transformative social innovation theory

The Institutionalization of Social Innovation: Between Transformation and Capture

TRANSIT deliverable D2.2 cross-cutting theme 'Governance':

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About TRANSIT:

TRANSIT is an international research project that aims to develops 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/.

Focus of deliverable:

This deliverable focuses on the topic of transformative social innovation (TSI) governance and contains (1) a workshop report (2) practical implications and proto-type TSI tools and (3) position paper on TSI governance.

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1 Foreword

TRANSIT seeks to grasp the dynamics of transformative social innovation, that is the process through which social innovations contribute to societal transformation. In order to arrive at a solid and grounded theory of Transformative Social Innovation (TSI), the TRANSIT project http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/combines theoretical reasoning and (comparative) empirical investigation. TSI theory will rest on an interplay between deductive and inductive lines of research, i.e. it will develop through constant confrontation between field knowledge and various theories of transformation. In order to facilitate this interplay between the theoretical and empirical streams, four 'cross-cutting themes' have been identified: Monitoring, Resources, Social learning and Governance.

Just like these other cross-cutting themes, Governance is a real aspect of transformative social innovation. It is a real aspect in two ways: by seeking changes in governance and by involving coordination amongst interdependent actors engaged in collective action. Governance refers to all processes of governing. This governing can be done by governments, but also by market or networks. Governance can be done by formal or informal organizations, and through whatever means of coordination. Governance is often done by the imposition of laws and the development of policies, but it is not limited to these governmental activities. Governance involves many forms of social coordination, and can also be done through jointly established rules of conduct, through contracts, or through language (via moral suasion). It should be considered here that social innovation is a special kind of innovation in that people opt to operate under for different organisational and behavioural rules. Divisions of responsibilities are being redrawn for normative and operational reasons. The redrawing of rules and responsibilities makes social innovation unavoidably a political process. The theme of TSI governance highlights the struggles and negotiations amongst actors possessing different interests, visions and resources.

Over and above the immediate practical significance for the actors concerned, the governance theme also helps the development of TSI theory because transformations are predicated upon changes in governance. It is a truly cross-cutting theme, as governance knowledge comprises both the concrete understanding of governance practices, challenges and processes, as well as the more abstract theoretical understandings needed: To what extent can such collective and possibly transformative processes be governed, planned, managed, 'orchestrated', or 'synchronized'? What kind of practical advice can reasonably be offered? Governance serves as a cross-cutting theme by informing TSI on both these concrete and abstract issues. It helps to compare the multi-actor struggles and innovation processes that we see in the various TRANSIT case studies, on the one hand. On the other hand it helps the theorization of transformation dynamics, relating theories of transforming systems to theories of networks, politics and administration.

In order to start the development of this cross-cutting theme, a workshop has been organized to identify the key challenges of TSI governance. On October 24th 2014 the Université Libre de Bruxelles held a one-day workshop on the institutionalization of social innovation. As developed in a position paper, this central theme was chosen as a way to highlight the different ambitions, interests and visions of change that are involved with SI. Moreover, this theme of institutionalization connects the governance of social innovation with the issue of innovation upscaling, which is a prominent theme in TSI theory development thus far. The governance theme elicits that 'upscaling' is not only a matter of transforming systems, but also of struggles and negotiations between *actors*. A both basic and intriguing starting point for TSI governance is the observation that social innovation is no longer a marginal activity. SI has gained support well beyond revolutionary quarters and neighbourhood-bound activities - it is informing official policy visions, and is a guiding concept on national and international levels. This institutionalization of SI is particularly intriguing as it reminds that the transformative understanding of social innovation exists alongside other understandings of it – understandings that are not necessarily after the same societal transformations, or even seek to avoid transformation and the upheaval associated with it. As has been frequently expressed by SI practitioners and researchers, the institutionalization of SI is actually somewhat paradoxical[1]. Some would say that social innovation is not meant to be institutionalized, and that it should rather constitute an alternative to existing institutional constellations. On the contrary, others maintain that current governmental organizations and businesses are indispensible adopters, facilitators or carriers of the transformation potentials. Then there is the consideration that such adoption and facilitation is bound to compromise the goals and spirit of SI initiatives, and that any attempt at transformation will be neutralized or 'captured' by the powers-that-be. In other words, the institutionalization of SI could be a process of real breakthrough, but could also be a delusion, marking the beginning of its demise.

