdeen, both within the city administration and among the participants. Increasingly, others join in reflections that go “beyond the era of the fossil energy industry”. While the main focus is the reduction of carbon emissions, this holistic approach also considers the social and economic aspects of sustainability. This thinking features in the emergent vision of Aberdeen in 2050<sup>10</sup> as well as in the projects. The project groups and the magazine ‘Aberdeen In Transition: Journey Towards 2050’ (online and hard-copy) inspired others to take part in working towards a sustainable future in Aberdeen.

A final outcome from the transition management process is the opening of a dialogue between policy makers, change agents from the city, scientists and community representatives to rethink current and future pathways for Aberdeen. The project nurtured partnerships and new connections between participants and the city administration that will remain in place. If this mode of dialogue persists, it can foster the engagement needed for realizing a sustainable Aberdeen. The new process design for the Strategic Energy Action Plan (SEAP) does suggest the persistence of this mode of dialogue: a policy officer stated that they now enter “this process with a genuine open mind” such that “people are involved from the beginning and feel that they can really contribute”.

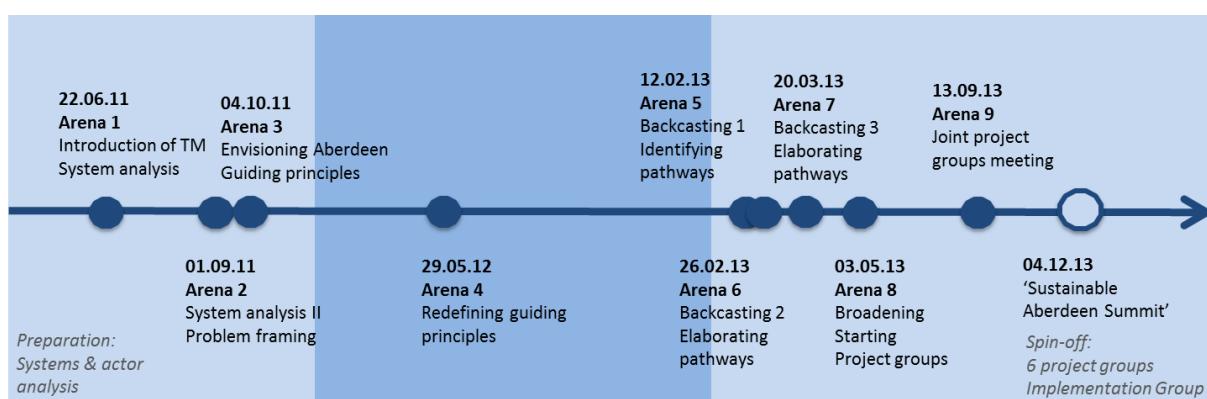


Figure 3: Timeline of the arena meetings in Aberdeen

<sup>10</sup> Available online at <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?ID=54190&sID=22343>

\*This text is also part of an evaluation report of the Interreg IVb-funded MUSIC project: Roorda, C. and Wittmayer, J., (2014). *Transition Management in five European cities – an evaluation*. DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

***Further reading on Aberdeen:***

Aberdeen City Council (2013). [Aberdeen in Transition - journey towards 2050](#).

Website MUSIC-project in Aberdeen: [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/musicproject/](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/musicproject/)

## D2 | Creating a climate for transition in Ghent, Belgium

*Chris Roorda, Julia Wittmayer, Cathy de Bruyne*

### **Context**

Ghent is the second-largest city in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium, and home to over 247.000 inhabitants. It is characterised by an impressive historical centre, a big and lively student community, rich cultural life and significant harbour activities.

Ghent has been active in urban climate governance in various ways. In 1996, it joined the Climate Alliance and from 1998 onwards the city regularly drafted environmental and energy policy plans. Ghent signed the European Covenant of Mayors in 2009, thereby agreeing to curb its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions even beyond the 20% reduction target set by the EU for 2020 and those of both the national and Flemish governments. Moreover, already in 2007, the city council of Ghent expressed its ambition to become climate neutral by 2050.

A specific team was set up within the environmental department, which became strongly oriented towards climate challenges. This move was underlined by two ambitious policy plans regarding energy and climate in 2008. The team's strategy was twofold: "to study" and "to involve/activate". Regarding the latter, the city administration immediately acknowledged that the ambition to become climate neutral could only be achieved by decisive action from all actors in the city. Therefore, in 2009, the Ghent Climate Alliance ('Gents Klimaatverbond') was set up.

In order to explore what a climate neutral future would actually mean and to enable the engagement of a diverse group of actors from the city, Ghent embraced the transition management approach and began a 'climate arena' under the umbrella of the Climate Alliance. This involved seventeen change-agents who were challenged to think and work beyond 'business as usual' and stimulated to take ownership for the ambition of a climate neutral city.



*Figure 1: View of Ghent city centre (photo by Municipality of Ghent)*

## **Process**

At the end of 2010, a project group was constituted to steer and facilitate the implementation of the transition management approach. The team consisted of two officers from the city's environmental department, two transition management experts (from the DRIFT and VITO research institutes) and an external facilitator. The process followed a rather tightly planned schedule: it had to be finished before the city council elections in autumn 2012.

The first months of 2011 were dedicated to the systems analysis, data gathering, interviews, system definition and data structuring. The systems analysis was conducted in considerable detail, taking into account a broad range of sources and making use of several techniques, such as an assessment of social, ecological and economic aspects, a historical sketch and a trend analysis. The analysis created a useful overview of the system, identifying problem areas and city trumps that could be used for future scenarios, as well as highlighting interlinkages between environmental, economic and social themes.

At the same time, an actor analysis was performed to identify interviewees for the systems analysis and potential participants for the climate arena. This resulted in the selection of a core arena group of seventeen members. People concerned with the future of their city, who either held innovative ideas or were open to innovative ideas and could reinforce these, were selected, with a wide variety in terms of age, gender and backgrounds – for example, a social youth worker, an environmental scientist, a nature conservation NGO member, actors from the cultural sector, students and staff members from Ghent University (UGent), SME entrepreneurs, and a harbour administrator.

Insights from the interviews and desk research were presented during the first arena meeting in May 2011. The discussion about the current 'state of Ghent' and its challenges in relation to climate neutrality eventually revolved around the seven 'trumps' of the city<sup>11</sup>. Discussing the analysis contributed to a broadening of the problem perception from a narrow focus on climate and energy towards a more holistic view. Additionally, the sketch of the city's historical developments enabled to highlight parallels to the contemporary state and to create the feeling that change is possible, also in the future.

In the second arena meeting (June 2011), participants defined basic principles for their city to become sustainable by 2050, taking the systems analysis and the problem definition as starting points. A third arena meeting (July 2011) focused on the actual envisioning of Ghent 2050 in a vivid image and an accompanying narrative. A visual harvesting artist animated the session to stimulate a visionary mindset. In a follow-up session with a smaller group, the vision was further elaborated.

The fourth transition arena meeting (September 2011) centred on participatory backcasting to identify transition pathways towards the envisioned future, and to determine milestones and actions for a few of these pathways. Most of these pathways – twenty in total, clustered along the four categories of the vision – were synthesised, interpreted and completed by the transition team. The first category of pathways ('Creating added value locally with an opening to the world') focuses on sustainable production and consumption patterns. The second category ('Ghent, good to live in') relates to urban planning in terms of city greening and the creation of a water network as well as to

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<sup>11</sup> The trumps identified are: 'Authentic city', 'Labour city', 'Water city', 'Knowledge city', 'Livable city', 'Sympathetic city', 'Energetic city'

the reorganisation of mobility. The pathways of the third category ('Energetic city: intelligent cycles') are concerned with decreasing energy demand, energy efficiency, renewable energy and closed material cycles. The last category ('Ghent's citizens feel at home in their city') centres on the activation of citizens to work towards a more sustainable city.

For the fifth transition arena (October 2011), a few additional participants were invited because of their link to the themes of the transition pathways. The meeting aimed at a prioritisation of transition pathways by the arena group. Five participants took leadership for one path and chaired a subgroup to formulate transition experiments that they would actually be willing to realise. Afterwards, extensive personal contact from the transition team with the arena participants on an individual basis led to a more elaborated framing of the transition experiments and the formulation of three additional transition experiments, which laid the basis for future spin-off initiatives (see outcomes).



*Figure 2: Discussions during the 5th transition arena meeting (photo by Peter Van Hoof)*

In late 2011 and early 2012, the environmental department and the arena participants disseminated their ideas and engaged a broader group of actors. The major event organised for this purpose was the Climate Forum (November 2011), to which the arena participants would invite ("headhunt") people who could contribute to the realisation of the emerging transition experiments. As a result, the event was attended by more than a hundred highly motivated people who were informed about the arena results thus far. Additionally, the arena work and results were presented to the city council. These presentations contributed to the uptake of the ambitions from the arena in the election programs of three political parties.

Furthermore, the ideas from the arena were published as fifteen 'transition magazines'<sup>12</sup> to promote the vision of the arena and lobby for support. A variant was made for each of the arena participants, including a photo on the cover and a personal interview, alongside a general introduction to the process and the vision. The magazines were published online (over 20.000 views) and also handed out to the arena participants so they could distribute them in their networks.

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<sup>12</sup> Online at: <http://www.gentsklimaatverbond.be/stad-gent/wat-zeggen-de-gentse-klimaathelden-over-2050>

## **Outcomes**

The climate arena resulted in a number of spin-off initiatives based on the ideas for the transition experiments, most of which were elaborated and implemented in Climate Working Groups (CWGs). These project groups started at, or shortly after, the Climate Forum, and consisted of arena participants and gradually added new actors. The city administration took a supportive, but limited role, thinking along, creating connections and offering logistical support.

Several spin-off initiatives took place in 2012/2013. Furthermore, inspired by the experiences, two additional arena processes started up in different contexts. See table 3 below for a complete overview.

