

Transformative Social Innovation Narrative of the Ecovillage of Schloss Tempelhof (TH)



Photos: Iris Kunze, 2014

By Iris Kunze -2015-03-31



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About TRANSIT:

TRANSIT is an international research project that aims to develop a theory of Transformative Social Innovation that is useful to both research and practice. It is co-funded by the European Commission and runs for four years, from 2014 until 2017. The TRANSIT consortium consists of 12 partners across Europe and Latin America. For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/>.

About this Document/ Disclaimer:

This report provides a very short summary of a full case report that includes in-depth case-studies of the Ecovillage of Schloss Tempelhof (TH). Both, the full case reports and this summary, were guided by four empirical research questions based upon a preliminary conceptual framework of the TRANSIT-project. The four questions concern:

1. the overall development of the local cases and the transnational network(ing);
2. how they relate to different types of change and innovation (incl. social innovation, system innovation, game- changers, narratives of change and societal transformation);
3. how actors are empowered and/or disempowered in and by the local cases and the transnational network(ing), including topics such as governance, learning, resourcing and monitoring;
4. what are other relevant emergent issues with regard to understanding the dynamics of transformative social innovation.

This summary document focuses on the first three questions. It presents – in a highly reduced and generalised format – the interpretations of the researchers, and does not necessarily reflect the views and nuances of the initiatives and respondents themselves. For a full account of each transnational network and local case, including interview quotes and expressed nuances by respondents, we refer to the full case report, which is available via the contact person indicated below or via communication.transit@ihs.nl Both the full case report, as well as this summary document, are the basis for future research activities and publications.

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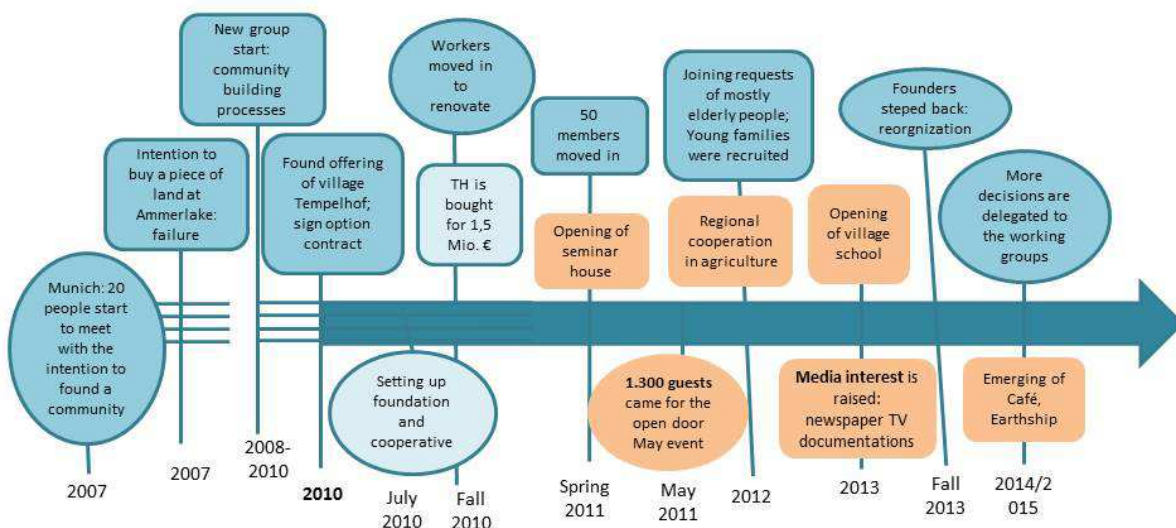
Schloss Tempelhof (TH)¹

1 Development of Schloss Tempelhof

Schloss Tempelhof (TH) was started in 2007 in Munich by about 20 entrepreneurs and activists from civil society movements like Artabana² and credit unions. The main ideas target intergenerational living, a common wealth economy, and raising the financial consciousness. With a combination of personal development and living in community, TH uses tools for building authentic communication, empathic relationships, and economic transparency. The main tool since the early starting phase is called WE-Process³.