Breakthrough or capture? And how about the grey area in between that many SI initiatives will have to navigate? This grey area has been explored by inviting five speakers to shed their critical and fresh perspectives on the matter. Confronting these with the emerging empirical and theoretical insights of TRANSIT, the workshop has enabled us to gain a better understanding of TSI governance, to specify critical issues, and to formulate practical implications of our insights into SI institutionalization. This report contains the results from this first agenda-setting workshop. After this general introduction, this report is structured as follows. First, we summarize the TRANSIT governance position paper and its function for the development of this cross-cutting theme (2). After an overview of the workshop program (3), we then present the five key issues for TSI governance that emerged during the workshop (4) as well as the practical implications that can be derived

[1] We thank the 'BRAL group' and their written reflections on the roundtable meeting June 2014 in Brussels, who further convinced us that this paradox is not only a theoretical puzzle but also a gathering term for many practical SI challenges.

from these governance insights (5). Finally, we conclude with a brief outlook on future activities regarding this cross-cutting governance theme (6). The governance position paper is include as an appendix.

2 TSI Governance as dynamics of institutionalization

As briefly introduced, we have chosen the institutionalization of social innovation as a starting point for TSI governance thinking. As it was intended as a starting point for exploration rather than as a final position or conclusion, the 'position paper' was intended to open up the space for exploration. On the other hand, it was to provide for a certain degree of guidance, of course, taking in various insights from almost a year of TRANSIT theorizing and case research. Arguably, the theme of 'institutionalization' does provide for some direction, and does formulate instructive intermediate conclusions – as far as possible at this stage of investigation.

In summary, the governance position paper takes aim at the political-administrative-societal tensions and struggles that SI, and especially TSI, are bound to be tied up with. The paper places TSI in a network perspective: *"…if we are to gain understanding of the future prospects for transformative social innovation, we need to understand by which actors, interests and perceptions it is carried"*. This perspective stresses that the 'upscaling' or mainstreaming of novelties, that tend to be rather marginal at first, eventually depends on the ways in which these fit in with predominant practices and belief systems. It reminds that this will involve tense processes of institutionalization. In those processes it may happen that social innovations break through, becoming the regular rather than the exceptional practices that they were, but it may also very well happen that they will be domesticated and neutralized to a certain extent. The central explorative questions were the following: *Do we see social innovation breaking through, with transformative novelties becoming mainstream? Or do we rather witness the domestication, capture and stifling of transformative potentials, through the inertia and co-optive power of existing governance constellations?*

Through this perspective and line of questioning, the paper connects between several streams of TRANSIT knowledge development. First, by adopting the paradoxes of institutionalization as its starting point, it engages with the critical discourse on SI and TSI that has developed both in theory as well as in practice. The position paper exposes the ambitious TSI to the often sobering experiences and demands of transformative practice. Second, the paper seeks to apply and specify several elements of TSI theory in development, such as the 'shades of change', the transformative roles of 'gamechangers', the 'multi-actor perspective', and more generally, the idea of social innovation as co-evolving with other societal changes. Third, the paper specifies governance issues and empirical questions that

can be used for case comparison. As will become clear through this report, these empirical findings are also crucial for the further development of the governance theme.

In line with the ambition to develop a critical perspective on TSI governance, and to gain fresh perspectives on the tensions of SI institutionalization, we have organized this synthesis workshop as a opportunity to learn from critical outsider perspectives. We have invited five speakers to shed their lights on TSI governance and the tensions surrounding 'institutionalization' in particular. Each in their own ways, they have addressed the particular governance challenges of TSI – through reflections on SI practice, through political-philosophical questioning, and through a consideration of SI as a development in public administration and contemporary political life.

3 Workshop Program

	Author	Title	
1	**Bonno Pel & Tom Bauler** (ULB)	Welcome and introduction to governance theme	-
2	**Gilda Farrell** (TRANSIT Advisory Board)	Institutionalisation of Social Innovation: an oxymora? (Why bringing together two terms whose sense should keep them away?)	
3	**Veit Bader** (University of Amsterdam)	Associative Democracy: From 'The Real Third Way' or a realist, experimentalist utopia back to Utopianism? A sad or at least sobering story	
4	**Victor Bekkers** (Erasmus University Rotterdam)	The governance of social innovation: a multi level perspective	
5	**Erik Paredis**(University of Ghent)	Some observations on civil society organisations and transitions	
6	**Gijs van Oenen**(Erasmus University Rottterdam)	Why call TSI 'social innovation' instead of 'system change'?	

