



The First Pressure Cooker was organized by the Drift team of ARTS at Drift, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands. The Pressure Cooker #1 is a joint effort of the EU funded projects ARTS, TRANSIT, TESS, and GLAMURS with the objective to bring together pioneering researchers to invigorate, reflect and co-develop new understandings around pressing topics for sustainability and sustainability transformations /sustainability transitions. This document brings together the reflectors' notes, and summarises the discussion points during the small-group sessions and the plenaries. The presentations of the pressure cooker and the supporting material are appended for future reference.

The present document is a common product of the participants edited by Niki Frantzeskaki, Matthew Bach and Felix Spira and we include all participants as co-authors in a random order of appearance. It can be referenced as such:

Frantzeskaki, N., Bach, M., Spira, F., Dumitru, A., Binder, C., Best, B., Durrant, R., Egermann, M., Loorbach, D., Wittmayer, J., Avelino, F., Haxeltine, A., Garcia Mira, R., Omann, I., Rauschmayer, F., Carrus, G., Reusser, D., Anguelovski, I., Uzzell, D., Knorringa, P., Olsson, P., Stedman, R., Silvestri, G., (2014), The role of civil society in sustainability transitions, Workshop Proceedings 2014.01, DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands.



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1. Concept

Niki Frantzeskaki and Adina Dumitru

European societies are faced with amalgamated crises: ecological degradation and loss of ecosystem functions, trembling welfare systems that retreat from providing services needed to fulfill basic societal needs and maintain social security, and the resurfacing of dichotomies in societies as effects of gentrification and fear of loss and change. In the midst of these crises, the conventional ways of dealing with problems and their manifestations appear ineffective, the complexity and magnitude of the challenges deem top-down steering approaches not enough.

With contemporary governance processes failing, civil society takes matters in its own hands. What was once a phenomenon in the global south, now appears in the global north in diverse flavors and intensity: civil society organizes itself in collectives, networks and nested-hubs, mobilizes resources (people, ideas and funds) and arrives to the wider public by realizing sustainability in practice. Transforming our cities and societies district-by-district, community-by-community, the sense of change that civil society has can be seen as a sign of hope that we can steer away from a deeper crisis- trap and at the same time, governments avoid or be limited in taking daring action to deal with the structural persistent problems behind these unsustainability crises.

With civil society's initiatives and social innovation actions in place and in progress swirling and flocking across Europe, it becomes a relevant question to address what the role of civil society in sustainability transitions is and to how the role evolves and changes in different socio-economic and socio-political contexts, across societal domains (e.g. energy, food, mobility, build environment and education) and across spatial scales (local, regional, national).

Additionally, not only the role of civil society is changing but also the forms of civil society participation in sustainability transitions. When studying initiatives, we are observing the adoption of new roles for civil society actors, as well as a transformation of the types of partnerships with other mainstream actors (state, market-based etc.). Are those shifting roles and forms of collaborative arrangements signs of a true transformation of the socio-political fabric of our society? Are these new forms of manifestation a way of going back to the original spirit of civil society, the spirit of emergence, spontaneity and participation that originally impressed Alexis de Tocqueville? Arguably, those who have now become traditional civil society actors in democracies – such as NGOs – should have transformation at the core of their organization and functioning, as well as contestation and the articulation of certain societal claims for justice, well-being, a more meaningful life, less inequality and a planet for future generations.

With this perspective in mind, we invite passionate researchers to work together on a discussion and intellectual debate addressing the following open research questions:

- What is the role of civil society in transforming current systems of provision? What are the conditions under which civil society becomes a driving force for sustainability transitions?
- Where should the civil society's engagement come into contact with formal governance structures? Where are the points of intersection? What is the role of the top-down vs bottom-up actions and governance processes?
- What are the types of formal or informal institutional and governance arrangements that maintain and sustain spontaneity and emergence? Are there any? Or is it that emergence of the new discourses and claims can only be born out of the conflict between the mainstream (including traditional civil society actors) and the claims of those whose needs are not covered/responded to?
- How to understand and unleash the transformative potential of social innovation? Is there an end to sustainability transitions – a state we can arrive at which is better than the one we have – certainly the emergence of initiatives would suggest so – or is it necessary to embed mechanisms for constant transformation, as part of a dynamic civil society?
- How to examine the role of transition initiatives in accelerating urban sustainability transitions?
- Where are the points of intersection between bottom-up and top-down movements? How can those points be made fruitful? What is the role of the top-down actors vs the role of the bottom-up actors (citizens....), or who has to do what?

In this first pressure-cooker workshop we invite you to critically think together how to bring forward transformative science by actively and consistently positioning civil society as the 'unit of interest and analysis'. We will openly share and discuss on-going research on the role of civil society, invite critical inputs and aim to co-create a viewpoint or positioning paper that explicitly addresses the above questions (relevant for transition initiatives and social innovation networks and practitioners) and policy questions (how to deal with conflating and conflicting civil society activities and needs).

SESSION I

TRANSITION INITIATIVES: A CONCEPT, A PHENOMENON OR A FALLACY?