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Relation to arena process</b>	<b>Outreach</b>
<b>Carrot mob</b>	CWG 'consumer pushes the market'	A carrot mob is a form of activism campaign to mobilize consumers to buy goods from one shop to reward its commitments to sustainability. This one-day carrot mob attracted 938 mobbers and made the targeted supermarket invest €10.000 in sustainability measures; it was featured as most successful carrot mob of 2012 on the global movement's website.
<b>Urban farming project with children</b>	Arena participant active in CWG 'city agriculture'	In collaboration with social youth organization; a project with a small group of children, growing and harvesting mushrooms, preparing a soup and having dinner with the children's families
<b>Valorization of sewage water projects</b>	CWG 'valorization of sewage water'	Development of a business case for city district the Old Docs (350 dwellings) on the transport of organic waste through the sewage system and the use of sewage water to produce warmth, biogas, nutrients and water; in 7 meetings with on average 12 participants a business case was developed, which was eventually pursued by 2 project developers. By the end of 2013 the bid for developing the area closed: the winning consortium had adopted these plans in their proposal, so the idea will now be implemented in the development of the Old Docs.
<b>Energy efficiency for businesses</b>	CWG 'energy efficiency for businesses'	A project financed by the City of Ghent aimed at stimulating and guiding SMEs to prompt them to structurally work on energy efficiency; the project started with a group of 10 SMEs. Additionally, this group provided input for the new municipal climate policy.
<b>Blue economy</b>	CWG 'Blue economy'	The ambition was to find a company that would set up an iconic project in line with the Blue-economy principles to enhance ecosystems (see Pauli, 2010). The working group was unsuccessful in finding a focus and involving partners to start up a project.
<b>Green Track</b>	Five art organizations sought connection to arena process and created CWG 'Green Track'	Thus far 30 cultural organizations joined; aim is to monitor CO <sub>2</sub> emissions of the organisations that are participating (including emissions from buildings, transport, consumptions and visitors), to develop an energy action plan and to sensitize visitors; several workshops were held on emission monitoring, sustainable transport and retrofitting. Brussels, Leuven and Antwerpen also participate in this project now.
<b>Mobility arena</b>	In the climate arena, the theme was put on the agenda and the opportunity for the departments to join forces was identified; involves some climate arena participants	The municipal mobility and environmental departments jointly organized an arena process to explore the future of mobility in Ghent, involving 25 participants and several city departments (mobility, environment, spatial planning). This resulted in the launch of the enthusiastically received transition agenda ' <a href="#">The bike of Troy</a> '; regular follow-up meetings in form of mobility cafes, and 3 iconic projects to create support for the envisioned developments, most notably the 'leefstraat' project converting streets in car-free zones full of activity for 1 month (involving 2 streets in 2013 and 10 other streets in 2014).
<b>Transition UGent</b>	Environmental coordinator of the University, participant in the initial arena group,	Arena-process initiated by the University of Ghent to explore how the university could become sustainable; over 120 students, scientists and administrative staff members participated; the resulting transition

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initiated and implemented new arena process	agenda 'Transition UGent – together for a sustainable university' formally became approved by the board of the university; spin-off activities are now starting up; sustainability platform is established as follow-up;
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Table 1: overview of spin-off initiatives of the climate arena process. Adapted from (Hölscher 2013).

Next to the transition magazine summarising the insights from the arena group discussions, and the emerging spin-off activities, the climate arena has led to more intangible outcomes.



Figure 3: Covers of transition magazines in Ghent

First, the strategic perspective developed by the climate arena, consisting of the problem structuring, a vision and its pathways, resonates in the city. We can acknowledge that a much broader variety of actors now relate their practices to the climate targets of the city and take a role in the transition (e.g. through the spin-off activities). Furthermore, it has influenced thinking about the future of the city: this is clearest in its uptake on the political level. Three political parties integrated insights from the arena in their political programmes, ultimately contributing to an extra climate budget, a broad range of climate-related measures and a 'top-down meets bottom-up' pillar in the council agreement of the newly established council in 2013.

Secondly, the process empowered the involved actors to pursue the transition they had envisioned. For the participants, the most valuable results of the process were the creation of a new network and contacts. Most of them recounted how envisioning a climate neutral Ghent in 2050 was contagious, inspiring and motivating; several have been motivated to take action or link their activities to the vision. The feeling of being part of a group of like-minded people and the involvement of the city administration and of the alderman has further enhanced the sense of impact, creating joint commitment and support.

Finally, the city administration now seems more ready and able to further the transition. The climate arena process proved valuable in building new bridges between departments (e.g. environment, economy, harbour, mobility, housing, spatial planning) on the issue of climate neutrality. The broad perspective of the systems analysis and the personal involvement of policy officers in the arena discussions made the climate issue relevant for other departments. The process also influenced the attitude and role of the city administration in relation to citizens, businesses, institutions and other organizations in the city. It led to a better understanding of complexity and the broader societal context of the low-carbon challenge. While the city administration still feels insecure with regard to its role in such processes, this process has created more understanding for how others relate to

issues that are of concern to the city administration; and how the city administration can better forge link with agendas and competences of other societal actors.



Figure 4: Timeline of the arena meetings in Ghent

\*This text is also part of an evaluation report of the Interreg IVb-funded MUSIC project: Roorda, C. and Wittmayer, J., (2014). *Transition Management in five European cities – an evaluation*. DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

#### Further reading on Ghent:

Hölscher, K. (2013). *Seeds of change? Evaluating the transition arena for urban climate governance in Ghent and Ludwigsburg*, Master thesis Utrecht University.

Nevens, F., C. Roorda (2014). *A climate of change: A transition approach for carbon neutrality in the city of Ghent (Belgium)*, *Sustainable Cities and Society* (2014), 1–10.  
doi:10.1016/j.scs.2013.06.001.

Maas, S. (2011). *Making sense of complex systems. A systems analysis methodology for Urban Transition Management: the case of Ghent and its climate ambitions*, Master thesis Wageningen University.

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City of Ghent (2012). [De Fiets van Troje](#), Ghent.

Website Gents Klimaatverbond: <http://www.gentsklimaatverbond.be>

## D3 | Tackling the energy transition locally in Ludwigsburg, Germany

Julia Wittmayer, Chris Roorda

### **Context**

Ludwigsburg is a German middle-sized town of about 87.000 inhabitants. Originally a small settlement adjoining the biggest baroque castle in Germany, Ludwigsburg is now a prosperous centre located in the Stuttgart region in the South of Germany.



*Figure 1: Ludwigsburg Market Square (by Todd Martin under Creative Commons License)*

Ludwigsburg signed the Covenant of Mayors and initiated a Local Agenda 21 process in 2001, proof of its ambition to promote sustainability and CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction, as well as to develop citizen participation. The latter can be seen in the Urban Development Concept, which is a long-term participatory process that involves 3-yearly future conferences to discuss relevant topics, targets and strategies with the city society.

Since 2008, this process is hosted by the newly established Department for Sustainable Urban Development (DSUD), a cross-sectional unit that is an immediate subordinate to the Lord Mayor, a driving force for local sustainability and participation since his election in 2003. Ludwigsburg has received several awards in these areas. The city enacts its sustainability policies in the wider context of the national nuclear phase out, as well as the ‘Energiewende’ (the national energy transition); the state of Baden Württemberg, where Ludwigsburg is located, is also governed by a green-led coalition since the last elections in 2011.

Based on insights from their integrated climate change and energy concept, the city administration’s recognition that it could not advance the Energiewende alone (being responsible for only 2% of the total energy use) led to the involvement of others – a transition management process was therefore

started up to complement existing participatory processes. As the methodology of transition management was unknown to the local administration, the initial focus of the transition team was on discerning what transition management could mean for Ludwigsburg and how it related to existing participatory and sustainability-related processes, such as the Urban Development Concept. To this end, the approach was presented to different audiences within and outside the local government. The process has initially been legitimised within the administration as being part of a European cooperation project. Thus, the transition management approach was utilized to inform and deepen the Energy theme in preparation for the next Future Conference. It was framed as a process in which citizens and professionals could dig deeper than in earlier participatory processes, and which would build on the integrated climate change and energy concept. This led to the underlying question: How can the ‘Energiewende’ [Energy transition] be achieved locally in Ludwigsburg?’.

### **Process**

The implementation of the process was located at the DSUD, a department with a high working pressure and competing priorities. A transition team was set up, but no official mandate was sought for the process, meaning that responsibilities and tasks were distributed according to availability. The transition team, which would guide the application of transition management, consisted of two policy officers and rotating trainees from DSUD, the head of the department of civic engagement, a transitions expert, and an external facilitator. Ludwigsburg started the process with a short system sketch based on an internal systems analysis workshop and about 30 interviews with local actors. The latter included citizens, entrepreneurs and professionals that the municipality had been in contact with – they had stood out for their engagement, raised sustainability-related questions, or been indicated by others as interesting in being involve in the process. All interviewees were invited to participate in the process. In a first participatory meeting that took place in November 2011, the transition team presented the project and its goals to all interviewees. The evening was focused on the presentation of the system sketch, which touched on a number of open questions on different aspects of life in Ludwigsburg related to the overall energy topic (e.g. housing, consumption).



*Figure 2: Working Group at the Energy Round Table*

After the kick-off meeting, the arena process took place between March and September 2012, with six meetings involving at least a core of 10 participants with diverse interests and backgrounds. All were committed to the city and sustainability, and most of them were and still are active in local initiatives in the energy field. In the first four meetings, the group developed an inspiring vision of "One day in the life of Ludwig and Ludwiga in 2050", which was accompanied by a more descriptive vision along with visionary images, such as mobility and green spaces. Through an extensive backcasting exercise, the arena group elaborated 21 action fields (their term for pathways), for example, how citizens can be provided a space to combine housing and culture in an innovative and creative way.



*Figure 3: Illustrations taken from the vision document in Ludwigsburg*

In the winter of 2012/2013, three broadening events took place where the vision and the resulting agenda were presented to, discussed and further developed with other city actors. The municipality and the arena members invited a wide range of participants to these events. The first meeting, the Energy Round Table, was the revival of an earlier participatory tool, through which actors interested in the energy topic could meet. The goal was to present the vision and to discuss and further elaborate and concretize the pathways. Another aim was to reach out and involve new actors. This was also done through the 'Future Conference' where energy was discussed as one of the eleven thematic fields of the Urban Development Concept; the goals were similar to the Energy Round Table meeting. A last meeting in February 2013 was the Energy Market of Opportunities, which had the aim of formulating concrete projects.

### ***Outcomes***

The ambition of the administration was to engage the city collectively in furthering the local Energiewende. Throughout the transition management process, some 250 citizens, entrepreneurs, professionals, policy officers and politicians became collaborated and thought about how to achieve the Energiewende locally, either in the transition arena or in one of the broadening events.