4 Synthesis of Workshop: Main Insights & Contestations

The central, overarching topic for the workshop was the institutionalization of social innovation, and the grey area between transformation and capture. A general lesson from the workshop seems to be, however, that even this quite general framing invites quite diverse

understandings about what social innovation is, what role it could play in processes of societal transformation and how to conceive of SI institutionalization. Reflecting on the many nuances and shifts-of-perspectives brought forward during the workshop, we were happy to conclude that the speakers introduced perspectives that were quite distinct from each other. Still, and notwithstanding these different perspectives, they were also clear convergences between their accounts. This allowed us to identify five key issues for TSI governance. These issues roughly correspond with the five contributions of our five invite speakers, whilst also expressing some striking connections between their accounts.

1) **Institutionalization of SI, oxymoron or tautology?**
2) **SI as historical resultant**
3) **SI as organizing concept for dispersed transformative action?**
4) **Supporting structures**
5) **SI as shifting advocacy coalitions**

1. Institutionalization of SI, oxymoron or tautology?

Maybe we need to realize that SI initiatives are of a different kind than existing institutions/institutional constellations (Farrell). Rather than considering how SI initiatives could be consolidated, diffused or 'upscaled' (i.e. somehow seamlessly integrated in the logics of current well-established institutions) the starting pint of our thinking may have to be that SI initiatives tend be after essentially different goals than efficient production or effective/accountable administration. Gilda Farrell usefully suggested a heuristics focusing on the frictions arising between SI-internal and SI-external rules. When considering how SI initiatives fit in with governmental laws, or with the rules applying to particular markets, we're dealing with external rules. SI initiatives also have internal rules however, in the form of ideological principles, codes of conduct or even the formalized governance principles that exist for cooperatives, associations and other legal forms. In other words, SI initiatives are not to be confused with anarchistic free-zones, and the appropriate question is not how they can be fit in with the rules. Farrell's distinction helps to consider and compare the different ways in which these confrontations of rule sets can be handled. Through this perspective it becomes more clear how some SI initiatives stick to their internal rulesets, and opt for retreat and isolation - one could consider the Ecovillages an example. By contrast, clandestine action and other forms of unruly behaviour come forward as essentially different forms of SI, in which the friction between rule sets is handled in a confrontational manner. Interestingly, this particular category seems to be absent in the TRANSIT sample of SI initiatives as can be seen from Table 1[2]. A concrete suggestion from Farrell's heuristic is then to consider whether TRANSIT is led by overly consensual empirical examples.

[2] A table to illustrate this point, developed by René Kemp (Maastricht University) and to be refined in TRANSIT comparative analyses.

Table 1. Governance aspects of social innovation projects

Involvement of government and business and their stance	**Formally recognised / de facto accepted**	**Experimental status**	**Condoned**	**Rule enforcement Prosecuted**
Hardly any government or business involvement	De facto acceptance Time banks, INFORSE, eco-village, transition towns		Rules are not enforced (as in the case of farmer market Genuino Clandestino)	
Government is involved (as direct or indirect funder or service provider)	Special rules apply Guaranteed funding Living Knowledge Network, DESIS	Temporary funding Rules waived	Suspicious watchover	Enforcement of rules Legal prosecution
Business is involved (as service provider and/or funder)	Social enterprise Corporate volunteering Ashoka, The Impact-Hub, credit unions, RIPESS	Learning projects	Projects go forward despite internal scepticism and opposition	Business asking for enforcement of rules (because of claims of unfair competition)

Another issue that the heuristic may help to understand is the 'grey zone between capture and transformation', as brought forward in the governance position paper. Farrell's heuristic calls attention to the fact that many SI initiatives can be seen to develop *hybrid*, mixed rule sets, as preconditions for support, accommodation and collaboration. Amongst Farrell's examples were the Ethical Banks and RIPESS, but more generally it could be considered how these hybrid rule sets develop. Taken together, these hybridization processes help understand the many possible reasons for SI initiatives to become part of, or partners of, established institutions. The heuristic merits to be applied through detailed comparison of the concrete rule sets that we encounter in the TRANSIT cases. In some (clusters of) cases it may then indeed turn to be a tautology to speak of SI institutionalization: The former SI initiative may have already turned into an institution, such as the renewable energy *sector*, or the *department* of social economy. In other cases, however, we may find very little hybridization and considerable distances between rule sets: The initiators may indeed be motivated and guided by considerations quite different from the establishment of new institutions. One could consider spiritual or religious motivations, but also the circumstance that many SI initiatives are based on trust - a mode of coordination that is difficult to generalize beyond relatively small communities.

