

**transformative  
social innovation  
theory**



# **TRANSIT - Third integration workshop**

**Motivations, relations and transformations: the role of  
social learning in individual and collective agency for  
social innovation**

TRANSIT - Third integration workshop  
People-Environment Research Group

A Coruña, 8-9 June, 2016  
Faculty of Educational Sciences.  
First Floor (“Salon de Grados”)  
University of A Coruña

**Draft program**

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# Motivations, relations and transformations: the role of social learning in individual and collective agency for social innovation

People-Environment Research Group

## 1. Justification

The TRANSIT project aims at developing a middle-range theory of transformative social innovation (TSI), through a combination of interdisciplinary theoretical development and empirical research on a series of case studies of social innovation initiatives. To achieve an understanding of how the phenomenon of social innovation contributes to transformative change, we combine a systemic perspective with a micro-theory of change, informed by social psychological perspectives that can bring an understanding of human agency and processes of individual and collective empowerment that are key to understanding how societal change comes about.

In TRANSIT, we define social innovation as “changing social relations, involving new ways of thinking, doing, organizing and framing” (Haxeltine *et al.*, 2015). But how do these changes happen, what drives them, and what is the role played by different actors in these processes? In order to answer such a question, a psychologically-informed understanding of processes of change within social innovation initiatives and in their interaction with the wider social context is needed. In TRANSIT, an understanding of the dynamic interplay between agency and structure is considered crucial for transformative social innovation, and a micro-theory of change is thus an important part of such an endeavor.

Such a theory is unconceivable without an understanding of processes of learning. Social learning has become a much used concept in debates on participatory democratic processes and social change more generally. Social learning is described alternatively as a desired outcome of participation, as a process that can lead to other valued outcomes such as individual and collective empowerment, consensus-building, and skill development, and as a cause or an integral part of processes of individual and collective agency. Scientific work on social learning draws on multi-disciplinary resources and has become a well-defined domain of inquiry. However, the concept is often used in rather fuzzy ways, there is a lack of clarity in differentiating between what social learning is, what forms it takes in the different contexts in which it is used, what its outcomes are, and how it can best be assessed and measured in empirical research.

The third TRANSIT integration workshop will focus on the following question: what drives the quest for social innovation and how does social learning contribute to the creation of new social relations, involving new ways of thinking, knowing, doing and framing?

Such an account requires an understanding of what drives the search for alternative social relations, and alternative modes of doing, framing, organizing and knowing, as well as persistence in social innovation endeavors. It thus needs an account of motivations. Empirical research in Batch I and preliminary analyses of Batch II case studies indicate that self-determination theory might provide an adequate framework for the understanding of what motivates people to start or join social innovation initiatives, as well as what might drive the quest of such initiatives to achieve wider societal change/transformation. The desire to create social and institutional contexts that support basic psychological need satisfaction and supportive and satisfactory human relations across a variety of institutional contexts and logics seems to be an important driver of social innovation.

Furthermore, social innovation initiatives constitute spaces of experimentation where new social relations are negotiated and configured. Differences in understandings of the societal issues the initiative tackles or on the strategies to follow to bring about transformative change are likely to be contentious issues and the success of the initiative members in finding solutions for such tensions, as well as resolving differences of opinion regarding how to develop over time will have an influence on their ability to have a transformative impact.

Based on empirical research in Batch I case studies, TRANSIT has proposed that individual and collective agency develop through the experimentation with new ways of relating within the social innovation initiative and the successful resolution of tensions between the need to shape the social innovation in ways that maintain sufficient space for autonomous action (Haxeltine et al., 2015). Social learning is expected to play a key role in the development of such new ways of relating, and the mechanisms and processes through which this happen will be explored.