After years of searching a suitable site near Munich, the village of Tempelhof located in the Jagstregion, a rural area in Southern Germany, state of Baden-Württemberg, is bought in December 2010 for 1,5 Million Euros plus another 4.600 Euros for every new member from the 67th person on that joins till 2017. The TH foundation owns the the property and all residents are voting members. Today, Schloss Tempelhof is a communal and self-organized village grown from 20 to 140 Inhabitants in only three years with a site of 32ha (4ha Buildings, 27ha agrarian land incl. 1ha forest). The community chose the name “*Schloss Tempelhof*” to indicate their commitment and identification with the place.

Members do not perceive Schloss Tempelhof as a classical ecovillage, because it is rather focused on social and socio-economic aspects. It became a member of GEN in 2013 after GEN has broadened its criteria. TH early started connecting with other ecovillages to learn from their experiences. They have adopted some tools like *the Forum* (of ZEGG), the building guidelines of 7Linden and many smaller and qualitative aspects of culture and practice. For detailed developmental steps see graph 2.1.



Graph 2.1: development of Schloss Tempelhof

¹ This report is a conclusion of an empirical case study of Schloss Tempelhof conducted in 2014 by Iris Kunze.

² Artabana is a self-organized health solidararian community network functioning similar like insurances. Hundreds of local communities are connected in a national wide solidarity fund. www.artabana.de (Dec.15, 2014).

³ The term Wir-Prozess was created by Schloss Tempelhof community relying on Scott Peck process of community building (Peck 2005). It is taught as public workshops and applied in other communities.

From the beginning Schloss Tempelhof was actively connecting to the region mainly in the area of agriculture. TH is not only a residential ecovillage but also employs about half of its members in part time on *need-based salaries*. TH runs a seminar house and hosts several hundred visitors a year. From the beginning media was interested in TH and in 2013 a documentary caused 25.000 hits on the website. The long-term guest helpers are increasing, especially elderly people are attracted.

2 Aspects of change and innovation

Schloss Tempelhof invites and triggers people to create social innovations. Interviewed members understand Schloss Tempelhof as an experimental space. In the following table 2.1 I interpreted aspects of Schloss Tempelhof according to the five shades of change.

Table 2.1: The five shades of change: aspects of Schloss Tempelhof

5 Shades of Change & Innovation	Aspects of Schloss Tempelhof
Narratives of change	<p>TH started in 2007, the time of the economic crises. Their main focus became to create small scale alternatives referring to narratives like gift economy, post growth economy and economy of the common good. Schloss Tempelhof is in close connection with the following networks and their narratives of change. TH often hosts their network meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Artabana: solidarity health care network all over Germany ● Communal supported agriculture: a system of a producer-consumer-cooperative and collective ownership of farms ● <i>Mehr Demokratie e.V.</i>, the German headquarter of the federal association of direct democracy has its office in Schloss Tempelhof. One of the TH founders is a board member. ● "Sinnstiftung", Foundation for a meaningful life ● Free schools: individually-adapted and self-responsible model of education
Game-changers	<p>The founders of TH started with sharing economy in Munich being aware of the economic crises. The second issue, TH was triggered by and works on alternatives is the demographical change. The founding members were motivated to become active in civil society initiatives because of the fundamental awareness that macrosystems create dependencies and cannot be influenced by individuals. Two more long term and subtle game changer are mentioned: <i>social alienation</i> and the <i>loss of community</i>.</p>
Social innovation	<p>Schloss Tempelhof works as an 'incubator' for innovations on two levels: first the infrastructure provides land, administration and tools for cooperation, governance, as well as structural and financial support. Second, the actual underlying value is a committed community with a culture of transparency, tolerance, cooperation and trust. It attracts people who want to experiment with communal and ecological methods, concretely in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eco low-technologies: the first <i>Earthship</i> in Germany is planned, a <i>Biomeiler</i> is built and already exported, permacultural methods are practiced and taught. Regional cooperation for improving ecological agriculture and preservation of the cultural landscape is successfully expanded. 2. Communal and social methods: the community building practice by Scott Peck was further developed into the WE-Process. It is practiced by the community and taught in seminars inside and outside TH; possibility management⁴ of Clinton Callahan who lived in TH gained practice and popularity by educating coaches. 3. Economic innovations, TH has created a culture of trust and gift economy for supporting members financially within a communal frame of mutual help. Furthermore an experiment in shared property and income economy had run for about two years that was recently suspended. 4. Concerning living in dignity for elders TH is making progress together with the Artabana network Germany. They bring experts together advising on advance directive and working on a concept for a hospice embedded in the community.