2. SI as a historical resultant

It was quite striking how several of our guest speakers coincided in their historical perspective on SI. This is refreshing, as it provides a certain counterweight to the typical TRANSIT focus on the *future* emergence of societal change and transformation. More specifically, the historicizing perspectives help us on two accounts: to further develop the idea of SI as being carried by a multitude of diverse actors and institutional logics (as in the governance position paper) and the idea of cross-SI comparisons of path dependencies.

As sketched by Gijs van Oenen, the apparent rise of SI can be considered a particular phase in shifting state-civil society-market relations, or a phase in modern emancipation processes. People and organizations are socialized into particular role understandings and relations, and these positions as citizens, consumers and community members change over time. Throughout modern emancipation processes, people have typically questioned the social order and its institutions. Over time, aspirations and expectations, whether realistic or not, have changed, and spreading uneasiness with the institutional order has eventually led to various major shifts in governance. In his account of the Netherlands, van Oenen thus describes how the earlier welfare state provided for many of its expectations of its citizens, but eventually made way for interactive and participative arrangements. By now, the many channels and venues for participation seem to meet with a certain amount of disenchantment, however, a certain fatigue that takes hold of the intended participative and interactive citizens. Thus considering SI as another phase in this process of citizen emancipation, SI can then be understood as having a certain unruliness - fed by disenchantment with prevalent societal roles and relations. Relevant contextual factors are then the various disappointments with representative democracy and its promises of influence, the doubted problem-solving powers of the welfare state, and the uneasiness with contemporary ways of consumption. In other words, this historical view helps us gain an understanding of actors' motivations, dispositions and capacities towards SI, as they grow from slowly evolving social roles and relations.

Importantly, van Oenen's account of current unruliness and what he calls 'interactive metal fatigue' refers largely to the Dutch context. And even when it could be considered relevant to the history of the well-developed welfare state more generally, this account does not present 'the essence' of SI. To the contrary, the account of the 'interactivity fatigue' rather illustrates the relevance of different historical contexts. The general insight is that SI can fruitfully be considered as a historical resultant, and the national/regional/cultural path dependencies that may come forward can usefully be compared[3].

[3] In fact, the research philosophy and report format of TRANSIT cases work towards such comparison of SI trajectories or journeys. From the governance perspective, it would then be worthwhile to deepen the broader shifts in governance relations that form the background to these journeys.

In fact, the other contributions offered several clues that help unpacking SI initiatives as historical resultants. An elaborate example was given by Erik Paredis, describing the gelling together, centrifugal tendencies and altogether intricate genealogy of Flanders' transitions initiatives. Further foothold for a historical understanding can be found in Farrell's account of the different birth grounds of TRANSIT cases, and in Bekkers' suggestion to consider shifting advocacy coalitions (see issue 5).

3. SI as organizing concept for dispersed transformative action?

Several workshop contributions were critical about the label of 'social innovation' in the way it was used by us and by government. This semantic issue is of direct practical importance in at least two respects: First, 'SI' is a term that suggests a unity that may not be there; it easily throws together actors into movements or alliances that they themselves do not feel part of. Second, the term also has its material effects as a policy concept, ultimately guiding decisions over support and understandings of legitimate action.