Finally, social innovation initiatives engage with existing institutions and actors in their more or less explicit efforts to achieve transformative impact. These interactions are likely to contribute to learning that has an impact on both individual and collective transformation towards (dis)empowerment and becoming a more or less effective transformative 'agent'. Transit has argued that individual actors and social innovation initiatives and their networks) are empowered (or disempowered) through specific *"processes of learning between individuals and groups at the level of the initiative/network, but also beyond the initiative/network to the broader social context"* (Haxeltine et al, 2015:54). The workshop will explore the relationship between, on the one hand, social learning and (dis)empowerment and, on the other, social learning and institutional transformative impact of social innovation initiatives.

The workshop will thus focus on the following three themes for discussion:

- 1) **Motivations** in transformative social innovation ambitions
  - 2) **Processes** through which new social relationships are established, contexts that foster satisfaction of basic psychological needs and the role of social learning in such processes
  - 3) **The role of social learning** in achieving transformative impact.
- The workshop will consist of a combination of invited presentations that will aim to bring a novel perspective to TRANSIT discussions; paper presentations by TRANSIT researchers (including two presentations that will integrate empirical data from the different case studies); and a series of group discussions that will aim to distill a series of useful practical insights on social learning. We invite all TRANSIT researchers that have an interest in this theme to participate in the workshop and contribute to the discussions.

## 2. Questions to be addressed

- What types of motivations drive (ongoing) involvement in processes of transformative change and how do these influence the theories of change that social innovation initiatives construct and the strategies they use to bring about societal transformation?
- How do these motivations relate to processes of empowerment and disempowerment of members, at different stages in the development of the initiatives, and what are the elements that lead to cohesion and flexibility rather than dissolution/dispersion and rigidity?
- How do different processes of social learning relate to individual and collective transformation at different stages? What types of individual and collective transformation processes lead to visions, values, identities and motivations that support action? How can we effectively conceptualize and map social learning processes, as well as maintain ongoing personal and collective reflection on processes and stages of transformation?
- What is/should be the relation between social learning and policy support in social innovation processes? Learning and non-learning in social policy institutions.
- Does social learning have meaning for the initiatives? Do the initiatives design/organize social learning processes consciously to promote empowerment?

### 3. Agenda

Wednesday, 8 June 2016

Faculty of Educational Sciences. Room: "Salon de Grados" (First Floor)  
Campus de Elviña. University of A Coruña

When	What	Where
09:00-09:30	Check in and welcome coffee	UDC
	<b>Introductory remarks</b>	UDC
09:30-10:00	<b>Social innovation and the transformation of politics</b> Professor <b>Ricardo García Mira</b> , University of A Coruña and President of the International Association for People-Environment Studies.	
	<b>Welcome and workshop introduction</b> <b>Adina Dumitru</b> , University of A Coruña	
10:00-11:00	<b>SOCIAL LEARNING IN COLLECTIVE AGENCY FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION</b>  Inspirational lecture: <b>Agency in processes of personal and collective change: the role of social learning in the case of Fiare Banca Etica</b> <b>Pedro Manuel Sasia</b> , leader of the credit cooperative movement in Spain and Professor at Deusto University, Basque Country, Spain.	UDC
11:00-11:20	<i>Coffee break.</i>	UDC
11:20-12:30	<b>Paper session: SOCIAL LEARNING INSIGHTS IN TRANSIT CASE-STUDIES</b> Chair: <b>Iris Kunze</b> , Center for Global Change and Sustainability, Austria. Note-taker: Alberto Díaz  <b>Social learning for transformative social innovation: empirical research outcomes of TRANSIT</b>	UDC

**Adina Dumitru** and **Isabel Lema-Blanco**, University of A Coruña, Spain.

**Social media, social learning and the basic income movement**

**Rene Kemp** and **Julia Backhaus**, University of Maastricht, the Netherlands and **Bonno Pel**, Free University of Brussels, Belgium.

**Practitioner engagement in social innovation: the role of social learning**

Tim Strasser and Rene Kemp, University of Maastricht, the Netherlands.