The vision and two preliminary pathways were presented to the Lord Mayor as early as July 2012, and the city council had been informed through existing channels, which also served as the main link between the arena and official decision-making processes. In winter 2012, the website 'MeinLb.de' was launched and linked to the arena process. It was meant to motivate and gather activities of

citizens, especially those in search for new collaborators. During the Energy Market of Opportunities, the working group ‘local energy transition’ was formed, consisting of some of the initial arena group members, as well as newly interested persons. At the same meeting, a number of spin-off activities pertaining to one or the other of the 21 pathways were started or prepared. For instance, in autumn 2013 a sustainability exhibition took place, which focused on energy and was developed by the city of Ludwigsburg in collaboration with a communication agency and the input of the working group. Other concrete projects include the development of a ‘sustainable shopping basket’ to raise awareness for sustainable consumption and the energy potential maps, which were developed by the administration to serve as decision-making support.

The substantial learning of the transition team members was also translated into a structural change within the administration, through the setting up a cross-departmental working group energy. Participants valued the process as an opportunity for active engagement, developing new contacts, and gaining insights into the issues most relevant to Ludwigsburg. The atmosphere in the arena was open, friendly and highly productive; participants trusted each other and felt part of a group of like-minded people. They valued knowledge sharing, new contacts, the systems perspective and the potential for developing projects.

Ludwigsburg connected the transition management process to on-going participatory processes, and the Energiewende specifically. By focusing on energy while not ignoring its complex interplay with other topics and sectors, the process increased the attention it received; the local society could connect to, get informed and develop knowledge about it. By blending it into the process of the Urban Development Concept, which is connected to formal decision-making process, Ludwigsburg was assured that the results would be built upon and not get ‘lost’ – as such, the results of the arena process are diffusing.

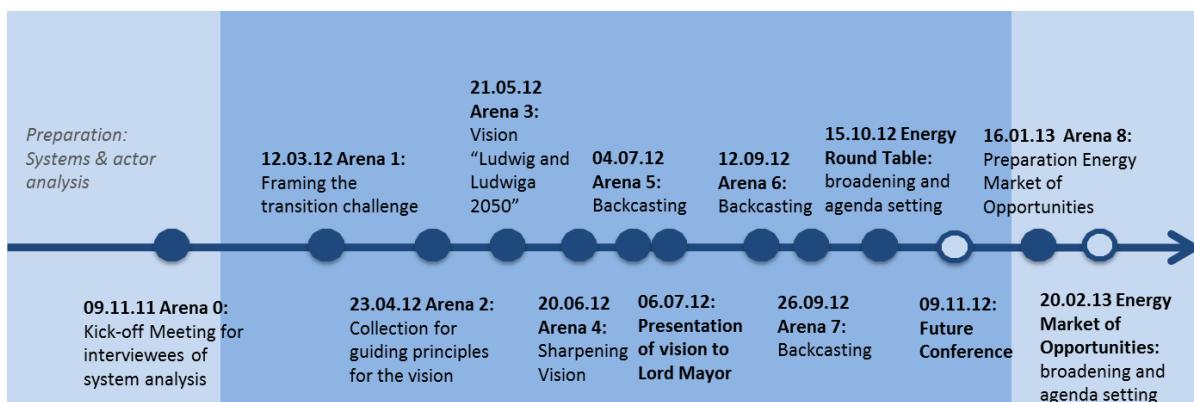


Figure 4: Timeline of the arena meetings in Ludwigsburg

\*This text is also part of an evaluation report of the Interreg IVb-funded MUSIC project: Roorda, C. and Wittmayer, J., (2014). *Transition Management in five European cities – an evaluation*. DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

**Further reading on Ludwigsburg:**

Hölscher, K. (2013). *Seeds of change? Evaluating the transition arena for urban climate governance in Ghent and Ludwigsburg*, Master thesis Utrecht University.

Wittmayer, J., Wenninger, A. & N. Tefrati (2013). *Die Energiewende auf kommunaler Ebene. Innovative Verwaltung* 09/2013: 46-48.

## D4 | Re-imagining local governance: transition management in Montreuil, France

*Julia Wittmayer, Chris Roorda, Wandrille Jumeaux*

### **Context**

Montreuil (France) is the third most populous suburb of Paris with 102.889 inhabitants. In the centre, the wall of peaches (Murs à pêches) is a testament to the city's past as the heart of an agricultural region and a fruit supplier for the whole of France. The city has a long history of immigration, especially from Mali and has become split into two parts – the richer part, Montreuil-Bas, with a direct metro connection to Paris and the poorer part, Montreuil-Haut, with no metro connection, a lot of social housing and lower levels of political engagement. With a history of communist mayors, Montreuil's citizens are highly engaged in social and cultural topics. Its current mayor, Dominique Voynet, is a former French Minister of Environment from the Green Party.



*Figure 1: Scenery of Montreuil*

The city signed the Covenant of Mayors in 2009, and subsequently drew up a Climate Plan and started a Local Agenda 21 process – the progress of both is reported upon annually in a Sustainability Report. The transition management process was expected to contribute to these ongoing activities by, on the one hand, increasing the involvement of local actors in achieving sustainability and, on the other, achieving the CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction objectives of the city (20% reduction and 20% sustainable energy by 2020). Energy poverty is an important topic in the city's context. The mayor and city council gave carte blanche to the civil servants to pursue the process, with the limitation of having no additional public money to support the process or its outcomes.

### **Process**

The implementation of the process and the MUSIC project as such was located within the environmental department. The members of the transition team were working in different municipal departments, namely the environmental and planning departments and the general directorate. The city of Montreuil contracted a local energy agency to support them in coordinating the process; they were initially also supported by a transition expert. Fuelled by a few intensive brainstorm sessions and some 40 interviews with frontrunners, the team formulated a transition analysis. Part of this analysis involved the broadening of the original focus on climate mitigation to include all relevant domains of urban policy making. This broader focus resulted from applying a systems perspective to the situation of Montreuil. The systems analysis covered the following topics: local economy, 'green city', conviviality and participation, soft and peaceful mobility, mixed use development, diversity and social cohesion.

For the first meeting, 25 participants were invited. They were selected for being frontrunners in the field of sustainability or in other social fields, or people difficult to engage in sustainability. The group itself consisted of a mix of backgrounds, for example, energy and climate, environment, architecture, housing, mobility, economy, culture and arts, education, social interaction and international solidarity. During this initial meeting in September 2011, the extensive analysis by the Montreuil transition team was supported and well received – a meeting to pave the way for a transition process in Montreuil. Yet, the transition team was missing the appropriation of the analysis by the arena participants, and therefore designed a special workshop method for the second transition arena in November 2011. This method allowed the participants to redefine parts of the analysis and to be analysts rather than listeners. This resulted in a reformulation of the challenges. For instance, with respect to the "local economy", the transition team had proposed the challenge "how can we develop 'green' economic activities?", this became "how can we relocate the economy and reinforce food self-sufficiency?" and "Is the city the appropriate scale-level to talk about the local economy?". Outcomes from this and the next meeting in January 2012 were collected and fed back to the arena participants in an elaborately designed overview of the transition analysis.

In March 2012, 13 participants met to formulate the vision "Montreuil in 2030" with three main themes, namely a solidary Montreuil, a modest Montreuil and a Montreuil reinforcing local democracy. The guiding focus was on retrofitting, housing diversification and education for change. Each of the themes included several aspects accompanied by a question. One of the aspects of democracy was co-decision, which was accompanied by the question: "which co-decision mechanisms, which simple and appropriate systems can be installed?" The following arena meeting took place in June with 16 participants and focused on collecting and prioritizing ideas. More than 300 ideas resulted from this meeting, and were clustered in different categories, such as possible pathways, orientations, and principles. The prioritization of these ideas took place by distinguishing, on the one hand, between 'old' and 'new' ideas and, on the other hand, between 'easy to realise' and 'more difficult to realise'.



*Figure 2: Output of the problem structuring phase in Montreuil*

The fifth arena meeting in September 2012 stood out as a milestone. It was devoted to a meta-reflection on the process and the relations between municipality and citizens, and led to the formulation of an agreement between both parties to guarantee the continuation of this new constellation. The arena then met to formulate seven 'solution cards', for example, 'share space and knowledge'. Each card focused on a specific challenge, its history, a general pathway including ideas to tackle it, linkages to ongoing municipal and civil processes and initiatives. The cards were illustrated by quotations and slogans. An online platform was used for each of the solution topics for the networking of organisations and ongoing initiatives and actions. In March 2013, the final arena was organized to discuss the future of the group and its importance in moving Montreuil in the desired direction. The transition agenda was drafted at this point to engage and motivate others; it included a short outline of the arena process and an overview of the solution cards. The agenda was then presented and handed over to the mayor of Montreuil during the launch event in June 2013. At the same event, one of the transition experiments, FabLab<sup>13</sup> was opened.

The transition work continued afterwards. In the beginning of October the group gathered to work on the solution cards and to prepare a two-day MUSIC & FabLab Festival at the end of October. This festival gathered about 200 people to give a new impulse to the transition agenda. It saw the elaboration of seven key projects, which were subsequently taken up by the participating citizens and organisations with the assistance of the municipality. To this end, another meeting took place in December 2014. In May 2014, the municipality gathered the group to think further about how to make transition management and the transition arena sustainable for Montreuil.

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<sup>13</sup> A Fab Lab, short for Fabrication Laboratory, is a workshop for digital fabrication that: - is free and open to the public, although direct expenses like materials used maybe charged; - subscribes to the Fab Charter and has its text on display on site and web site; - disposes of a common set of core tools and processes (and maybe even more); - contributes to and/or cooperates with many other Fab Labs and takes part in or leads network initiatives. (<http://www.fablabinternational.org/fab-lab/what-is-it-in-essence>)

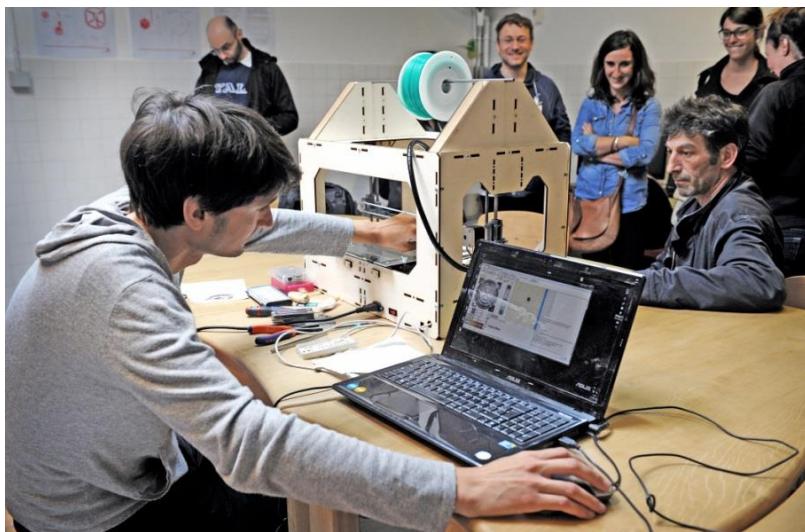
For the future, the city administration is in the process of making an inventory of lessons learned from this transition arena process. Part of this process are creativity sessions to solve the challenges and localize the process guidelines further. The next iteration should be starting by the end of 2014.