SI, let alone TSI, are terms that suggests unity. As such they fail to notice that this unity has first to be forged, and that various ideas for social innovation need to be negotiated and 'brought under the same umbrella'. In our position paper we pointed to this fact by considering SI as a 'boundary concept'. Such concept is flexible enough to appeal to various actors in slightly different translations (SI proving to appeal both to transformation-minded social movements and to policy-makers, for example), yet maintains a certain coherence and specific meaning (i.e. there is some shared understanding of the term, notwithstanding the different translations). Still, the workshop speakers suggested the notion of 'SI' to be even more problematic than initially suspected. Paredis' account indicates how transformative action continued to be dispersed in the Flanders' transition case, and that it remained difficult to converge on a unifying narrative that served the particular ways of doing transformative action of all constituents. His analysis serves as a reminder that the term of an SI initiative' may be meaningful to TRANSIT researchers, but may still be alien to the diverse actors concerned. Paredis' account highlighted how social innovation actors cluster in only loosely structured fields of action, and the identification of 'social innovation initiatives' easily misapprehends who is striving for what. In our TSI proto-theory there is already the understanding that we're dealing with intertwined 'ecologies of innovation' or SI networks. Along the same line of thinking, TRANSIT could conceive of its cases in terms of structures[4] as sketched by Erik Paredis (Figure 1 below).

[4] Or as considered by Michael S. Jorgensen (AAU), TRANSIT could consider again whether the co-production processes of TSI, the fluid lines between 'SI initiatives' and therewith the understanding of units of analysis, could be reflected better in the TRANSIT case research guidelines..

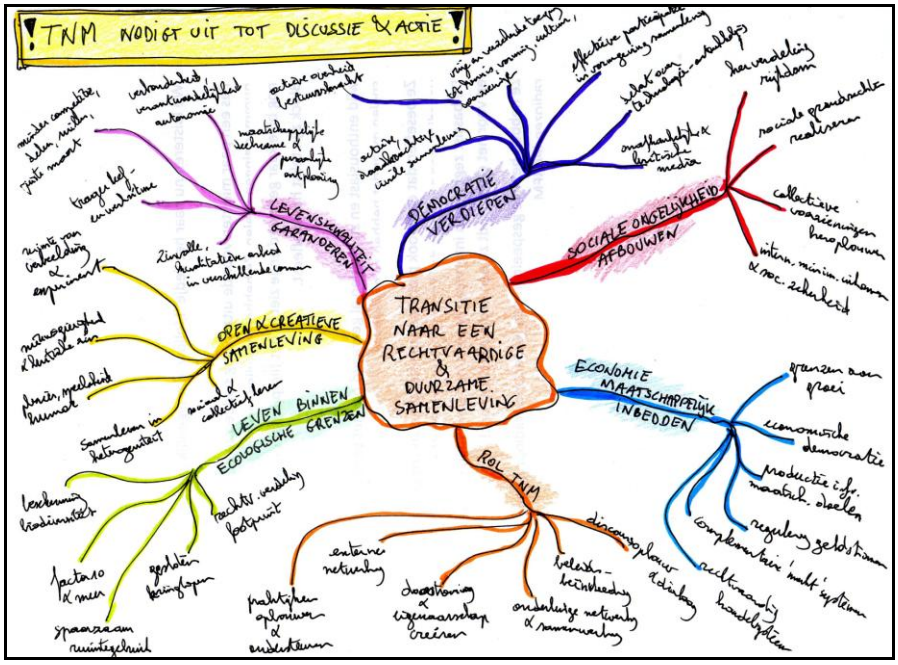

Figure 1 Innovation network and its branches: © Erik Paredis, 2014

The conclusion of such meaning-tracing is not so much that SI is a term that is vacuous. It is more than an empty slogan that is disconnected from real-world practices. The point is rather that 'SI' is used to describe various activities, for which some actors like to use it as a unifying emblem, and others not. So 'SI' is not just a term but also a story or 'narrative' that helps to join dispersed counter-hegemonic forces. A related second point is then that 'SI' can also be very 'performative' as a policy concept. As sketched in the governance position paper, it is a concept that has caught on in various societal quarters, and not all of its translations and deployments are aimed at transformation. Concretely, TRANSIT will have to consider how 'SI' operates as a policy concept (granting certain initiatives official status and eligibility for support), and how it operates in the spheres of commerce and civil society.

These two considerations on 'SI' as an organizing concept bring home that this central category of TRANSIT is self-evident nor innocent. Apart from recognizing that SI is a boundary concept, as in the governance position paper, TRANSIT governance should try to specify this discursive phenomenon. Various theoretical tools are available to specify how the term operates in society, and what realities it creates. We could consider SI as a concept with a certain 'puissance instituant', for example, or as a 'floating signifier' that mobilizes dispersed social forces simultaneously. For now however, the immediate conclusion is that TRANSIT should handle the 'SI' category critically and with care. When doing empirical studies we should not be deluded into believing that SI is naturally existing, or of evident relevance to presumed SI agents.