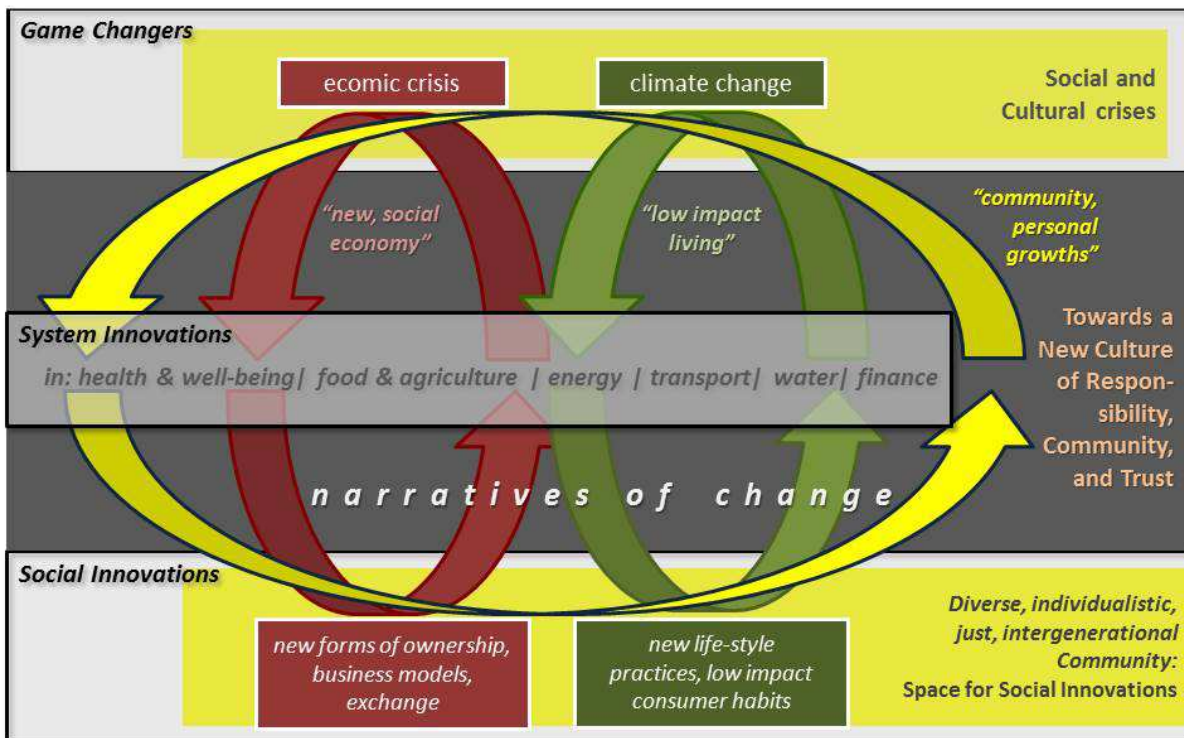
⁴ The method was developed by psychological coaches Clinton and Marion Callahan (Callahan 2009)