### **Outcomes**

In starting the transition process, Montreuil had the ambition to engage local actors in drafting an energy agenda for the city. Throughout the process, this ambition shifted to include new perspectives on local governance and on the functioning of the city administration as such.

Throughout the process, over 200 people in Montreuil became involved through the arena process, action-oriented projects and the two broader events. Subsequent publications further expanded outreach efforts. The process and its outcomes are documented in the transition agenda, which was signed by the mayor and the arena participants, and is available online<sup>14</sup>.

The collaboration of the participants led to the identification of synergies between existing projects. One spin-off project, 'La voie est libre' is picking up on ideas from the 90s, when highways were closed for one Sunday a year and a huge number of initiatives were presented on the road – music, theatre and activities for children. Another spin-off project, the 'Velodrom' is the result of a collaboration between two frontrunners, one working with Roma on agriculture projects and another engaged in a cycling initiative, to initiate bicycle lessons for Roma children, and including a repair shop.



*Figure 3: FabLab in Montreuil*

Seven specific projects sprouted from the later arena meetings and the MUSIC & Fablab festival. Considerable amounts of time and energy were dedicated to these projects, first because of the

<sup>14</sup> See: <http://www.montreuil.fr/agenda-de-transition.pdf>

frontrunners' desire to enter a more concrete phase of the process and, second, because the need was felt to make the outcomes more tangible and comprehensive in Montreuil (both toward the administration and the citizens and communities). Four of the projects are led by participants, these include the following:

- *Hands-on learning center on eco-renovation* : enhancing the skills of Montreuil's craftsmen in the field of eco-renovation through practical experience on a dedicated building.
- *Fablab and School of transition*: using the FabLab not only as a place to create one's own objects, but also to educate Montreuil's inhabitants on transition thinking.
- *Green and Living Roofs* – transforming the roofs of public buildings into places where inhabitants can not only grow food, but can also enjoy a nature together.
- *Mobile information center for eco-renovation in a double-decker bus*: reaching out to people with information about eco-renovation to them and connecting people from different background (craftsmen, private people, etc.).

Two other projects are taken up by the municipality.

- *Re-using vegetable cooking oil for its energetic potential*: the municipality is investigating into the possibility of having a comprehensive study of the energetic potential of the intercommunal territory.
- *Applied research on a concrete energy efficient territorial organization for Montreuil*: using a biomimetic approach to further delineate the vision developed in the transition arena and to draw a detailed picture of an energy efficient Montreuil.

This action-oriented focus emerged, even though most of the change agents had initially understood the process as reflection-centred. During the meetings, the arena group also reflected on the relation between the municipality and its citizens, the broader theme of local governance, and the role of the arena therein. This resulted in an agreement on the ownership of ideas, the implementation of projects, facilitation and communication, as well as governance. It helped to bring governmental officers and citizens together and acted as a basis for follow-up actions. Within the local administration, the transition management process led to new ties between different departments. The long-term sick leave of a leading team member led to the external Energy Agency taking on a more coordinating and leading role. This added to the reflexivity of the process in terms of local government-citizen relationships, but also allowed for a further reflection of the (municipal) transition team members on their own way of working. The transition team experienced the collaboration between different departments and services as something very important not only for the process but also for the future of their daily work. The identification of this element as the key issue shifted the focus from the initial energy transition towards an institutional transition, which was strongly supported by the facilitator and therefore influenced by his understanding of the process as he stated: "*With the arena we worked on the agenda, but at the same time we worked with the transition team to create space to reflect, to look at what has to change to realise the projects. The way of working of the municipality has to be modified and for that a space is needed to criticize and to turn the process against them.*"



Figure 4: Timeline of the arena meetings in Montreuil

\*This text is also part of an evaluation report of the Interreg IVb-funded MUSIC project: Roorda, C. and Wittmayer, J., (2014). *Transition Management in five European cities – an evaluation*. DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

#### Further reading on Montreuil:

Arène de Transition Montreuil, Ville de Montreuil and MVE (2013). [Agenda de Transition](#).

#### Videos:

- [MUSIC & FabLab Festival 1](#)
- [MUSIC & FabLab Festival 2](#)



## E | Policy transition

## E1 | Creating a sustainability movement in The Hague, The Netherlands

Julia Wittmayer<sup>15</sup>

### Context

In 2011, the city council of The Hague clearly voiced its sustainability ambitions in a [Climate Plan](#) and an [Energy vision](#). These ambitions include a climate neutral city by 2040, with a milestone of CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction by 20%, energy saving by 20% and sustainable energy production of 20% in 2020. Next to the commitment of the municipality, the realization of this ambition asks for the active commitment of a range of different actors within the city – citizens, entrepreneurs, business and associations. In its coalition agreement 2010-2014, the city council included the setting up of an incentive regulation engaging societal actors into making The Hague more sustainable together. A budget of 1,4 million was available for this regulation which aimed at creating a sustainability movement in The Hague.

It was the Department of Sustainability and Social Environment (Duurzaamheid en Leefomgeving) which was responsible for the design and implementation of such a regulation. The city administration embraced a transition perspective for exploring the contours and starting points of the incentive regulation. A pre-study was commissioned to gain more insights on what such a perspective would mean for the governance of the sustainability transition that the city was striving for ([Avelino et al. 2011](#)).

This report is based on scientific insights from transition studies and an inventory of existing initiatives and regulations in The Hague as well as in other cities. In the following we outline the recommendations of this report and its further translation into the final inventory regulation before we turn to a description of the outcomes based on an evaluation report ([Marissing & Meere 2013](#)).

### *Recommendations from a transition perspective: the starting points*

The pre-study started from the assumption that structural changes are needed but cannot be planned. These changes include the build-up of capacity for change and a breakdown of existing and trusted structures. In this context, a good understanding of the societal dynamics is needed to smartly play into the possibilities for change. Often, parties try to change their immediate surroundings and do not develop the mass and strategy to realize breakthroughs. One of the challenges in transition processes is to help develop this common ground and the necessary insights – also at the local level.

The pre-study focused on two elements for fundamental change on the local level: the search for a new role for (local) government in combination with innovative financial solutions. In The Hague the feeling reigned that ‘classic’ subsidies were not sufficient and that better results could be achieved if the government would work more pro-actively and in cooperation with citizens and other parties for societal innovation. In doing so, the local government would invest time, knowledge and skills, next to subsidies. Its support to other actors could take the form of co-financing, targeted creation of policy space, creating platforms, connecting different parties and the removal of institutional barriers.

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<sup>15</sup> With thanks to Wendelijn Oolders of the City of The Hague for her input.

Building upon this, the pre-study drew up a picture of an ideal-type municipality which invests money and time into bundling, strengthening and directing as well as founding, provoking and supporting societal initiatives. Such a municipality uses a custom fit approach for different neighbourhoods, based on their specific possibilities, problems and opportunities. Finally, it employs an innovative governance approach combining a sense of direction, with an impulse for action through the creation of space for co-creation. On the basis of this image of a local government the following starting points were formulated for an incentive regulation (Avelino et al. 2011: p 59):

The municipality:

1. facilitates the collective capacity ('samenredzaamheid') of the city,
2. safeguards continuity and connection on different levels,
3. goes beyond subsidies and applies alternative forms of financing,
4. links sustainability with other urban topics,
5. remains flexible: allows for various levels, various speeds and various target groups,
6. uses transparent communication to citizens, societal organisations and business.

The recommendations were partly building on the existing neighbourhood development approach of The Hague so as to integrate existing experience. They aimed at increasing the range, scale and impact of this approach in five ways: content (towards a broader definition of sustainability), process (towards a tailor-made approach for all neighbourhoods), participation (actively searching for developing frontrunners in different target groups), vision (investing in common image and agenda forming) and policy innovation (via policy participation working towards the removal of institutional and judicial barriers for movement).

For the actual design of the incentive regulation the pre-study outlines a number of elements for inclusion, such as target groups, call for initiatives, differentiation and process phasing, geographical scale, thematic focus, communication, requirements, selection and evaluation as well as process guidance and organisation. For each of the elements, possible choices were outlined. The basis for this choice matrix is the image of a municipality as outlined above.

At the core of the pre-study is the recommendation to strongly pursue policy participation, to actively search, deepen, broaden and scale up societal initiatives and to use new forms of societal value creation and financing. This new role for local government means giving step by step more space and stimulus to the self-organizing capacity of the city, her inhabitants, institutions and businesses.

### ***Giving form to an incentive regulation in practice***

This pre-study served as inspiration when setting up the actual incentive regulation – which is when the legal department got involved to formulate a workable, solid and justifiable regulation. The tedious process took about six months.

The main element of the final regulation is that it finances *processes* rather than products. It finances two kind of processes, one is meant for new initiatives to start up or to substantiate ideas into an action plan (plan development subsidy) and the other is meant for the existing initiatives to develop

their plans further into an executable project plan (project development subsidy). For plan development, €4.000 can be requested, and for project development €12.000, by a foundation or an association. For example, instead of providing subsidy for solar panels, the incentive regulation provides subsidy for neighbours, businesses and other actors find each other and draw up a common plan, get advice, setting up an organisation (i.e. plan development subsidy) or if this plan already exists it provides budget for feasibility studies, financial and legal advice (i.e. project development subsidy). As part of the regulation, the municipality organized three meetings for all initiatives with differing foci.