2. Towards a European Societal Sustainability

Dominik Reusser

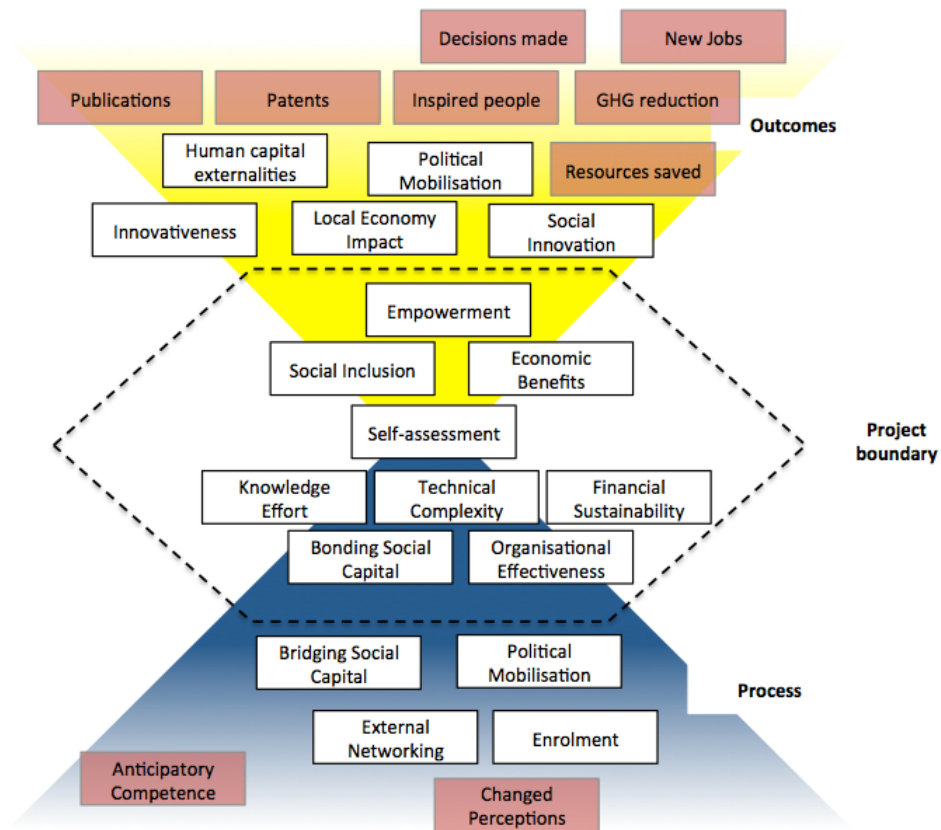
The core conceptualization of the TESS project is presented, including the hypotheses that capture the main mechanisms in which community transformative initiatives are contributing to societal sustainability in their context. The discussion over the presentation ignited the two reflectors:

2.1. Reflection 1 by Benjamin Best

How can the disparate worlds of science and civil society work together? How might an enhanced research capacity invaluable the community-based initiatives (CBIs)? The Towards a European Societal Sustainability (TESS) research proposal addresses these and other questions. It offers a measurement of potentials and impacts of CBIs, in economic terms and beyond.

Indicators: The tableau of criteria in domains knowledge, society, economics and policy seems to exclude ecological indicators. The presentation indicates, that CBIs aim to reduce GHG emissions and TESS will concern with food, waste, mobility and small-scale energy technologies. Thus it would be worthwhile to include ecological indicators like GHG reductions (CO₂) and resources (t). Also, there are some well established and relevant indicators missing in the other domains, such as a) knowledge: *patents, publications*, b) political: *decisions made*, c) economic: *new jobs*, d) social: *changed perceptions, anticipatory competence...*

Representation of indicators: After reading through the paper I found that a different form representation of the indicators would be easier to understand (for CBI-actors). Here is my suggestion:



2.2. Reflection 2 by Giuseppe Carrus

The idea at the root of the TESS project is both interesting and stimulating, especially to the extent that it will be able to find communalities in the factors that predict the success and long-term stability of low-carbon initiatives across European cultures. To ensure the success of the project and the strengthen the robustness of its findings, there is a need to define precise indicators that ensure the findings are compatible across the initiatives.

Two conceptual questions can be raised regarding the paper. First, what is the role of specific individual factors in the success of initiatives? These could include sustainable worldviews, personal motivation, social norms, self efficacy, group identity, life satisfaction, values, etc. Second, what are the outcomes of successful initiatives, beyond carbon emission reduction, for individuals and communities? We could expect some of the following: wellbeing, active citizenship, collective self-efficacy, trust, and social support.

3. Understanding acceleration dynamics of sustainability transitions

Niki Frantzeskaki

The core conceptualizations about transition initiatives and acceleration of the ARTS project is presented, including the hypotheses that capture the main mechanisms of acceleration. The discussion over the presentation ignited the two reflectors:

3.1. Reflection 1 by Felix Rauschmayer

Scaling up involves many different dimensions – geographical, temporal, political, etc. It is, however, not clear to what extent they are comparable or equivalent, for example, is accelerating the temporal equivalent of scaling up?

Regarding local initiatives, there may be a lack of precision. A big discussion has taken place within the field of critical geography in relation to the distinction between local initiatives and local players. For instance, how can we differentiate between actions by Transition Towns and those by Greenpeace?

Then, the definition of transformative change seems to focus only on basic services, though it is not necessarily clear what these would be or how their 'basic' nature could be ascertained.

The question of needs is particularly problematic in terms of the definition of environmental sustainability. How are these defined? Is there a link to those discussed in Morelli's paper? What about aspects relating to intra and inter-generational justice?

Expanding the focus of the paper could be desirable – from only one element, i.e. low carbon, to more domains, such as biodiversity (Rockström et al 2012) or education.

3.2. Reflection 2 by Michele-Lee Moore

The framing question currently is stated as: "how can local transition initiatives accelerate...?", which carries an embedded assumption that they "should" or "would". The author needs to be careful not to assume that just because a local initiative has been started, that those same people care about acceleration (i.e. they may only care about their more narrowly defined goals), or that they want to be linked to other initiatives for the purpose of acceleration. What incentives exist for these local initiatives to focus on acceleration? Currently, they will be competing with the other initiatives you hope them to link with for funding. Moreover, they will have limited capacity and resources to focus on an acceleration "mission", which could detract from achieving their initial, more narrowly defined goals.

