transformative
social innovation
theory

INFORSE TSI Narrative

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-study report that includes in-depth case-studies of the International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE) and two of its local manifestations - Vedvarende Energi (VE) in Denmark and the Association pour la Promotion des Energies Renouvelables (APERe) in Belgium. 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 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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1 Development of VE, APERe and INFORSE

INFORSE – International Network for Sustainable Energy – is a worldwide network consisting of 140 independent NGOs working in about 60 countries to promote sustainable energy. Two local manifestations have been studied, VE in Denmark and APERe in Belgium. Although all three organisations are included in this short narrative, most attention is given to VE as its different social innovations apparently are those that have contributed most to societal transformation. The development starts with the Danish local manifestation VE – Vedvarende Energi (Renewable Energy) founded in 1975 under the name OVE – Organisationen for Vedvarende Energi. (O)VE was related to the Danish anti-nuclear movement OOA, founded in 1974 and the environmental organisation NOAH, established in 1969 and since 1988 the Danish Member of Friends of the Earth. The so-called oil crisis in 1973/74 and the Danish energy sectors attempt to implement nuclear power in Denmark started the organisation. From the start, members of (O)VE was engaged in experimenting with and developing renewable energy technologies. (O)VE arranged meetings for wind enthusiasts, discussing their experiments, exchanging experiences, creating a social, informal network, eventually giving birth to the Danish wind turbine industry. It was a period of co-evolution of technology and social network.

Many of the local activities were eventually- by the mid 1980ies - embedded in local environment and energy offices, organised in the umbrella organisation SEK – and still related to (O)VE. The wind turbines grow in size in order to be more cost-effective. The size of wind turbines and the policies makes it possible for (O)VE (and related local offices under SEK) to create local wind co-operatives, which for a period is decisive for the survival of the young Danish wind turbine industry. (O)VE has been part of co-evolving the marked for wind turbines. At the same time, other renewable energy technologies are promoted without getting the same industrial breakthrough as wind energy.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and prior to the Earth Summit in Rio 1992, ideas of creating an international network of NGO's related to renewable energy starts to take shape with (O)VE as a central actor. Inspired by this, the Belgian local manifestation APERe (Association pour la Promotion des Energies Renouvelables – association for promoting renewable energy) is founded in 1991. The transnational network INFORSE is established in 1992, with a database of the member organisations as one of the main features, for instance connecting organisations in Western and Eastern Europe. APERe is close to the Wallonian government. In the first 10 years, focus was on the mere existence of renewable energy. In the last half of the 1990ies VE's relation to wind is predominantly promoting wind energy as part of scenarios of a 100 % renewable energy system. This experience is later used by INFORSE in creating scenarios for several European countries. For APERe, 2001 is the start of a decennium where it creates a market for renewable energy. For VE and INFORSE it is the start of a period with shortage of funding. However, VE gets national funding for 'Energitjenesten' as sub-organisation, focusing on energy savings in houses, using the local environment and energy offices. In 2010 (O)VE and SEK is merged into VE. Both VE; INFORSE and APERe are now working on illustrating that a 100 % renewable energy society is possible. And in later years, energy savings have become an increasingly more important field of work for VE and APERe. As the question of 100 % renewable energy has become mainstreamed in Denmark, VE is in the process of

redefining the organisation's role. As a part of this it is trying to re-focus on local activities and local development. This includes a higher degree of cooperative or public ownership to renewable energy facilities as a way of reducing the increasing resistance to big wind turbine facilities.

2 Aspects of change and innovation

VE's own narrative of change started as being those who developed practical alternatives to fossil fuels and nuclear power. VE sees itself as a part of a larger environment that have contributed to the actual change going on in the Danish energy sector – the long-term change towards 100 % renewable energy. APERe describes how it took a vacant place of experts and consultancy, and has developed the role as a political neutral, professional promoter of renewable energy and rational use of energy. INFORSE describes itself as an international advocacy organisation.