UDC

**DISCUSSION SESSION 1**

**Enhancing learning for transformative agency**

*Speakers and participants distributed in small groups*

12:30- Working groups: Practitioner + researcher

14:00 *Group1: Flor Avelino; note-taker: Helena*

*Group2: Iris Kunze; note taker: Alberto*

*Group 3: Bonno Pel; note taker: Monica*

*Group 4: Isabel Lema; note-taker...*

Plenary

14:00- Lunch  
15:30

UDC

**Paper session: INDIVIDUAL AND RELATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL INNOVATION INITIATIVES**

UDC

15:30-  
18:30

**Chair: Adina Dumitru**, University of A Coruña, Spain.

Note-taker: Helena Martínez

15:30-  
16:30

**Increasing the learning potential and reflective agency capacities through a critical turning points database.** *Design exercise for the CTP database.*

**Bonno Pel** and **Tom Bauler**, Free University of Brussels, Belgium.

16:30-

**Searching for a new mode of community in social innovation**

17:20	<p><b>initiatives</b>  <b>Iris Kunze</b>, Center for Global Change and Sustainability, Austria.</p> <p><b>Transforming social relations in social innovation initiatives</b>  <b>Carla Cipolla</b>, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brasil</p>	
17:20- 18:30	<p><b>DISCUSSION SESSION 2</b></p> <p><b>The quest for new social relations and new societal arrangements in social innovation and sustainability initiatives: insights for practitioners and researchers</b>  <i>Speakers and participants distributed in small groups</i>  <i>Group 1: Jens Dorland; Note taker: Helena</i>  <i>Group 2: Tim Strasser; Note taker: Alberto</i>  <i>Group 2: Carla Cipolla; Note taker: Monica</i>  <i>Group 4: Tom Bauler; Note-taker:.....</i></p>	UDC
20:30	Dinner with a sea view, Porto Cobo Hotel	

## Thursday, 9 June 2016

Faculty of Educational Sciences. Room: "Salon de Grados" (First Floor)  
 Campus de Elviña. University of A Coruña

When	What	Where
09:30- 10:00	Guided exercise: <b>Deeper motivations and personal transformations</b>	UDC
10:00- 11:00	<p><b>MOTIVATIONS FOR CHANGE</b></p> <p>Invited lecture: <b>Self-determination theory –a motivational account of the quest for social change –</b>            Professor <b>Kennon Sheldon</b>, University of Missouri, USA</p>	UDC
11:00- 11:20	<i>Coffee break.</i>	UDC



	<p><b>Paper session MOTIVATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE</b></p> <p><b>Chair: Ricardo García Mira</b>, University of A Coruña Note taker: Helena Martínez</p> <p><b>Motivations for transformative social innovations: TRANSIT results</b> <b>Adina Dumitru, Isabel Lema and Ricardo García Mira</b>, University of A Coruña, Spain</p>	UDC
11:20- 12:40	<p><b>Becoming a change agent in sustainability initiatives</b> Ferdinando Fornara, University of Cagliari, Italy</p> <p><b>Temporal Autonomy: Exploring Flexibility, Everyday Life, and Wellbeing</b> <b>Tony Craig</b>, The James Hutton Institute, Scotland, United Kingdom.</p> <p><b>Motivations to join sustainability initiatives: the case of joining and living in an eco-village in Romania</b> <b>Irina Macsinga</b>, West University of Timisoara, Romania.</p>	
12:40- 14:00	<p><b>Conceptualizing empowerment in social innovation initiatives and its relationship to motivations for action</b> <b>Flor Avelino</b>, Dutch Research Institute for Transitions, the Netherlands, and coordinator of the TRANSIT project</p> <p><b>DISCUSSION SESSION 3</b> Discussion/working groups: Motivations and empowerment in social innovation initiatives. <i>Speakers and participants.</i></p>	UDC
14:00- 15:30	Lunch	UDC
15:30- 18:30	Guided city visit: the Tower of Hercules (World Heritage Site) and the city of A Coruña	
21:00	Dinner: restaurant to be announced	