Secondly, you may want to consider the dynamics internal to the local organizations and initiatives themselves. Even if a leader wants to focus on acceleration, this may not be well supported by other members, given that many will resist changing from their initial more narrow focus.

Thirdly, there are structural differences of the initiatives that have already been acknowledged by the project, and the types of "services" that are being explored would have difference in terms of the actor configurations that traditionally have provided them.

Previous research would indicate that the ones that will be most successful will likely have networks, access to resources, be well established, etc. But then this assumes the reverse is true, that if someone does not have resources, they should fail. EXCEPT that lots of evidence also indicates that a lack of resources makes the initiatives more likely to be innovative, to network, etc.

Therefore, my recommendation would be to re-adjust the focus on agency and the links to structural barriers, and consider that even though the barriers may be specific to a context (e.g. in some cases the barrier is a policy, in other cases it may be finances, etc.), how do agents navigate through these barriers? What motivates some agents to build the networks critical to success but not others?

4. Small Group Session I

Guiding questions:

- What is the role of civil society in transforming current systems of provision? What are the conditions under which civil society becomes a driving force for sustainability transitions?
- Where should the civil society's engagement come into contact with formal governance structures? Where are the points of intersection? What is the role of the top-down vs bottom-up actions and governance processes?
- How to examine the role of transition initiatives in accelerating urban sustainability transitions?

4.1. Group A Discussions reported by Felix Spira

There is a fundamental problem with **definitions**: it is very difficult to just talk about **civil society** – what is it? Indeed, it spans from small-scale initiatives to large organisations, each with different ambitions and practices. At the same time, civil society and government initiatives are often emphasised, but the market and business actors should be kept in mind. We should also question the role of variation between different contexts during the acceleration phase. Moreover, as civil society influences social change through social movements and messy bottom-up processes and social movement, it is undergoing a constant conceptual transformation.

In order to understand the concept of **transformative change**, it is important to investigate initiatives and list what they are doing differently compared to existing systems of provision. Interestingly, many of these initiatives are not interested in carbon reduction; they pursue diverse goals across different scales. This not only creates conflicts between governments and initiatives, but also among them. This indicates that one can use different frames (i.e., not just sustainability) to incentivize people to 'do the right thing'.

In any case, upscaling is not possible without a **resource model**. This can take numerous forms, such as developing an economically viable business model, or securing government grants and subsidies.

Interaction between initiatives and the dominant government-market logic

A central point is that initiatives do not exist in a bubble: they interact in many ways with the dominant government and market logics. This raises questions concerning the positioning of initiatives vis-à-vis the regime – how close or distant should one be to the 'centres of power'? How much are you being (or willing to be) captured by the dominant regime? How far away can you stay? For example, local initiatives in the UK are being disciplined into the top-down carbon logic of the government. It is not, however, simply a question of the regime pulling in initiatives; these can create markets and processes that make alternatives competitive and capable of diffusing. Upscaling nevertheless tends to make initiatives less radical, and initiatives can reject, challenge, or stay away from actors whom they deem illegitimate. Crises can also help initiatives to break into the mainstream. More generally, we ask whether initiatives stretch-and-transform or fit-and-conform to the existing system. In these actions,

the role of intermediate projects, hybrid actors and hybrid forums become relevant (cf. Elzen et al. 2012 and Smith 2007).

4.2. Group B discussions reported by Matthew Bach

There is the question of inclusion vs exclusion: initiatives can be socially and racially exclusive. Are we therefore problematizing based on a **positive bias**? I.e., is there a lack of attention given to negative question framings, for instance, regarding what is not being achieved? Impacts should therefore be seen as an open question, though these also vary depending on the phase in which an organization is studied (e.g., set-up, established).

What is the **background** of these initiatives? Are these people putting in their free time or are they **professionals**? It's really a mix, some "are" the initiative, others contribute a little time. In ARTS, the criterion was a minimum of 3 years for initiatives.

It is questionable whether **growth** is an indicator for the success of CBIs. Do we assume that they want this? A lot of them started out as alternative processes that did (do) not want to lock into wider or existing processes – **they don't want to end up as mainstreamed**. They want to remain more radical. In Spain, some of these movements are clear that they want to steer clear of the regime: they want to be **self-sustaining**. TRANSIT has also faced these issues. There is therefore an alternative vs. marginal tension.

Motivations are really different and this **diversity also makes initiatives stronger**.

In asking what the role of civil society is, we implicitly recognize that it has been **evolving**. There is therefore an underlying role, as well as a **state agenda** (e.g., a way to shrink the state). The private sector is also interested, raising the **question of capture**: if initiatives become bigger they might become instruments for a shrinking state or private companies. Linked to this is a question about the role of transnational corporations.

There are also some methodological issues. Defining issues in terms of a **city or regional perspective** may be part of the problem instead of the solution. The whole local/global issue is something that people do not appear to understand. It is equally problematic to depart from a **hypothesis basis** rather than grounded research. While this is motivated by how funding agencies rate proposals, if we really want to understand these initiatives we need a more **emergent, diverse, multi-perspective, richer understanding**.

There is a risk that we look at initiatives because we get excited, but this comes with the perhaps naïve notion that they want to be **discovered** and **come to light** – they might, however, want to continue doing their own thing in the shadows. In ARTS, we don't always think of **governance processes** as institutionalized ones: civil society initiatives often show that they can **set up their own** governance processes and agendas.

We need to make our understanding of **civil society – state interactions** more **complex**. That's why we need for more longitudinal studies: as there are iterative cycles of interactions, e.g. cycles of protest theories, engagement, etc.