The first request for proposal was published on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and closed on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. For this round €256.000 were available, €64.000 for plan development and €192.000 for project development – out of which €196.000 were spent in total. 26 initiatives were granted the subsidy out of which 14 for plan development and 12 for project development. Examples are [070Energiek](#), who focus on energy reduction, collective energy purchase and local sustainable energy production through means of amongst others energy parties in the neighbourhood; or [Duurzaam Moerwijk](#) who focus on raising awareness and stimulate sustainable behaviour with their co-inhabitants in the neighbourhood of Moerwijk. They do so through a number of different measures such as the creation of a neighbourhood garden or street-level activities. The 26 initiatives were invited for three network meetings by the municipality. During the first meeting the participants could get to know each other, and were put into the spotlight with the press attending. They also received a book outlining how to write a business case. During the second meeting their needs were analysed. The last meeting was a celebration moment for the participants. It was also open to people interested in participating in a next round of the regulation for gathering inspiration. Towards the end of the run-time of the subsidy (June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013), the initiatives had to hand in their action and project plans including a cost overview to have the money paid out by the municipality. In total, the municipality claims that more than 1000 inhabitants have been reached through the initiatives.

### ***Outcome: results of the incentive regulation***

In September 2013, the city administration had the regulation and its outcomes evaluated. This evaluation explicitly focused on whether the city had started moving towards greater sustainability. Other choices could have been whether the city had reached its climate targets, or whether the city administration has changed its way of working. The results have been published in a report entitled ‘Sustainability in The Hague’ (Marissing and Meere, 2013), and the following paragraphs are based on the findings of this report.

### ***The initiatives: who is moving***

Overall the 26 project groups making use of the regulation were spread nicely across neighbourhoods all over the city. The report indicated that the spread in backgrounds of the participants was limited. Those participating were people that either had an affinity with the sustainability topic or were already active in their neighbourhood. The majority is of Dutch descent and holds a college or university degree. They seem to fit one of the following three categories: they are successful middle-aged professionals, early pensioners or young social entrepreneurs. As such, the evaluation report indicated, they already possessed the competences to deal with such a

regulation. The plans produced by these groups show a wide diversity: from very professional to amateurish.

#### *The motivations: why are they making use of the incentive regulation*

Money was not one of the primary reasons for making use of the regulation. The regulation, along with the budget and new contacts helped the groups to substantiate their ideas, to sharpen their focus and to receive a 'last push into the good direction'. The regulation also meant that the municipality gave recognition to their initiative. The participants vary in ambition and scope: from making the world a better place, to setting up smaller enjoyable activities in the neighbourhood. They see sustainability as both goal and method and were motivated by the idea of increasing their social contacts, increasing the liveability of their neighbourhood and responding to the sense of urgency with regard to different sustainability challenges.

#### *Reflection on the starting points of the incentive regulation*

The evaluation report also reflected on the starting points of the regulation. Generally, the groups appreciated having a process subsidy next to project subsidies. It gave them the opportunity to further develop their plans, and they considered the budget sufficient. Sustainability has been taken as a broad topic, although the regulation focused on CO<sub>2</sub> and energy consumption reduction. The initiatives ranged from a focus on mobility, green in the city to producing sustainable energy.

The regulation focused on the scale of the neighbourhood which supported participants to elaborate their ideas with a link to their daily surroundings and local networks. The initiatives working in different parts of the city each experienced similar challenges and went through a similar but not connected learning process to address these. While this learning process was appreciated, it also felt like 'reinventing the wheel' for some groups. The meetings organized by the municipality helped to link the initiatives with one another, which led to increased collective learning as well as to study visits to other neighbourhoods.

The report found that the initiatives cooperated with different actors in the city and could find their way to alternative forms of financing. By financing processes, the local economy got a boost as the initiatives hired local professionals for support. The initiatives also found their way with regard to existing regulations and approaches of the municipality, such as specific product subsidies.

#### *Reflection on the role of the municipality*

The role of the municipality remained somewhat vague for the initiatives. In the beginning, several policy officers within the Department of Sustainability and Social Environment were contact persons for the initiatives (one policy officer for a number of initiatives). At a certain point this was brought back to one policy officer being contact person for all 26 initiatives.

#### *Looking forward*

A second request for proposals was closed on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014. 31 initiatives applied and were granted the funding under the condition of handing in their plans within seven months. The total budget was

€250.000, out of which every district could be granted a maximum of 3 grants of €8.000. This money was to be spent on either advice (80%) as or on process costs (20%). Advice costs include advice from an external professional (e.g. financial, legal or technical advice), process costs include the costs for setting up a legal body (e.g. a foundation, association), costs associated with meetings, bank or communication.

For this second round a number of changes to the incentive regulation were introduced<sup>16</sup>, namely:

- The differentiation between plan development and project development was removed as it appeared to be confusing and moreover both streams seemed to have comparable challenges (e.g. administrative challenges, functioning project organisation). Instead the regulation is referred to as ‘budget for initiatives’.
- For these challenges identified in the first round, the municipality will organize meetings to support the participants in the process.
- Strategic communication was to be used, especially in districts that did not have a high response rate in the first round. By using the examples from the first round, it proved to be easier to communicate the goals and ambitions of the regulation.

As such the city is using the ongoing developments to learn for the future design of the incentive regulation. In the meanwhile, there have been municipal elections (March 2014). The new coalition agreement makes it possible to continue with this regulation. The policy officer coordinating the 31 initiatives is not only connecting the initiatives with one other, but also to other sustainability-related activities and organisations in The Hague and to colleagues within the city administration. The latter is, due to budget cuts and reorganisations, mainly working via unofficial channels and thriving on the drive and interest of those involved; e.g. colleagues from different departments read along in the proposal phase, or the Department for Education, Culture and Welfare got involved in an initiative that looked for putting solar panels on the roof of schools.

These are the very first seeds for what the pre-study termed policy transition: changes within the city administration and its attitudes and relation towards its citizens. This aspect has received lesser attention so far – but in the light of the current discussion of a retreating welfare state and the alleged rise of the participation society, this is an interesting question to tackle. The incentive regulation can provide a context for this.

#### **Further reading on The Hague:**

Avelino, F., Loorbach, D. and Wittmayer, J. (2012) *Het Stimuleren van Duurzaamheid in de Stad. Een Onderzoeksadvies aan de Gemeente Den Haag*. DRIFT, Rotterdam

Gemeente Den Haag (2010) *Energievisie Den Haag 2040*. Geemente Den Haag, Den Haag.

Gemeente Den Haag (2011) *Klimaatplan Den Haag*. Geemente Den Haag, Den Haag.

Gemeente Den Haag (2014) *Subsidieregeling Duurzaamheid door Haagse Wijken*. Geemente Den Haag, Den Haag.

<sup>16</sup> Gemeente Den Haag (2014) Letter of alderman Baldewsingh to the city council. DSB/2014.132 – RIS 270272.

*Marissing, Erik van & Meere, Freek de (2013) Duurzaamheid in Den Haag. Procesevaluatie subsidieregeling. 'Duurzaamheid door Haagse wijken'. Verwey-Jonker Instituut, Utrecht.*



## F | Synthesis articles

## F1 | Lessons for the governance of urban sustainability transitions<sup>17</sup>

Chris Roorda, Julia Wittmayer

Cities are seen as offering the opportunity for decisive local action to address a number of the complex problems our societies are facing – both in terms of policy and societal action. Recognizing this, cities have adopted ambitious sustainability targets and agenda's that ask for fundamental long-term changes – sustainability transitions.

A number of cities have been using a transition management approach as a new framework for thinking about and working on urban sustainability transitions. As outlined in more detail elsewhere in this dossier, see [A1 | Sustainability transitions in cities and their governance](#) and [A2 | Local action for sustainability: from Local Agenda 21 to transition management](#), key activities of transition management are building a network of change-agents, jointly drafting a systemic change perspective and empowering diverse actors to engage in, and learn from, initiatives contributing to a sustainable future. Rather than a cookbook, transition management is based on a number of tenants that can help guide the governance of a city but should be adapted to the local context<sup>18</sup>. Based on the rich experiences of implementing transition management in a number of cities as part of the Interreg IVb-funded [MUSIC](#) project (namely Aberdeen - see [D1 | Aberdeen in transition: a journey towards 2050](#), Ghent - see [D2 | Creating a climate for transition in Ghent, Belgium](#), Ludwigsburg – see [D3 | Tackling the energy transition locally in Ludwigsburg, Germany](#) and Montreuil - see [D4 | Re-imagining local governance: transition management in Montreuil, France](#)) this article reflects on the outcomes of using a transition management approach in the urban context, draws lessons for the application of this approach and – in broader sense –for the governance of urban sustainability transitions.

### *Outcomes of the Transition management processes*

Transition management, as a reflexive governance approach, is said to harbour a number of possibilities for addressing persistent problems<sup>19</sup>, namely: understanding of complexity; shared narrative; new networks and constellations; new roles and relations; and co-production. In the following we reflect on the outcomes of transition management processes in a number of cities<sup>20</sup> with regard to these 5 elements.

#### *Understanding of complexity*

Overall, transition management helps to increase participants' understanding of problems faced by cities and of their societal context. Two elements of the approach are directly related: work on a

<sup>17</sup> This text is largely based on Roorda, C. and Wittmayer, J., (2014). Transition Management in five European cities – an evaluation. DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

<sup>18</sup> These tenants are a) systems perspective, b) system innovation in incremental steps, c) diversity and flexibility, e) co-creation, f) creating opportunities for change agents and g) social and institutional learning.

<sup>19</sup> See one of the introductory articles in this dossier, Wittmayer & Roorda, Sustainability transitions in cities and their governance, see [A1 | Sustainability transitions in cities and their governance](#).

<sup>20</sup> Our reflections refer to Aberdeen - see [D1 | Aberdeen in transition: a journey towards 2050](#), Ghent - see [D2 | Creating a climate for transition in Ghent, Belgium](#), Ludwigsburg – see [D3 | Tackling the energy transition locally in Ludwigsburg, Germany](#) and Montreuil - see [D4 | Re-imagining local governance: transition management in Montreuil, France](#)). They are to some extent also transferable to The Hague - see [E1 | Creating a sustainability movement in The Hague, The Netherlands](#). Please see these articles for a more in-depth description of the transition management process in every city.

systems analysis to acquire an overview of the city as the basis for the formulation of transition challenges, and discussions in a transition arena setting regarding problem structuring and envisioning.

The process and its output were strongly influenced by the emphasis on exploring the problems that cities face from a ‘systems perspective’. For the cities partnering in the MUSIC project to decrease their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the systems analysis and subsequent discussions led to a reframing of the initial challenges. They made it possible to move beyond a (technical) focus on energy or climate mitigation to include other relevant domains of urban policy making on the way to a low-carbon future. For example, in Montreuil, policy officers involved in the process stated that “[transition management] allowed us to remove the institutional perspective of looking at things” and “replaced our business as usual for looking more to the long-term”.