When analysing both VE and APERe it is important to recognize that one of the ways these organisations contribute to is by creating new organisations and institutions. APERe has been part creating EDORA, the federation of Walloon renewable energy producers. VE has been initiating meetings for wind energy enthusiasts, leading to the creation of the Danish Wind Turbine Owners Association and the Risø Test Centre for (Small) Wind Turbines. Local VE activities led to the creation of local environment and energy centres. VE is part of an environment of NGO's that together with groups of researchers and others are in a co-evolution process of both technologies and social networks, which can be considered as their first social innovation. VE members were part of experimenting with wind turbine technology and taking part in the technological development especially in the last half of the 1970ies. The technological experiments were decisive in the development of the network: when people met, they discussed the results of their experiments and how to advance the technology. When wind turbine production became a small industry, some of the VE members focussed on other technologies. The early experimentation – which could be considered as social innovation – is decisive for the later transformation of the Danish energy system.

The way of organising ownership to wind turbines: the development of wind co-operatives is a second social innovation related to VE. In the 1980ies and part of the early 1990ies, a combination of the capacity of each single wind turbine, price and rules about maximum distance between owners and the turbine, owner's consumption in relation to the wind turbines production and tariff conditions made it opportune to create local co-operations owning one or more wind turbines. Later, APERe began to promote the creation of renewable energy co-ops in Belgium. The local co-operations in Denmark made the Danish wind turbine industry survive and develop even larger, more efficient wind turbines. Lately experiments with new forms of local ownership have taken place in Denmark, once again illustrating the co-evolution of the TSI and market. The most extreme local Danish wind turbine co-operation is Middelgrunden, initiated by the local environment and energy office KMEK in 1996, involving between 50000 and 100000 citizens in the planning phase, with 10000 citizens supporting the planning phase economically and more than 8000 people owning parts of ten 2 MW wind turbines. The

way of getting the planning phase financed could be considered as a social innovation in itself.

The third way of being socially innovative in relation to wind energy is to emphasize that wind energy is an important part of the energy system if 100 % renewable energy are to be reached. This is how VE have worked with wind since the mid-1990ies and APERe a couple of years later. They are co-evolving the narrative that a society based on a 100 % renewable energy is possible – if it is combined with reductions in energy consumption. Energy efficiency and an altered behaviour in relation to energy are necessary.