ARTS is based on a lot of existing research on initiatives, as well as from **us asking them** what they need or would like. They have been happy so far, though have generally been frustrated with researchers treating them as **data-cows** – we are therefore creating a **bi-directional flow**. For example, **initiatives ask us** to make the research results available to them, help them get the bigger picture of the interactions in their area, get to know who else is working on similar things (finding each other), and knowing how others do it in other cities.

A related question is that of **readability**. There is a lot of information produced by different research teams. While mapping processes and inventories may be helpful, finding a way to read through all this can be **challenging and discouraging**. Defining the **added value** of one's project is also important in this regard.

Policy-makers and the **mass media** can play a powerful role. People perceive that the power is present and supportive, and the mass media contributes to the general representation that an initiative is something relevant and worth supporting.

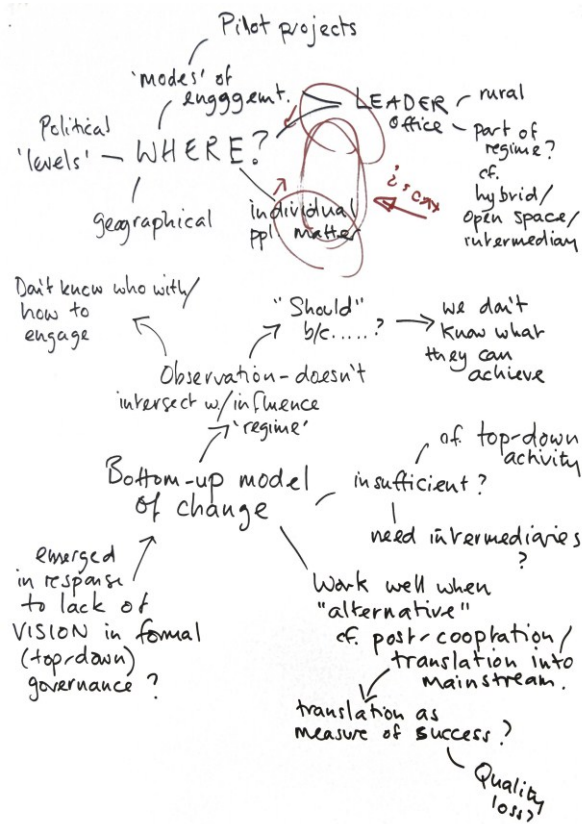
What about **social media**? A lot of news channels go out and look in “Twitterland” for stories. Has this changed the visibility or the role for civil society? I think social media has changed our awareness. Early social-psychological studies found that the mass media is useful in terms of awareness-raising, but not so much in terms of influencing. Is this the same for social media?

And what about organizations on the margins of legality? Some of them do not want to be visible, which brings us back to the **question of upscaling**.

Returning to the need for **longitudinal studies**, we forget at our peril that **everything has a history**: civil society organizations, but also individuals (their individual trajectories, how they have changed, etc.). This is not unimportant when talking about the development of CBIs. For example, we're looking at labor organizations and trade unions and at leaders within those who are talking about climate change. How did they get there? They came through education, through the church, etc. This is another dimension of this.

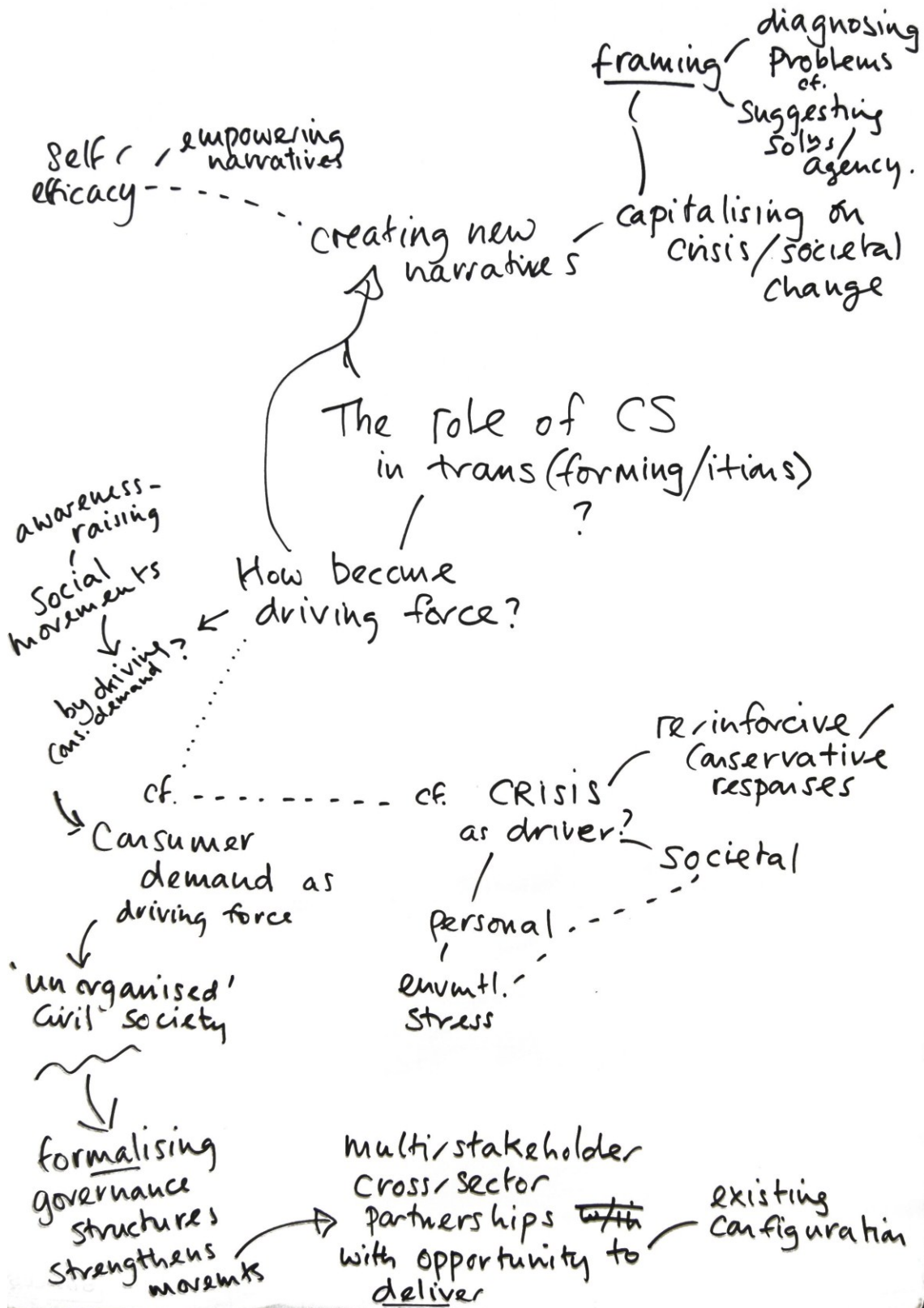
We feel that we miss the **bigger picture** if we just look at contextually embedded initiatives. This also creates an us/them divide. In ARTS, we want to examine this tension (**inclusivity vs. exclusivity**), so we need to look at how these relations might be explored. Yet, one **cannot do everything** in a project. You can look at these islands, but they're still highly connected to others. Even those who are more extreme in wanting to be left alone (e.g., ecovillages) still have this global element. **It's never only the island.**