4. Supporting structures

TRANSIT starts from the assumption that SI, at least when facilitating conditions exist in the form of other 'shades of change', can contribute to societal transformations. In this respect our governance position paper started a line of reasoning in which such transformation is but one possible evolutionary outcome, 'capture' being another. As indicated in the introduction, this paradox of institutionalization continues to challenge TSI researchers and practitioners. Still, this issue of transformation or capture, however important, could turn out somewhat distracting for TSI governance. As far as it yields a preoccupation with capture, and forgets about the grey area in between the extremes, the transformation/capture line of reasoning neglects how muddy social transformations tend to be. As held by Veit Bader, transformation processes should, like politics more generally, be conceived of as 'das geduldiges Bohren dicker Bretter'. That is, they tend not to be brought about through grand revolutions, but are first and foremost a matter of patiently sustained efforts towards change. The importance of the sustenance of transformation attempts is often overlooked by (future-oriented) change agents. Moreover, it seems be something of a blind spot for the current experimentalism that can be witnessed, with its preoccupation with innovation rather than *change* (Bader, van Oenen).

One conclusion for TRANSIT governance is then that the relation between SI initiative and existing institutions should not be mistaken for an absolute dichotomy (as the 'capture' framing is at risk of suggesting). Instead, it should be considered what supportive structures, hybrids of relations (Farrell, see issue 1) and somehow sustained reform and 'long-term stable mobilization' (Bader) develop around SI initiatives. Likewise, it would be consequential to consider not only how SI networks manage to sustain themselves, but also how successive and intertwined SI networks, NGOs and social movements manage to exert sustained change efforts in a particular field over time (e.g. 'responsible finance', or 'fair'/'sustainable' organization of labour').

Another conclusion that can be drawn from Bader's contribution is that there are already considerable insights available on the reform programs and supplementing institutions that could carry SI, and help it towards sustained exertion of transformative force. In particular, Bader mentions 'associative democracy' (see references in the governance position paper and in his presentation). This well-studied and practised institutional model combines elements of state, market and network modes of governance – thus balancing different values such as efficiency, accountability, equity, and voice. 'AD' is just like SI a quest for governance arrangements beyond and between the 'institutional logics' of market, state and civil society. Other than the more experimental and loosely structured SI initiatives however, AD is more about institutional design. As such, AD seems to be a model precisely for the SI-supporting and sustaining institutions. As it is oriented towards institutional design, considerable knowledge has been gathered on the typical tradeoffs that have to be

faced when institutionalizing SI: Between flexibility and democracy, for example, or between efficiency and normative commitments to sustainability.

Finally, the emphasis on the need for supporting structures can also be appreciated as a reminder that SI has no choice but to engage with the institutional structures it seeks to reform. Associative Democracy organizations can be considered appropriate ways of institutionalizing and sustaining SI initiatives, but still they are usually meant to supplement, rather than supplant, the prevailing institutions of the capitalist market and representative democracy. Against TSI initiatives that envision transformations to take off beyond current institutions, off-grid and 'outside of the system', Bader's account contains a certain sobering statement. Representative democracy continues to be of great importance– the associated institutions can be criticised, but better not be ignored (as they will not forget *you*!).

5. SI as shifting advocacy coalitions

In the governance position paper, we considered how SI is carried by different societal actors and institutional logics that all have their particular deployments of SI in mind. We thus considered how SI is simultaneously the label for fundamental state reforms and for extensions of ongoing neoliberal politics, and also guides the 'sharing economy' initiatives that are emerging in most various shapes. As a consequence, SI and associated notions such as the sharing economy or Big Society become contested concepts. Typically, actors will engage in political struggles over what constitutes the real sharing economy and which can be considered false derivatives. Similarly, there are ongoing discussions and negotiations over the concrete rights and duties that Big Society should entail. Taken together, we argued that these confrontations make for a dialectical struggle, i.e. a process in which SI deployments evoke objections and reactions, leading to constantly changing adaptations and amendments. Such developing process may go in a transformative direction, SI may also become stranded in 'capture', but crucially, such dialectic process is likely to spawn various intermediate forms or SI hybrids as well.