Moreover, as put by a policy officer in the city of Ghent, “*the systems analysis was important to lift the level of the arena discussions*” and enabled the participants, with their diverse backgrounds, to build upon and learn from each other, which most of them highly appreciated. Individually, and also as a group, this gave them insights beyond their fields of expertise, and also increased their commitment. One change-agent of the transition management process in Aberdeen framed it as follows: “*in order to own the problem you have to be part of the problem definition and I think that was successfully done*”.

### *Shared narrative*

Shared understandings about the past, present and future of the city, as well as a shared language are expected outcomes of a transition management process.

In all cities, the analysis from a systems perspective and discussions on problem framing enabled the change agents in the transition management process and also the initiating policy officers to question current paradigms. The subsequent envisioning discussions are meant for jointly exploring how alternative paradigms could materialize in the future. By some, the visions - being holistic and embedded in the local context - were considered as a vital way of enabling diverse people to relate to a sustainable future. Others disputed the usefulness of such visions. For example, one change agent in Ghent argued “[...] [the vision] remains very broad. And I think that's why it was not immediately sticking to my mind”. A participant in Montreuil also stated that “[...] reality is different. [...]. I think it is good to start with a utopia. But I don't see concrete actions coming out of these documents.”

With “documents”, this participant refers to the publications of the narratives, which were meant to enable the uptake of the problem structuring, vision, pathways and short-term actions by a larger audience. It is hard to trace the effects of these narratives beyond the initial transition arena setting, as their uptake is both indirect and diffuse. The city of Ghent provides the clearest example: three political parties incorporated insights from the transition arena into their political programs. Together with several other influences, this ultimately led to the inclusion of an extra climate budget, a broad range of climate-related measures and a ‘top-down meets bottom-up’ pillar in the agreement of the newly-established council in 2013. While such clear links cannot be found in the other cities, the narrative evidently also resonates within their administrations, influencing climate and energy policy, as well as policy plans from departments such as spatial planning, mobility and

economy. Moreover, some of the arena participants indicated that the narrative serves them as an anchor point, helping them to orient their professional and personal actions and choices. This is further visible in the follow-up initiatives they become involved in, as described in the next paragraph.

### *New networks and constellations*

Another mechanism of the transition management process is the emergence of new networks and constellations. The establishment of new contacts during the transition arena meetings were highly valued by the arena participants and the organizing transition team members, as the following quotes from Ghent and Aberdeen illustrate: “*friends were made*”, “*I met people through the [...] [transition management process] I wouldn’t have met without it, that’s very positive*” and “*most valuable was the dynamic atmosphere of people who want to be the change*”.

By inviting additional participants to backcasting workshops in the later transition arena meetings through broadening events or the work in project groups, more actors became involved in the transition management process. In both Aberdeen and Ghent, civic project groups were started as follow-up to the backcasting workshops, in order to elaborate more specific themes and concrete project ideas. These project groups involved arena participants and other relevant actors, and were only to a limited extent facilitated by the city administration.

Although the participants in Ludwigsburg and Montreuil perceived the process as being about informing the city administration rather than taking action, they also engaged in some spin-off activities. The follow-up and spin-off activities included:

- In Aberdeen, six project groups were created by the end of 2013. Three of these focus on education: one on primary education (developing an education package for primary school pupils on energy and sustainability), one on secondary education (assisting students and families to monitor and ultimately decrease their energy use), and one for secondary school and higher education (promoting sustainable living for students). The other three project groups work on ‘remote working hubs’ (a series of trial days testing the concept of remote working hubs), ‘transport’ (developing an e-forum on sustainable transport), and ‘celebrate the streets’ (developing an event that recognises low-carbon transport and alternative uses for streets).
- In Ghent, six project groups were also started during 2012 and 2013: ‘consumer pushes the market’ (organizing a carrot mob), ‘urban farming’ (developing an urban farming agenda for the city), ‘valorisation of sewage water’ (developing a business case for a city district on the transport of organic waste through the sewage system and the use of sewage water to produce warmth, biogas, nutrients and water); ‘energy efficiency for businesses’ (promoting energy efficiency under SMEs, financed by the city administration), ‘Blue economy’ (convincing businesses to start an iconic project in line with the Blue economy principles, the attempt turned out unsuccessful) and ‘Green Track’ (collaboration of 30 cultural organizations on developing an energy action plan and to sensitize visitors, supported by the city administration). Next to these, two new arena trajectories were initiated (focussing on a sustainable university and sustainable mobility), which led to further spin-off initiatives.

- In Montreuil, a Fablab was launched by a participant and connected to the launch of the transition agenda. The later MUSIC & FabLab Festival elaborated seven key projects, which were subsequently taken up by the participating citizens and organisations, assisted by the municipality. Synergies between existing projects were also established: ‘La voie est libre’ (organizing music, theatre and activities on a closed highway) and ‘Velodrom’ (bicycle lessons and a repair shop for Roma youth, a new collaboration between two participants).
- In Ludwigsburg, a project group ‘local energy transition’ was formed, giving input to a sustainability exhibition and developing a ‘sustainable shopping basket’ to raise awareness for sustainable consumption. This group is online at MeinLB.de where it invites other actors to join the group.

The connections between the participants in the project groups proved stronger than the contacts established in the initial transition arena groups, which fizzled out in all cities. However, most participants also valued the network created in the transition arena setting, especially to people with backgrounds and organisations previously unfamiliar to them: they can get in touch with their new contacts when necessary. Furthermore, the contacts between the city administration and other local actors (e.g. inhabitants, grassroots activists, entrepreneurs, researchers) were mutually appreciated.

### *New roles and relations*

The transition arena process can been considered as a learning journey for both the participants and the city administration with regard to acting upon and experimenting with (possible and alternative) roles and relations in the transition towards a sustainable city.

Within the city administrations, the application of the transition management approach created lasting cross-departmental linkages. Policy officers from diverse domains, especially those involved in the arena meetings, discovered the links with and the relevance of climate and energy ambitions for their own work. This is remarkable, as earlier attempts to put climate neutrality on the agenda of their departments had often led to more resistance than cooperation. According to a policy officer in Montreuil, it is “*not our culture to have different departments working together*”, but, his colleague in Ghent added, “*transition management helps to get climate neutrality on the agenda in every department*”.

Many of the transition arena participants in Aberdeen, Ghent, Montreuil and Ludwigsburg indicate that the transition management approach strengthened their capacities and motivation to play a role in the transition to a low-carbon city. A participant in Ghent summarizes: “*you see all these nice people who do that as well, so it stimulates you to also go a step further*”. Some arena participants adjusted clearly their own activities inspired by the arena process; most prominent examples are a transition arena participant who started a Fablab in Montreuil, and an environmental coordinator of Ghent University who initiated a new arena process involving students, professors and administrative staff members to explore how the university could contribute to a climate neutral city.

For a number of reasons, the process step at which the structured transition arena setting was dissolved and the process of diffusion and translation of the narrative, actions and networks started, was a critical moment of the process. Firstly, the transition management approach as presented to

the cities did not give concrete indications for interventions by the cities at this stage. Secondly, the city administrations often had neither time nor a specific budget available for the continued support of the transition movement. Thirdly, there was no formal setting or role foreseen for the arena-participants and the city administration. At this point, it boiled down to each individual actor (within the diverse networks): which role they could imagine and take up for themselves?

In part the effort was continued on an individual basis, as the change-agents and the policy officers translated the narrative to their own agendas; in part in cooperation channelled through the project groups. Surely, not all arena participants committed to a role in these project groups. A reason mentioned often was the lack of facilitation, but even more strongly it was advocated that the project teams would need more resources or better alignment with the professional ambitions of the people involved. As a participant in Aberdeen put it: "*The problem is that these kind of projects rely on volunteering of time and time is probably the most pressured resource we have*". In the course, also additional actors became involved through these project groups, including actors who would normally not even be triggered by the issue of a low-carbon city; they could relate their (professional or personal) ambitions to the more specific projects, such as teachers in the educational projects in Aberdeen and citizens living in the participating streets in the 'leefstraten'-project in Ghent.

### *Co-production*

The search for new roles and relations also belongs to the shifting of views on participation within local governments: rather than citizens or businesses participating in a municipal decision making process, transition management is about co-production in a societal learning process.

The transition management approach influenced the attitude and role of the city administration in relation to other actors. The new mode of working from the approach, focusing on social and institutional learning and creating opportunities for change agents, is in part translated into the daily work of the city administration. In Aberdeen, for example, it influenced the city's approach to drafting a Strategic Energy Action Plan. In Ghent, the city administration even decided to organize a new transition arena on the theme of sustainable mobility. In Montreuil, the reflection on the relation between the municipality and its citizens became very central to the process. A policy officers from Montreuil stated that "*transition management is not just another participatory process, it is about transforming from inside*". The facilitator of the arena process in Montreuil expressed that "*for [the policy officers] there is something like a before and after the arena, it really modified their way of working*".

At the same time, there is still much insecurity within administrations when it comes to defining its role in relation to such processes. In spite of the acknowledgement that a strong outward orientation is needed, a city officer in Ghent noted that "*it will take a while before the governments feels comfortable with that and discovers its new role*". Also, aiming for co-production does not necessarily mean others simply take over governmental tasks.

These processes also showed that it is difficult for both sides, citizens and administration, to overcome the ingrained role patterns that they have cultivated for a long time. The experience in Ludwigsburg is an example of what, to a lesser extent, happened in the other cities. While the city acts at the forefront of citizen participation, it has in the past often approached society as an input

source for policy formulation, rather than for co-creating a common future. Seeing the process in this same tradition, actors in Ludwigsburg felt less compelled to take on new roles.