4.3. Group C discussions reported by Rachel Durrant



Intermediary organizations can help to create links between initiatives and government structures. In some cases, these are not needed, as initiatives can interact directly with governments and businesses, for instance through leaders that link different organisations. This intermediate space can exist and might not need to be institutionalised in the form of a lead-office, formal projects, or organisations. An intermediate space can be important for the spread of initiatives, and is a place where bottom-up and top-down can meet. Intermediary actors are therefore organisations and bridging actors that span several stakeholder groups. We may, nonetheless, not need to construct this space, as some initiatives are hybrid from the outset.

In terms of the role of civil society, consumers can also be included – i.e., certain people want to change their lifestyles through consumption can be seen as a form of unorganised civil society. There are multiple ways of organizing this form of civil society (e.g., multi-stakeholder processes, cross-sector partnerships). How, then, can civil society become a driving force of change? Crises can act as a trigger by creating and empowering new and different narratives, while also providing alternative scenarios. This makes it possible to capitalize on crises as a trigger for social change. The question of whether crises should be provoked is, however, less clear.



5. Session I Recap

S. Session I

- what about civil society and market relations

- interactions of initiatives with government

- connect → should it connect?

- coalitions between different coalition groups

- leadership / charisma → the individual factor

- connect to formal structures

* upscaling and how to do it

* how to identify which are the 'players' → work together

* how to stretch and transform the system

• how to define t-initiatives better
* look at practices

• how history teaches about the impact via social movements

• does the notion of civil society transform over time?

• normative aspect → should it be → do you keep initial idea

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN Sustainability Transitions

ROLE

- variability to context

- resistance forces

* why is intermediary space is needed:

- to disperse them, to upscale them

* radicality ↔

SESSION II

SOCIAL INNOVATION: A PHENOMENON, A MOVEMENT OR A TREND?



6. Green lifestyles, alternative models and up-scaling regional sustainability

Adina Dumitru

6.1. Reflection 1 by Richard Stedman

This paper develops a larger conception of lifestyle, especially concerning different perceptions thereof and how they relate to understandings of time and space. There is also the question of how structure influences lifestyles. In empirical terms, the relationship of objective and subjective wellbeing could be examined; in particular, how they intersect or how close they are.

The focus on leisure is a very good point, as this plays an integral part in how we constitute our identities and how we identify feedbacks that will have impact on our behavior and lifestyles. Yet the variability is potentially large. Focusing on lifestyle profiles can be construed as Eurocentric, all the more when it is considered that individuals identify themselves according to their leisure preferences.

With regard to the experience of time and place, it could be beneficial to think about the primary drivers behind those patterns, as well as variations both within and across contexts. Specifically regarding the spatial dimension, there is a complex relationship between attachment and sustainable behavior. Many elements intervene in it but place identity is not the only space of attachment. Attachment can also relate to mal-adaptive behaviors.

6.2. Reflection 2 by Constanze Binder

The focus here is on the conceptualization of wellbeing. When thinking about lifestyles, there should be a move away from consumption towards activities. This is fascinating in that it makes it possible to examine the setting within which these are chosen. Broadening the conceptual framework also allows help to disentangle goals, consumption, and lifestyle. Additionally, doing so implies that lifestyle changes need not lead to a loss of wellbeing.

There are, however, two issues. First, subjective wellbeing in terms of desires, motivations, and how desires can adapt to your surroundings and how this can bring new activity patterns. Is there a danger that you get some adaptation phenomena in societies by taking on board the subjective wellbeing? Second, what are the implications, for instance, on transitions? (a) It shifts the focus: how to design institutions to promote sustainable lifestyles (b) Hype on nature literature: Decision architecture that the person will choose on time pressure one alternative over another. Would broadening of the framework allow discussing changes in lifestyles in individual and collective lifestyles.

7. Shifting power relations in sustainability transitions

Flor Avelino and Julia Wittmayer

7.1. Reflection 1 by Ines Omann

The research question underlying this paper is as follows: how can we conceptualise *who* are the different actors exercising power in transition, and what are the (shifting) power *relations* between them?