This 'dialectics of SI' seems a reasonable portrayal of the actor dynamics and the politics involved with SI development. Likewise, Victor Bekkers indicated SI to be a 'magical concept', managing to appeal to different political actors for different reasons. Yet beyond this general understanding, Bekkers reminded us of two well-established frameworks that could help trace these shifting actor alignments: the Advocacy Coalition Framework and the Punctuated Equilibrium Framework. Especially through the first we can systematically consider how actor coalitions form, and how internal tensions surface and disappear. If we approach SI institutionalization in terms of shifting advocacy coalitions, this also implies that we need to consider all groups of actors and institutional logics potentially involved in these coalitions: Beyond the civil society-market-state triangle, which is so central in SI thinking, our view of TSI governance may have to be broadened to encompass the whole

spectrum of political actors. More generally, this political science framework helps to ground TSI governance thinking in well-established ways of analyzing political life. An immediate advantage from this perspective is that it brings nuance to simplifying schemes such as citizen versus state, or life-world versus system.

Beside its capacity to specify the political dynamics that shape SI, a particularly instructive aspect of the advocacy coalitions framework (ACF) is the distinction of layers in belief systems. For TSI this could help specify the ways in which SI initiatives diverge from existing institutional logics, and the ways in which they align with or build on them (compare issue 1 on the frictions between internal and external rule systems). Interestingly, the ACF rests on the understanding that people have quite stable core beliefs. In other words, notwithstanding the socially-innovative shifts and the changing ideas about social roles and relations that we are witnessing, there may still be a strong continuity in deeper beliefs about solidarity, role of the state, citizenship, or relations with the natural environment. Without going into the details, this idea of stable deeper beliefs sheds an interesting light on SI. It shows SI as a shaping force of, but especially as being shaped by, only slowly evolving social coalitions and alignments. Regarding the guiding metaphors through which TRANSIT could communicate TSI insights[5], we could then consider a geological imagery (the tectonics of TSI), This 'slow' metaphor somewhat challenges the quite common and apparently appealing biological imageries of 'rhizomic', rampant and branching SI – the relatively 'fast', dynamic metaphors.

5 Insights for Transformative Social Innovation Practice

The governance of TSI can be considered a linking theme not only between theory and empirical investigation, but also between systemic theory and situated practice. TRANSIT Governance mediates between overall TSI on the one hand, and the practice and management of TSI by particular situated actors on the other. Following the line of thinking pursued in the governance position paper, the workshop focused on the linkage between TSI dynamics (systems evolution) and governance. As a consequence of this choice of focus, the linkage with TSI management and TSI practice was somewhat weaker however. Developing governance in the context of broader TSI processes, the position paper and workshop set the stage for TSI management, rather than informing it directly.
Still, despite this rather theoretical, reflective starting point, the workshop did yield several insights with fairly immediate practical implications. Below it will be considered how each of the identified key issues for TSI governance can be translated into practically relevant insights. The challenge has been to formulate insights that are relevant for the different governance actors that may be involved with TSI processes. After all, a very basic les-

[5] See Avelino & Wittmayer (eds.) 2014, p 56 (Deliverable D2.1) on metaphors as TRANSIT tools

son from these TSI governance explorations is that societal transformations do not depend on the agency of 'SI initiatives' only.

1) **Institutionalization of SI: Specifying the rules that should change**

The discussions on the institutionalisation of SI have brought out (see section 4) that it is not unreasonable to try to institutionalize SI initiatives, but also that it's not the self-evident course of action. The crucial point from Gilda Farrell's contribution was that existing institutions have their rules, and SI initiatives too. The practical challenge is then to identify how these sets of rules are compatible or not, where there is friction between them, and where there is scope for mutual support. For SI-initiatives it is then important to re-consider which internal rules they want to preserve, as a matter of staying true to their core values, and which they consider open to change and adaptation to external rules[6]. Can the informal, trust-based initiative be formalized, to make it more efficient or influential for example? Or is the very initiative meant to introduce trust-based ways of working and living, and are these considerations of size and efficiency less important? A related question to ask oneself is then whether one wants to change , break, evade or experiment with existing societal rules. Or is one rather after local improvements, and marginal innovative activities that can be done within existing rules precisely because they remain small in size? If it is the ambition to change societal rules however, this means confronting them, trying to have a meaningful dialogue about them, and specifying amendments on them. Likewise, policymakers are advised to specify what it is in social innovation initiatives that they seek to consolidate. In particular, they should try to specify the often informal rules that may cause frictions – and articulate through which 'internal' rules the public good can even be endangered by certain kinds of (T)SI[7].