	<p>5. In the area of education the village school for children is a new and unique model fostering the intrinsic motivation.</p>
<p>System innovation</p>	<p>The approach of Schloss Tempelhof is not politically in the sense of changing special rules or laws. It rather strives for reclaiming services for individuals and the community that have been taken over by larger institutions like the state, corporations, or business services.</p> <p>Further their alternative and personal based system of insurances can be seen as potential system innovation. System innovations in TH are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saving affordable housing and ecological land use by cooperative ownership structures. TH has established a foundation that owns the real estate regulating the use of this piece of land with ecological and social guidelines. The land is taken out of speculation and can never be sold again. • Experimental innovations in the frame of existing building laws: first <i>Earthship</i> in Germany is about to be built • Regional integration and influence by bringing ecological and cooperative methods and systems to the agriculture of the region
<p>Societal transformation</p>	<p>After only three years of existence TH has potential of societal impact with the following three aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2013 newly founded village school gained permission by state institutions as elementary and secondary school. The model is revolutionary even compared to many free schools. It is accepted as a legal school for one year now and some parents already had move to the region because of this school. • Schloss Tempelhof is engaged in the Artabana alternative health care movement. There is a potential to introduce a new, cooperative form of caring system for disabled and ill people. • TH members are consulting 10-20 community initiatives every month about the steps how to found an intentional community project. TH offers its foundation for purchasing and owning the land to these new initiatives starting all over Germany. This can already be called a societal impact with transformative value. There are some other, mainly urban initiatives in Germany with the same intentions of communal non-speculative forms of ownership of real estate, but just for single houses in cities.

In short, I conclude that even if TH did not started as an ecovillage and does not have a primary focus on ecological living; it has realized major ecological milestones in comparison to mainstream society in Germany. Schloss Tempelhof has brought forward numerous ecological as well as socio-economic innovations in only three years of existence.

Graph 2.2 shows the five shades of change observed in Schloss Tempelhof in the TRANSIT conceptual framework of transformative change. The social and cultural crises including health care and demographical change is seen as subordinated to the economic and ecological crises. While there is no common theory on transformative change, the creation of a diverse and committed community is the paramount activity. I conclude their main themes of change address social and cultural transformation. The initiative is experimenting with new forms of governance and community providing an experimental space for social and system innovations. *Community* and *personal growth* are fundamental for a new culture triggering a subtle, long-term cultural change. Forms of social economy and low impact living are thematic, manifested expressions of this new culture.

Graph. 2.2: Five shades of change and innovation in the ecovillage of Schloss Tempelhof (source: TRANSIT and Iris Kunze)



3 Aspects of (Dis)empowerment

Realizing responsibility and individual empowerment is a main pillar of Schloss Tempelhof. They believe a co-creative community is the bases for individual empowerment. In Munich the founding members experimented with firstly economic empowerment including gift economy, and for instance supporting each other in finding creative ways to deal with personal lacks of money. TH has realized creative practices of economic empowerment. For them empowerment goes hand in hand with self-sufficiency (currently 60% of the food) and independence from insurances and large economic markets that cannot be influenced by individuals. The *need-based income* empowers members to determine their own salary which is based on transparency of what the single member spends and owns. Some newcomers felt suspicious about that kind of social control. Still I could not find any case where it was used to disempower or control someone.

Empowerment of aged people is a central aim in TH. Two third of the joining requests are people older than sixty (Interview TH5). It mirrors the longing for community by citizens in Germany – a country of demographical change. TH went through intense processes concerning empowerment and age: the elderly expected commitment by younger members for care taking in the case of disability. The younger members though rejected because of feeling disempowered (Interview TH5). TH has not worked out a solution; still the community is creating a path which integrates the zeitgeist of individual freedom expressed by their young members: They start to create attractive living conditions for young families estimating that ten healthy persons can easily take care of one person who needs intensive support.