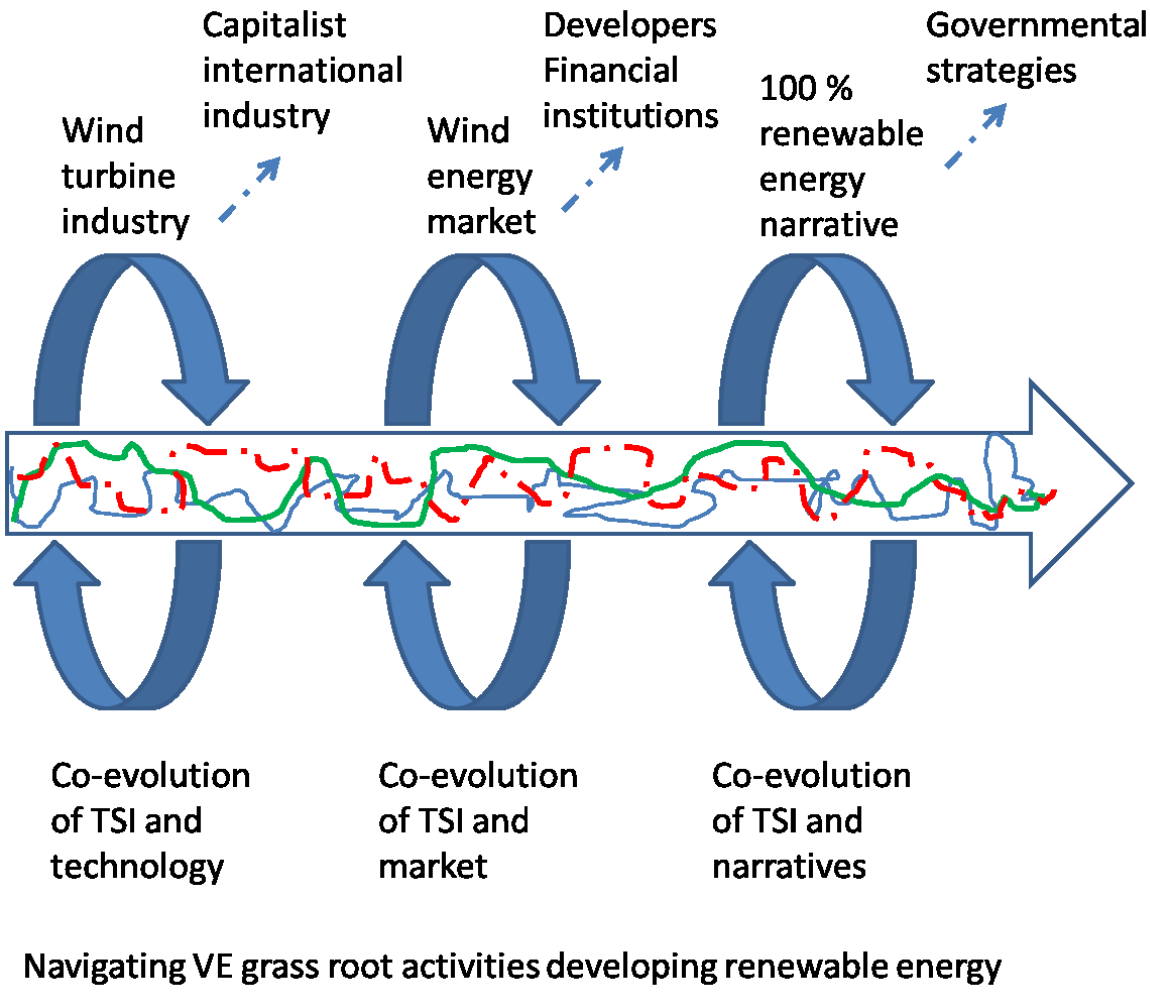

Figure 1: Some of VE's activities are co-developed with others, and – as time goes by – taken over by others. When looking closer into VE activities, discover how VE is constantly manoeuvring in relation to other actors; in relation to conflicts; in relation to opportunities and in relation to the development of the energy system. These manoeuvres are represented by the messy lines in the central arrow.

Both APERe and VE are promoting energy savings, even though it seems to be easier to promote renewable energy. APERe describes it as: '*the action of producing RE is 'sexier' than less consuming*'. VE has recently been experimenting with different ways of involving

citizens in energy savings, developing 'the end of the road' concept together with municipalities and local house owner associations, combining local demonstration of energy saving technologies with inspection of a private home together with the house owners and their neighbours, looking for relevant energy saving possibilities.

Actual societal transformation towards 100 % renewable energy is going on, both Belgium and Denmark. In 2014, 12 % of the electricity production in Belgium was based on RE, and wind turbines in Denmark produced corresponding to 39.1 % of the Danish electricity demand. And even though there are no direct link between the early activities in VE 40 years ago and the on-going transformation, the network VE is a part of have played a decisive role along with a number of other actors.

3 Aspects of (dis)empowerment

In both Belgium and Denmark the question of renewable energy has been mainstreamed. When VE started 40 years ago, the idea of 100 % renewable energy was considered as utopian by most people. Both APERe and VE have experiences a move from being 'outsiders', in opposition to the existing energy sector, to become more integrated in the political context, experiencing that the organisations goals become more or less adopted: It is hard to find people outside the fossil fuel and nuclear power industries that are not having 100 % renewable energy as a long-term goal.

Both APERe and VE have been professionalized and mainstreamed. APERe has been fast in creating formal alliances with strong insiders in the energy sector and public authorities, which also is important for the relative stable funding of the organisation. It is important for APERe to be considered as a professional, expert based, politically neutral organisation. Both VE and INFORSE are dependent on finding funding from projects; thereby the criteria for getting financial resources are part of shaping the possible actions of these organisations. For VE this has meant an increased focus on energy savings in private households via 'Energitjenesten'. There is interaction between VE and the governmental level, shaping the resourcing, basically through informal contacts and recognition among politicians of the role of the grass roots. The informal interaction between researchers and VE is – and has been – important in relation to the development of renewable energy. The researchers qualify the grass roots experiments and scenarios. The grass roots disseminates research results in a popular way to citizens

Even though the goal of 100 % renewable energy is mainstreamed, there are still controversies. These are especially clear in the Danish case, with controversies among NGOs and between NGOs and the government and business actors concerning the speed of the transformation, the role of bio-energy and the needed energy savings. Furthermore, VE is trying to re-invent the organisation. One part of this is an emphasis on attracting young people, making them volunteers in 'UngEnergi'. Another part is redefining the goal, finding a new, less main-streamed focus. This could involve more local activities, experimenting with ways of using renewable energy projects to stimulate local economy and local democracy.