#### *Lessons learned: transition management as a balancing act*

By reflecting on these transition management processes in the four cities, we can draw lessons for the transition management approach in the urban context and, in broader sense, for the governance of urban sustainability transitions. To start with the latter:

- The experiences reveal the benefits of playing into local dynamics (rather than starting from a blank slate), learning from and connecting to actors and initiatives in the city that (could) contribute to sustainability ambitions, e.g. a low-carbon future.
- The orientation towards local dynamics made it necessary for the city administrations to acknowledge that they do not have full control – neither over the transition management process, nor over the transition as a whole. It is not possible to dominate the content of the narrative or the resulting initiatives; the perspectives and motivations of the participants determine them. Outcomes might therefore not be fully in line with the goals, ambitions and plans of the municipality. Overall, patience is essential: time is needed for ideas to evolve, contacts to develop trust, and conditions to change.
- The demand for controllable steps and predictable outputs can put the process under undue pressure. The creation of mental and organizational space is therefore crucial in the application of transition management or similar ‘open’ and reflexive approaches. This includes the provision of time and trust to go beyond business as usual, openness for reflection and learning.
- Dealing with accountability is a delicate issue. It was often raised in relation to how far the process could reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But the processes do not reduce emissions in a straightforward way. The effect is intangible and indirect: the spin-off activities and the changes to actors, policies and agendas are what make a difference. Although difficult to measure, these effects need to be monitored to account for the efforts and investments put into the process.

Lessons for applying the transition management approach in the urban context are:

- City administrations should not underestimate the importance of a facilitation role. Also after or next to this arena trajectory, the municipality could take a facilitating role to increase the impact of the arena results by disseminating the narrative and supporting the emerging project teams (without taking over or making them too dependent on this support). More general, the municipalities could further pursue the role of transition instigator by engaging a broader group of people, organisations and initiatives to adopt ambitions for a sustainable future, and relate this to their own agendas and practices.
- Related to this, it is also important not to have overstretched expectations for participants to engage in specific actions. Mainly participants and newly involved actors who can link these

to their professional or personal motivation engage. But they cannot be expected to simply pursue the ideas from the arena group or the ambitions from the municipality. The resulting projects will therefore be influenced by their own agendas and ambitions.

- A tension between the general understanding of 'power' and 'impact' versus the ambition to go beyond the status quo and beyond 'business as usual' appears. It is often assumed that the arena process should influence 'decision makers' or the whole urban population, and make all of them embrace climate measures. The transition management approach, however, aims at another type of impact: changing what people think is 'possible' or 'impossible'.
- Implementation of transition management by a (local) government implies a strong learning component regarding its role, as well as a struggle to create space to explore new roles and to deal with multiple roles. An alternative would be for a research institute or an NGO to lead the implementation; this could ease tensions, and would therefore warrant further exploration. Doing so could, however, limit the process' impact on the practices of the local government and hamper bottom-up – top-down interaction.

### ***Concluding reflections: fostering transitions a towards sustainable cities***

In all four cities, the application of the transition management approach has proven a productive but challenging journey. It provided the participants and city administrations with a space for going beyond the status quo. The experiences make it possible to clearly articulate the potential outcomes of transition management for urban climate governance from a practitioner perspective. In all cities, the following outcomes have been reached to more or lesser extent, influenced by local ambitions and circumstances:

- A guiding perspective that provides a sense of direction regarding the fundamental changes needed to reach a sustainable future. This encourages a better understanding of the complexity and societal context of low-carbon ambitions. The perspective can serve as a framework that enhances initiatives and innovations, and enables recognition of ongoing developments contributing to this future;
- An impulse for moving towards a more sustainable future. The dynamic and inspiring character of the process encourages and activates people to contribute to a sustainability transition. Especially the spin-off activities emerge as 'seeds of change' that allow a variety of actors to engage;
- Empowerment enabling actors in the city to more effectively foster a transition towards a sustainable future. Through the process, actors from different backgrounds collectively start exploring and taking on (new) roles. Also policy officers become empowered to enter new roles, as this requires a shift in their views on participation (towards co-production), playing much more into the city's existing dynamics instead of formulating policy 'from behind their desk'.

All in all, transition management can give cities a concrete starting point to play into societal dynamics to foster systems change. The last years have seen growing recognition that (local)

governments cannot address sustainability challenges on their own. We therefore expect innovative governance approaches like transition management to become more widespread. This development could reinforce (and be reinforced by) the further ‘transitioning’ of institutions: changing structures (e.g. further breaking the silos and altering regulations), cultures (e.g. embracing complexity and becoming more prone to co-creation) and practices (e.g. adjusting financing schemes to foster sustainable measures and building capacities for transition). This will again prove to be an intensive struggle and learning experience – many challenges ahead!

## F2 | Exploring the transformative potential of communities

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### **What is transformative potential of communities?**

In the context of sustainability transitions, the main focus has been on transitions in sectors, such as mobility, agriculture or most prominently energy (see e.g. the [Dutch ‘energietransitie’](#) and the [German ‘Energiewende’](#)). Only lately a focus on cities and communities is surging, to which this dossier is a witness. With this focus on cities and communities a number of questions arise, e.g. How can communities confront the persistent problems our societies are facing? How can they contribute to fundamental change? How can we understand their potential to transform themselves (community transformation) to become more sustainable? And their potential to transform their surroundings (system transformation)? How can these be supported? These questions are central to this contribution.

Transformative potential of community is defined as the potential of communities to transform themselves and their surroundings towards a more sustainable future. This potential is nothing that a community either ‘has’ or ‘not has’. Rather it is a concept aimed at helping us to make sense of how communities can be linked to societal change. Transformative potential relates to questions of agency and to ways in which transitions are and can be influenced so as to contribute to sustainability.

One approach dedicated to these questions is transition management. This approach is based on a number of principles, which are derived from complexity theory, governance and sociology (see introductory articles of this dossier, see [A1 | Sustainability transitions in cities and their governance](#) and [A2 | Local action for sustainability: from Local Agenda 21 to transition management](#), Loorbach 2010<sup>21</sup>, Frantzeskaki et al. 2012<sup>22</sup>). These principles can help us in thinking about elements of transformative potential of communities and include:

- long-term thinking as the basis for short term policy,
- thinking in terms of multiple domains (multi-domain), different actors (multi-actor), different levels (multi-level),
- learning as an important aim for policy ('learning-by-doing' and 'doing-by-learning')
- orienting governance towards system innovation besides system improvement,
- keeping options open, and exploring multiple pathways.

Other elements for thinking about transformative potential of communities can come from literature on social innovation. This is another interesting perspective focusing on society and change. Social innovations are innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means (BEPA 2010<sup>23</sup>), and

<sup>21</sup> Loorbach, D. (2010) Transition Management for Sustainable Development: a Prescriptive, Complexity-Based Governance Framework. *Governance*, 23, 161-183

<sup>22</sup> Frantzeskaki, N., Loorbach, D., and Meadowcroft, J., (2012), Governing transitions to sustainability: Transition management as a governance approach towards pursuing sustainability, *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 2012 Vol 15 Nos ½ pp.19-36

<sup>23</sup> BEPA (2010) Empowering People, Driving Change. Social Innovation in the European Union. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

as such relate directly to the community fabric and dynamic. Scholars of social innovation in urban (neighbourhood) development stress three dimensions of social innovation. These dimensions, which are interesting for further exploring our questions (Moulaert et al. 2005<sup>24</sup>, 2010<sup>25</sup>), are:

- the satisfaction of human needs (content/product dimension),
- changes in social relations, especially with regard to governance and participation (process dimension) and
- increasing the socio-political capability and access to resources needed to satisfy needs and participation (empowerment dimension)

Combining the above, we propose six elements through which to further explore the notion of transformative potential of communities in the context of societal change and sustainability transitions, namely:

- 1) a shared and acted-upon perspective on the present and a desired future which integrates diversity
- 2) (inclusive) networks across actor categories, domains and levels
- 3) a learning environment, based upon experimentation and/or reflexivity and accompanied by empowerment
- 4) needs of the community are met now and in the future,
- 5) supple social relations in an environment of participation and direct action,
- 6) access to resources (e.g. money, time, power, networks, political will)

In the following we go into more detail for each of these six elements to investigate how transformative potential of communities can be described and how transition management based processes can play into this potential.

### **Different elements of transformative potential**

We do so by exploring and deepening the six elements sketched above, illustrating whether and how transition management based processes (referred to as community arenas) might strengthen, create space for or develop these elements. The latter will be done by directly referring to three transition management-based co-creation processes in Carnisse, see [B2 | The community arena in Carnisse – Rotterdam, The Netherlands](#), Finkenstein, see [B1 | The community arena in Finkenstein, Austria](#), and Agniesebuurt, see [B3 | The community arena in Agniesebuurt – Rotterdam, The Netherlands](#). They were all directed towards creating a shared perception of the present as well as a desirable future vision, translating this vision into strategies and concrete actions.

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<sup>24</sup> Moulaert, F., F. Martinelli, E. Swyngedouw, S. Gonzalez (2005) Towards alternative model(s) of local innovation. *Urban Studies* (Routledge), 42 (2005), pp. 1969–1990

<sup>25</sup> Moulaert, F., A. Mehmood (2010) Analysing regional development and policy: A structural-realist approach. *Regional Studies*, 44 (1), pp. 103-118

### *1) a shared and acted-upon perspective on the present and a desired future which integrates diversity*

One element of transformative potential of a community is a shared and acted-upon perspective on the present and a desired future integrating diversity. Such a perspective, consists of at least three parts: 1) a shared perspective of the present and of a desired future, the latter consisting of a diversity of images, 2) diverse pathways to reach this future, and 3) an attitude connecting short term actions and long term vision.

Having a vision of a desirable future can act as a guiding star that gives guidance to the community and its members in taking decisions in everyday life. However, this vision should also be desirable enough to be acted upon: that the community and its members are taking steps towards its realisation although, and in the context of sustainability transitions even, if this asks for fundamental changes. As a last point, the vision should not be set in stone, it should be part of the deliberative culture in the community to challenge this vision to deconstruct and to reconstruct a more desirable one. The vision is as important as the deliberative, reflexive conversations through which it is re-invented and further developed.

Questions of ownership play a substantial role in this discussion: Whose vision is it ? This encompasses how strongly the people involved are able to relate to the process (or not) and if and to what extent they feel connected to what they are doing (or not) and perceive it as being meaningful (or not). Transition management-based approaches, such as the community arena, are processes that aim at creating an arena for deliberation and at the same time at establishing a first guiding star. In Carnisse and Finkenstein, the community arena process resulted in a shared problem perception and vision, including a number of pathways for both communities. In Carnisse, a group of about 15 people drew up a shared perspective. A much smaller group out of these 15 felt ownership for presenting and disseminating it further in the neighbourhood and to actually acting upon it. The action in turn, amongst others the re-opening of a community centre has an influence on the whole neighbourhood. In Finkenstein, although based on a similar small group, the ownership was felt much broader, and extended to political actors accompanying the process – which opens the opportunity of the vision, or its underlying principles dripping into and influencing local policy making. In the Agniesebuurt, a special focus was put on including the ideas of children and youngsters, as the main future users, in designing the new square.