Governance

TH is based on collective land ownership taken out of external speculation. The internal governance was carefully worked out to guarantee empowerment of all members. TH relies on the principle of *all leader* as a goal of the WE-process (Peck 2005). All interviewees mention that realizing the *all leader* principle is still a long way to go. Consensus decision making requires intense practice in self-responsible information, communication while acknowledging others. The subsidiary governance structures in TH are perceived as empowering. On the other hand have some groups experienced to be overwhelmed if the members are not competent in facilitating group processes. TH has a system of external supervisors from other groups coaching the working groups regularly. The TH principle of *all leader* is not only about equality in decision making processes, but also about honouring others. Empowering and trusting everyone with his and her contribution – may it be as manager, as artist or as garbage wo/man.

Another issue of empowerment is the process of exclusive membership selection that many established ecovillages – also TH – started with to handle with overwhelming joining requests. In TH they reject elderly people because 66% of the joining requests are people aged 60+. Affiliating all requests would be not manageable. Schloss Tempelhof members turn the tables by educating and empowering elders how to found such an ecovillage themselves. For TH, external governance was firstly related to the formal process of purchasing a piece of land with the local institutions and municipality. Further they are dependent on permissions for their enterprises, their architectural plans and the use of land. It was told that conflicts with neighbors had happened concerning agricultural issues with weed treatment and pesticides. Their unique new model of the village school was a long act to get permission by the education ministry. TH has developed a trustful connection with the regional and local municipalities. A fruitful example is the permission for some experiments of mobile homes and an *Earthship*.

Social learning

Members of Schloss Tempelhof endlessly emphasize that one can only live in such a community if he or she is willing to change her/himself while increasingly developing social competencies. The transformation to a new communal 'WE-culture' also includes the ongoing transformation of every single member 'from a rough to a gentle individualist' (Peck 2005). TH has cultivated a field where people mirror each other in daily life. Social learning is also offered to external guests: Schloss Tempelhof conciliates their own experiences in its seminar house in its most frequented courses on social competencies, relationship, community building, gift economy, and solidary health care.

It is perceived that Schloss Tempelhof members have easily the chance to learn new occupations because of three reasons: First, the community offers an informal frame to join 'friends' at their work places and get professional advice. Second, there are lots of offers where everyone can help for instance during the harvest, cooking for more than 100 people or facilitation of meetings. Third, the barrier to risk something new is low because an attitude of empathy is cultivated where failing is less crucial based on trust and broader knowledge of each other. In the area of education, the village school of Schloss Tempelhof is a new and unique model fostering the intrinsic motivation. Pupils are completely free what they want to learn and have to create their own curriculum together with learning assistants.

Resourcing

Schloss Tempelhof is shimmied by a culture of philanthropy and could only be realized due to private donations of its members. They are practicing *gift economy* – donating without expecting anything in return. I observe many TH members who had succeeded in mainstream carriers in society though had experienced a burn out to different extends. The majority of TH members is coming from a middle-class intellectual background having wondered if there is something else than making money. TH is finally rewarding those people. Also some craftsmen are members with or without property in the background working on *need-based income* in TH or making their own living. Over the years Schloss Tempelhof has established a living culture of gift economy. Engaged members organize fundraising for popular commons like the piano in the event hall. In addition to the financial resources, the members are rich of social capital, skills and knowledge.

Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluation does not happen professional or systematic in Schloss Tempelhof. An interviewee originates the missing monitoring to missing resources and being absorbed by daily life affairs. TH has just evaluated processes “where the failing could not be overlooked” (Interview TH3). At least they have an annual several day long retreat around the shift of the year to reflect on the past year, asking about how far they are on track with their goals, and what makes sense to change and plan for the next year. One of the managers had worked in evaluation before she came to TH. She says it does not fit to use official methods, but rather she observes how single members and the ‘collective field’ of the community can learn and incorporate experiences that effect and enhance the next project, decision process or business. She notices successes and appreciation have a tremendous influence on engagement and on creating successful projects (Interview TH1).

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