A multi-actor perspective is used to link four sectors (community, state, business and third sector) along three axes (non for profit, profit; formal, informal; private, public), and across three types of actors (individual, organisation, sectors). This framework connects them to different types of power (power over, different power, more or less power in certain contexts), providing a good way to grasp complexity, as well as a good overview of multiple roles and interdependencies. It may, nevertheless, be too complex for empirical use, though the idea to use it for network analysis and stakeholder choice is good. Specific examples from the different classifications could be helpful, for instance, for the three levels of power distinguished by authors – relational, dispositional and structural or for different forms of power (over, different, more/less). It could also be useful to indicate more clearly how this conceptualization could be used empirically as a tool for network analysis or stakeholder selection.

One particularly positive point is that assumptions are made explicit: the regime has more power than niches, the regime is linked to the state and niches to community, etc. However, power is not clear at all levels (niche, regime, landscape): niche-regime dynamics exists.

Power shifts are also important for sustainability transitions, though the paper does not elaborate on this. Grassroots movement should become more important, but how can this be supported? What other power shifts are important or are already taking place?

There is the further issue that one person can have different hats and roles: neighbour, consumer, member of an association, policy-maker (one role from each sector), with different power levels (none as a neighbour, very high as a policymaker), as well as being a part of an organisational actor (such as an institution). What does this mean for their roles in sustainability transitions (as all four have a role)? What could research or Transition Management do to support these actors throughout the transition phases?

7.2. Reflection 2 by David Uzzell

Where is the change in sustainability transitions?

It should go without saying that the concept of transition necessarily involves the notion of change. Although your paper constructs a highly sophisticated, nuanced model of the relationship between various structures and agents that contribute to civil society in sustainability transitions, paradoxically I could not see in the paper how change happens. The word change appears four times, but usually in reference to the outcomes of change. Nowhere do we read how these structures and agents have in them, processes that create 'engines for change'. What are the mechanisms within structures, agents, relationships that lead to sustainability transitions?

Clarification at the borders

I liked the way that you challenged the idea of strong borders between civil society, the state and the market. The borders are not only flexible but also *permeable*. But it also has to be recognised that there are also contradictions between and within these elements. Civil society organisations can be part of the dominant power relations while simultaneously resisting them. For example, the Church is normally seen as a conservative force that acts in tandem with the state. Yet the development of social movements and trade unions in Brazil was supported by one element of the Roman Catholic Church, namely Liberation Theology, a theology that argued that the church should identify not with the state, but with the poor and the dispossessed. Likewise, individuals engage simultaneously in practices of resistance as well as subordination, i.e., while they are opposing certain policies of the state or the character of the state in general (a dictatorship) they might simultaneously engage in practices of gender, ethnic, class or other forms of oppression within their own group. Through such everyday practices they contribute to the structures that support the state.

This leads to a second point. There is no consensus in the literature on what is civil society – for some the term is used as shorthand for NGOs, social movements etc., in other words, organisations that lie in contradistinction to the state and sometimes to the dominant economic structures. While you put forward a multi-layered model of civil society, I nevertheless thought that there was a degree of ambiguity and lack of clarity in the paper about the nature of civil society. There are alternative understandings of civil society. For example, for Gramsci civil society is not an agglomeration of organisations or social movements but a space of political struggle and contestation over ideas and where hegemony is constructed and challenged. Some models of Civil Society – State – Market are overly simplistic. While introducing the notion of 'third sector' is interesting, I'm not sure that it either helps us understand civil society; two wrongs don't make a right. Likewise there is ambiguity when you discuss the state. You suggest that it is not only government departments: "*Therein it is important to remember that 'the state' does not only refer to government departments or politicians, but also to the individual behaviour of 'citizens' and 'voters', and how they collectively help shape 'the state'.*" (12-13). The state is certainly more than government departments – it also comprises the instruments of the state (i.e., the judiciary, the police, the military etc.). If we take an Althusserian perspective, we would also include the practice of interpellation through which the state and organisations constituted or at least co-constituted by the state (e.g. family, the church, the education system, the arts) reproduces its ideology by calling on people to be (come) a worthy citizen ('le bon sujet'). Is this what you mean when you say it also refers to "*the individual behaviour of 'citizens' and*

'voters', and how they collectively help shape 'the state'. If so, this shows how civil society organizations are always present within and against the state simultaneously.

The structures and relationships of power are not placeless

Although the importance of context is highlighted, the paper reads as if one can discuss the mechanisms of power in the abstract. Of course, at one level we can, and this may be helpful, but we should not forget that what terms like state, government, civil society, public/private mean in different places can be very different.

For example, the contemporary interest in civil society is partly a result of the uprisings in Eastern Europe in the 1980's (and indeed there was something of the same explanation employed in the early stages of the Arab Spring), and the opposition to the military dictatorships in Latin America. In these cases, civil society is seen as a system-changing force. On the other hand, in liberal democracies of Western Europe, civil society is more often seen as a cog in the engine of governance that serves to both strengthen the existing democratic system and act as a watchdog against the excesses and intrusions of the state into the realm of the public and private. It is probably for this reason that in the 'West' civil society is usually equated with organisations like environmental and human rights groups.

In parallel to place/space, there is the issue of time; these processes have a history. Not only are sustainable practices in transition (i.e., changing), but so are the forces driving those changes.

8. Small Group Session II

The second small-group session extended on the highlights indicated during the plenary discussion. The focus was on the role of civil society, and the way intermediary structures play out in enabling or catalyzing the operation and longevity of transition initiatives.

8.1. Group A discussion reported by Felix Spira

Is civil society part of the counter-movement or a cog?