### *2) (inclusive) networks across actor categories, domains and levels*

Having a shared understanding of the present and future as the result of a common process over an extended period of time also builds a new network. Such networks, nourishing diversity rather than sameness, are crucial when it comes to creating a process which eventually fosters transitions on the local scale. They are nascent structures eventually helping to facilitate the overall transformative process leading to change. In this context, transitions can be understood as “multi-actor processes”, where different actor groups interact. Those encompass social groups, scientific communities, policymakers as well as social movements and special interest groups.

When we talk about networks in the realm of transformative potential, it is worth to see these as elements of social capital. Social capital describes relationships, relations of trust, reciprocity, and exchange; the evolution of common rules; and the role of networks. It encompasses the involvement of civil society and collective action. Social capital theory provides an explanation for how individuals

use their relationships with other actors in societies for their own and for the collective good. It looks at how people build links between their social groups and others through processes, with three important dimensions: Bonding, bridging and linking (Gehmacher et al. 2006<sup>26</sup>). *Bonding* describes the relationship between people within a group, whereas *bridging* refers to the relation between different groups and *linking* to their connection to other levels (e.g. state or broader public).

Creating social capital can be facilitated by the community arena process. It asks the participants who have a variety of perspectives and backgrounds to share their visions with the public, and collaborate with others for their implementation. These processes can enable the development of meaningful relations, which in turn are viable to build (inclusive) networks across actor categories, domains and levels. In the three communities, the newly formed networks included people who knew each other, amongst others through sharing personal or professional interests, or from living close to each other but also complete strangers. One participant in Finkenstein described the networks as offering a platform for discussing ideas and worries about the shared living space. He perceived the group as becoming stronger than the sum of its single members. In Carnisse, a participant described being engaged in the arena as being part of her responsibility as a citizen. Exchanging views and discussing in a diverse group created a fruitful atmosphere for collaboration and learning. This leads to an enhancement of the social capital of the community in terms of establishing new relations within and between groups.

### *3) a learning environment, based upon experimentation and/or reflexivity and accompanied by empowerment*

Both learning and empowerment relate closely to the idea of transforming oneself, one's community and one's surrounding. In transition management, social learning is seen as a process through which to deal with complexity and uncertainty. Although learning may be understood in different ways, at its core it involves a lasting change in the interpretive frames (belief systems, cognitive frameworks, etc.) of an actor. We use the concept of *social* learning as bridging the level of the individual and the level of the collective, as second order learning is never a purely individual experience but instead always happens in a social setting. The empowerment of an actor can be linked to learning and is understood as attaining "the necessary access, strategies, skills, and willingness to exercise power" (Avelino 2011: 77<sup>27</sup>). Learning may contribute to empowerment since participants acquire new skills and also may include changes of underlying assumptions, beliefs and values about the exercise of power. Within this scope, two main learning processes can be distinguished: first and second order learning processes. Second order learning processes are crucial for transition processes as they open windows for behavioural changes and help deal with increasing uncertainty and complexity. These second order learning processes are complemented by first order learning processes which centre around concrete skills, e.g. speaking one's mind in public and in front of a large group of people; facilitating meetings; working respectfully together in a diverse groups.

Based on evaluation and monitoring interviews that have been held at the end of the community arena process in Finkenstein and Carnisse, the participants self-reported that the process contributed to an on-going learning and empowerment process in their communities. Through the processes, the

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<sup>26</sup> Gehmacher, E., Kroismayr, S., Neumüller, J., Schuster, M. (Eds) (2006) Sozialkapital: Neue Zugänge zu gesellschaftlichen Kräften –Vienna: Mandelbaum

<sup>27</sup> Avelino, F. (2011) Power in Transition. Empowering Discourses on Sustainability Transitions. Doctoral Thesis, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam

participants' belief that they are able to direct their actions to desired ends and that they can have an impact on the local context was strengthened. Participants reported several learning experiences, e.g. that they learned about their own and others' roles in the project or specific skills such as talking in front of a group. A very important learning experience shared by all participants was the experience of working together in a respectful and constructive way even with previously unknown people and in a very diverse group. The fact that the process had an open agenda contributed greatly to the participants' feeling of self-determination: they could choose what to put on the agenda and no specific policy agenda was 'imposed' on them. At the same time, these evaluation interviews also showed the disempowering effects of wanting to change a system within the hour: in Carnisse, one participant indicated that he considered it a failure that the process had not led to considerable improvement of the housing stock in the neighbourhood.

#### *4) needs of the community are met now and in the future*

Meeting the needs of its members now and in the future can be a driver for a community to change current ways of doing, thinking and structuring – to transform itself and possibly its environment. As such the meeting of needs is an element in thinking about the potential of a community for community and system transformation.

Needs can be defined in a number of ways, one can refer to basic human needs (such as Moulaert et al. 2005 in the context of social innovation<sup>28</sup>) or the ten basic needs as introduced by Max-Neef (1991<sup>29</sup>), namely subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity, freedom, and transcendence. Another well-known definition of needs is the pyramid of needs by Maslow (1943<sup>30</sup>).

Part of the community arena process is the drawing up of a system analysis in which the transition challenges of the communities are identified, first by researchers and then together with the communities in a participatory process. These challenges are also related to needs, for Finkenstein they included for example limited political participation, preserving rich heritage as well as fragmentation and low social cohesion. In the case of Agniesebuurt the absence of a formally organized residents organisation or a collective of active inhabitants and/or entrepreneurs were important points in analysing the current situation. Another possibility is to look at the visions drawn up or the projects implemented. These reveal needs and associated values such as belonging, economic security, entrepreneurship, or environmental values, all underlying a transformative potential of the communities.

#### *5) supple social relations in an environment of participation and direct action*

If a community transforms, one of the changing aspects are the relations between community members. Supple social relations referring to relations that are able to adapt to but also to shape change processes can therefore be considered an element of transformative potential of

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<sup>28</sup> Moulaert, F., F. Martinelli, E. Swyngedouw, S. Gonzalez (2005) Towards alternative model(s) of local innovation. *Urban Studies*, 42 (2005), pp. 1969–1990

<sup>29</sup> Max-Neef, M., (1991) Human scale development: conception, application and further reflections. The Apex Press, London, New York.

<sup>30</sup> Maslow, Abraham (1943) A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–96. Retrieved from <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>

communities. In the current context of a withdrawing welfare state in a number of Western countries and an economic crisis, one of the relations that is changing rapidly is the one between governments and their citizens.

This relation was subject to experimentation and change in Carnisse and Finkenstein. In Finkenstein, neither the inhabitants nor policy makers had a lot of experiences with participatory processes – for both parties this was a new experience and they were interested in the community arena process. Interest remained so high, that local policymakers were organised in a supporting group, next to the community arena. During the arena process, some people from within the municipal government and administration, started to act as important contact persons for citizens in Finkenstein and created new relations between citizens and their local government.

In Carnisse, on the other hand, previous experiences with participatory processes oriented towards informing (rather than involving) the public, overshadowed the process for both policymakers and inhabitants. Recent municipal budget cuts increased negative sentiments. In this context, the community arena methodology was perceived as unique by the participants: a process with an open agenda that was to be set by the participants and was not initiated by the municipality. The local municipality on the other hand perceived the fact that the arena process was something which could not be controlled in terms of output and outcome as problematic. The participants could not all adapt to this new form of participation and at times fell into the roles which they were accustomed to from previous municipality-led participatory processes, (e.g. pointing at others for the blame or to take action). More experimental with regard to relations, was the link between both parties when it concerns the project of re-opening a local community centre – clearly here the local municipality searched for new ways of relating to the citizen initiative and vice versa.

#### *6) access to resources (e.g. money, time, power, networks, political will)*

Resources are surely part of transformation processes and are broadly understood here: not only financial funds, but also time, power, networks, political will or knowledge. All these are resources a community with transformative ambitions should have access to.

In terms of financial resources, the aspect of co-funding is interesting in both pilots. Co-funding creates opportunities for a more intense process (both in terms of commitment and interest of actors, e.g. political actors as well as of number of meetings) and for increased exposure. Through the co-funding and governance context, political actors in Finkenstein showed a high level of interest and commitment. Co-funding might increase the relevance of the process and its outcomes, as well as its embedding in on-going processes and institutions. It can also lead others to join into the process of change and adopt (part of) the future vision that the group worked on or it can provide the organising team with additional resources in organising the process. At the same time, co-financing might also introduce power imbalances or political tensions, money-oriented interests or dependencies, and influence the way others perceive the research team. It increases the need for accountability (not only to the additional funders but also to other stakeholders) and the possibility of critique as the process might be seen as the playing field of different interests.

### ***An emerging understanding of community and system transformation***

In this contribution we explored an understanding of a transformative potential of communities and how a transition management-based process can play into it. The elements of transformative potential that we draw up here, should not be seen as a checklist which can be ticked to assess whether a community ‘has’ transformative potential or not. Rather, this exploration should help us make sense of how communities and societal change can be linked by formulating and exploring a number of elements of transformative potential.

In the communities of Finkenstein, Carnisse and Agniesebuurt, outside interventions that created an open, diverse and emancipatory space for societal learning played into the outlined elements of transformative potential. This space can:

- 1) provide direction (i.e. sustainability)
- 2) support the creation of networks for people who feel the need for change
- 3) emphasize learning and reflexivity (including reflections on values, beliefs and assumptions)
- 4) increase a feeling of impact, choice, meaningfulness and competence of individuals and groups (i.e. empowerment) in addressing local needs
- 5) support changes in social relations of individuals, organizations and institutions (i.e. create networks, change role activities)
- 6) offer access to resources through e.g. third-party funding, establishing new networks.

Overall, transformative potential of communities in the light of societal challenges can be played into through empowering processes such as the community arena methodology. Change-minded people are coming together in an open and diverse setting and, by thinking about the future, they not only reflect on their own perspectives and values, but are also confronted with those of others. The process aligns perspectives, while nourishing diversity. Envisioning the future in images, texts and emotions supports this individual and group reflection and opens heads, hands and hearts. Linking this vision to the tangible present provides a space for the inner and outer contexts to interact: the process provides levers to participants for enhancing their transformative potential as a community. The extent to which such a space can be created very much depends on the local context (e.g. history with participatory processes) and the skills of the researcher and/or facilitator.



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