- We need a typology and conceptual differentiation of the notion of civil society. For example, domain (food, energy) and degree of radicality.
- Does sustainability mean, you lose the radical? Mainstreaming the radical. Is this possible? Do you have to lose the radical to mainstream sustainability?
- When do we challenge the status quo and when do we reproduce it? What does it mean to 'unpack' the status quo? Does sustainability go beyond reducing negative impacts?
- Is there something that civil society can do in driving sustainability transitions that is different from what business and government can do?
- Why are there more spaces for radicality within civil society?

How do we understand the processes of change from niche-regime interaction?

- Role of interfaces/intermediate spaces/initiatives/projects -> can be collaborative and conflictual. It is often the case that we see interactions in dichotomies: antagonistic – synergy / more interface – no interface. If it is too antagonistic you do not have any intermediate space
- Social change labs that challenge status quo to different degrees and are positioned at different leverage points in the system; similar to transition arena concept
- Cycles of engagement and retrieval of an initiative with the state over time
- Transition initiatives: keep the radical core and get back to it over time; translate practices to the regime. In this way transition initiatives challenge the unsustainable, stop reproducing the existing status quo and start re-producing more sustainable practices.
- Transition town initiatives in UK, Canada and Sweden very different, due to differences in context
- Place makers and place shakers; do you want them to clash to keep each other in shack, create competition.
- There is also a task division between initiatives: radical ones and those that work more within the system. Transformation of power: is it as a consequence or cause of change? Do we need more eco-villages or do you need more retrofitting?
- It is important to see initiatives as part of larger movements, e.g. the solidarity economy, the degrowth movement, the environmental movement. To better understand their evolution, we need to consider that the trajectory of how civil society develops is very historically bound.
- What makes movements to intersect? E.g. sharing, environmental justice, energy transition, etc.
 - o Amazon rainforest: indigenous movement, human rights, conservation

- Can be very powerful to combine lobby power
- Add hoc alliances that are being created around certain shocks, when problems are framed in a way that attracts to the frames of multiple social movements
- Easier to challenge/criticise/problematicize than developing positive visions/ideas/attractors?
- Initiatives as being opposed to the status-quo or creating a new attractor/vision; creating new attractors rather than getting pulled into the old.

8.2. Group B discussion reported by Matthew Bach

Do we need intermediary organizations or platforms? There is usually a big barrier between the two – there could even just be an informal group who meet to facilitate or connect. This interface can also just be a room or a setting to meet (e.g. for regular events or roundtables) – concept of an **open space without top-down power**. This space could be thought of as the **public sphere**; a crucible for ideas and interactions.

The need for an intermediary space is supported by practical experience: individuals from initiatives don't feel comfortable going to city hall, and vice versa. Thus, a **neutral place can lead to success, and can be enabled by "neutral" or intermediate actor of researchers**. Action research is very good for opening these kinds of spaces for open communication. Regarding this boundary, it's at the same time a separation and a blurred space. But there are also transaction costs.

Such spaces are particularly productive if people came to the table **as people** within a community rather than as representatives of specific interests. There is, however, always a tension – people are inevitably linked to interests and organizations. And yet, this can be positive: by allowing people to be transparent about who they are and how they feel, they can also be empowered. **Facilitation can enable more fluid identities**. This leads to a **real conversation instead of roleplay**. This perspective may, however, **challenge the niche/regime actor dyad**. While this distinction makes sense analytically, it may lose its sense when applied to individuals (empirically), as these can take on multiple roles.

It seems that the particular relations that we're talking about will be so variable according to the context. Trying to figure out some **mid-level theories** (e.g., drivers, parameters) would be helpful. We also need to consider the **diversity of these interactions** and relate them to the role of civil society – cf. stretch and transform or fit and conform? There are different ways of connecting to the system.

There is a **tension between intention and outcome (and vice versa)** – so intent or results? There are also **those who might really change, but don't engage and you don't find them**. **"Hidden innovation"** – what to do with those actors who do really good things but don't want to be connected at all. **Disappointed from the system and go back**. We need to accept if they say no.

We should consider the **other side of the curve, engaged in practices not for transformational reasons but just because "it makes sense" in different ways**. So think

about the whole curve of civil society: they're an untapped reservoir of potentiality. For instance, a shift in context can bring about transformational behavior – exogenous forces: you can create activists by reframing an activity that was not transformational.

8.3. Group C discussions reported by Niki Frantzeskaki

Theory of change and how do we see civil society: **as a counter movement or a cog?**

European sources civil society programs, self-servicing programs also influence the context in which civil society organisations emerge and operate. In general civil society is co-opting in the general disciplining process and it is often instrumentalised by the machinery of the state.

When examining and researching the civil society, we need to keep in mind that ***civil society is not a uniform body*** the same way that the state is not a uniform body of interests, needs and preferences. It is important to consider the differences within the civil society.

A valid and timely proposition. Intellectually it is a valid proposition that civil society will play a very important role in the future of Europe. At the same time, civil society organisations already play a significant role and are part of reality in cities and states. It remains as a question to be explored: what is the role of civil society in the future sustainability of Europe? How do we develop an empirically grounded answer to this question? How powerful is the civil society in Europe today? Do you relate it to historical benchmarks, different types of power roles, comparing it to social movements, or even look at what are the examples of agency, measure how they operate and ask whether it is sufficient to address the sustainability challenges?

When invigorating and elucidating the role of civil society in sustainability transitions, we need to remain reflective to the starting assumptions on their role and position. For example, it is implicit in the way we talk about transitions, that we are locked in the market logic even when addressing the role of civil society. There is an underlying skepticism in the ability of dominant institutions to produce transformations, not complying with the dominant discourses. This creates a hope that civil society will be the engine for change, and will create the innovative and transformative agency to bring in the more alternative reality. There is the hope on the ability and capacity of civil society to bring about sustainability transformations also ignited the distrust on other actors due to the lacking social agenda next to the market and/or political agendas.

In understanding how civil society engages in circles of change within the state we need to conceptually investigate and connect the following aspects present in civil society's role manifestations:

- Domination versus resistance: the effect of fighting with the two dimensions results on something new....
- Motivation: People come together because of the frustration and the deligitimisation of the state, the distrust of the state . The market does not step in because of the crisis, and the austerity as a driving force for asking all these questions.

- Distance: How change can come on the fringes on the status quo? But what if it happens from within? Is distance necessary? Do we have to have distance from existing structures? Example: the trade unions have been discredited
- Dependency: there is much dependency on the stability that the state provides, and what happens when the state cannot provide anymore this stability? So that may be a force to create this distance.
- Presence of a special individual: If you are pushing radical agendas / alternatives and you are close to power, then you need to be a very special individual to break-free from the expectations of your role. Play the game and at the same time ensure autonomy and distance to reflect. Need to be a Trojan horse to the system to keep performing but also to push for transformations.
- Making the system work for the initiatives?: what if we read the context wrong? That transition initiatives instead of being disciplined, they 'use' the system for their own mission when needed and then retreat.
- Civil society being instrumentalised: People taking advantage of civil society initiatives, turning them as an instrument for serving own needs/targets but without returning to the civil society --- corrodes the goals of civil society
- It is a problem of imbalance within the civil society, with larger civil society organisations claiming that smaller groups (grassroots for example) have same agendas
- State versus the civil society: Peeling off civil society organisations to incept pieces that are relevant, instrumentalising civil society is a risk and a threat to the hope that civil society can be the transformative force towards sustainability.

9. Plenary Discussion and concluding thoughts

Invigorating on the role of civil society in sustainability transitions highlighted the following that we choose to have as concluding thoughts for future research and exploration:

- Understanding the diversifying role of civil society in Europe's sustainability pathway is a valid proposition both scientifically and socially.
- There are different roles that civil society takes up in its co-existence with other actors:
 - The cog for transformations to sustainability
 - The safeguard and self-servicing actor of social needs and social conflicts
 - The hidden innovator that wants to contribute to sustainability but remain disconnected from other spheres of social life
- There are also some threats to putting all the hopes on civil society for igniting sustainability transitions:
 - People taking advantage of civil society initiatives, turning them as an instrument for serving own needs/targets but without returning to the civil society --- corrodes the goals of civil society
 - Civil society initiatives can be instrumentalised by neoliberal agendas to support their narratives on decentralization and retreat of the state
 - Civil society initiatives can be peeled off to serve political agendas at times and be left depowered and/or exhausted from over-exposure.



10. List of Participants

Ulrich Brand	University of Vienna, Austria
Constanze Binder	.Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL
Benjamin Best	Wuppertal Institute, Germany
Rachel Durrant	.SPRU, Sussex University, UK
Markus Egermann	IOER, Dresden, Germany
Felix Spira	DRIFT, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL
Niki Frantzeskaki	.DRIFT, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL
Derk Loorbach	DRIFT, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL
Adina Dumitru	.University of Corunna, Spain.
Ricardo Garcia Mira	University of Corunna, Spain
Ines Omann	.UFZ, Leipzig, Germany
Felix Rauschmayer	UFZ, Leipzig, Germany
.Giuseppe Carrus	Università Roma Tre, Italy
Julia Wittmayer.	.DRIFT, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL
Flor Avelino	DRIFT, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL
.Alex Haxeltine.	University of East Anglia, UK
Dominik Reusser	Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Germany
.Isabelle Anguelovski	ICTA, Autonomous University Barcelona, Spain
David Uzzell	.University of Surrey, UK
.Peter Knorringa	Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL
Michele-Lee Moore	University of Victoria, Canada
Per Olsson	Stockholm Resilience Center, Sweden
Richard Stedman	Cornell University, Ithaca, USA
Giorgia Silvestri	DRIFT, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL
Matthew Bach	DRIFT, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL
Keighley McFarland	DRIFT, Erasmus Uni Rotterdam, NL

11. Agenda

09.30-10.00 Welcome and coffee

Session I – Transition Initiatives: a concept, a phenomenon or a fallacy?

10.00-10.10 Welcome, objectives of the workshop and round of introductions
Niki Frantzeskaki

10.10-10.25 Presentation #1: Towards a European Societal Sustainability
Dominik Reusser

10.25-10.40 Presentation #2: Understanding acceleration dynamics of sustainability transitions, *Niki Frantzeskaki*

10.40-11.00 Reflectors' Inputs
Paper #1: *Benjamin Best & Giuseppe Carrus*
Paper #2: *Felix Rauschmayer & Michele-Lee Moore*

11.00-11.10 *Coffee break*

11.10-12:00 Small Group Session I

12.00-12.30 Plenary Discussion
Facilitator: *Derk Loorbach*

12.45-13.45 *Lunch*

Session II – Social innovation: a phenomenon, a movement or a trend?

13.45-14.00 Presentation #3: Green lifestyles, alternative models and up-scaling regional sustainability, *Adina Dumitru*

14:00-14.15 Presentation #4: Shifting power relations in sustainability transitions
Flor Avelino

14.15-14.45 Reflectors' Inputs
Paper #3: *Richard Stedman & Constanze Binder*
Paper #4: *Ines Oman & David Uzzell*

14:45-15:40 Small Group Session II

15.40-16.00 *Coffee break*

16.00 GROUP PICTURE and recharge moment!

16.05-16.45 Plenary Discussion
Facilitator: *Julia Wittmayer*

16.45-17.15 Closing of the day , next steps and check-out (*Niki Frantzeskaki*)

17.15 *Drinks and snacks*