[6] Or as reflected by Michael S. Jørgensen (AAU), it seems crucial for SI initiatives to preserve or recast their boundaries – their inner coherence, but also their relations with surrounding SI initiatives and with existing institutions.

[7] This point was brought forward by Adrian Smith (SPRU), in a brief reflection on the workshop.

2) How histories matter

Gijs van Oenen considered the apparent rise of social innovation as a particular moment or phase in history, and especially as a moment in changing social roles of individuals. This understanding of SI as a 'historical resultant' has more practical implications than it may be immediately apparent: First, it reminds that the confrontations of current social challenges and the development of future visions are very much the results of how people understand history. In the case of the Netherlands, SI seems to have a lot to do with the disenchantment with parliamentary democracy, for example, and with the welfare state. Also the particular mode of active citizenship and individuals' quest for direct influence on their surroundings seems to be a reaction to earlier forms of participation. Very basically, history matters because current actions tend to be *re*actions, too. A second practical implication is that SI initiatives should be considered as quite unique initiatives. In the Netherlands, they've been shaped by the particular kind of welfare state and the particular relations between sate, market and civil society[8], and in other countries or regions the initiatives are therefore bound to be reacting to other developments. The practical implication is then that it's worthwhile for SI initiatives to reflect on where they're coming from, what they are reacting against, what earlier situation they may want to restore. Especially in this activist, and therefore present and future-oriented field, this could help clarify what energies the initiative is tapping from, and what the driving motivations are. For policymakers such exercise is of no less practical relevance, as it is bound to clarify how SI initiatives are reacting to earlier policy choices.

3) "SI": Handling a term that performs

The workshop, and especially the contribution by Erik Paredis, initiated useful discussion on the many possible practical consequences of using the term "SI". It showed the so-called 'performative' workings of the label. Practically speaking, this reminds us that words tend to be actions too, and that an important part of the practice of social innovation is discursive. Next to the immediate actions of organizing, creating and negotiating, there is always the aspect of doing so under one heading or the other. The particular difficulty of 'social innovation' is that associates activities with each other that may be very different, and that is also simultaneously a transformative concept and a policy concept. Similar to what has been discussed under 1), the concept urges to consider with which views on society one wants to connect, and with which not, and which aspects of "SI" one wants to emphasize (for example its reference to solidarity, its difference from technological innovation, its creative aspect, its aspect of changing social relations, its designation of civil society as primary source of change...etc.). More generally, beyond the so particularly performative

[8] Such analysis of shifting relations between state, market, civil society, and the 'third sector' developing at the interstices of these institutions, can be supported by the Multi Actor Perspective. This mapping tool has introduced in the TRANS-IT report on the 'gamechangers' in TSI, Deliverable D.1. Avelino and Wittmayer(eds) (2014)

concept of 'SI' itself, SI initiators better make very conscious decisions about their relations to broader 'narratives of change'[9] more generally. Such sets of ideas, concepts and metaphors about change and innovation (such as 'the sharing economy', or 'the transition') create alliances between actors in very different positions and fields. The art is then to bundle innovative/transformative energies, without alienating the vast diversity of voices that is present in SI. In a way, 'SI' indicates a minefield of meanings, but it also opens up the scope for unexpected alliances. To navigate it is the discursive practice of social innovators.

4) **Sustaining transformative efforts**

The possible 'capture' of social innovation, its dismantling and watering down by existing institutions and 'powers that be', is something to reckon with. Still, Veit Bader reminded that such capture is not the only thing to worry about, and maybe even a preoccupation that distracts from the real transformation challenge. Also in this respect it is worthwhile for SI initiators to inform their transformation strategies with a sense of history. Experience learns that transformation processes are a matter of sustained efforts, and it crucially relies on institution-building that somehow consolidates the results of local experimentation. In some countries, there are various associations, umbrella organisations, cooperatives and federations that provide for such sustenance. For SI initiatives, this issue raises the question of which institutions or supporting structures there are available to somehow sustain their (transformatively intended) SI initiatives. What's more, considering the lasting relevance of state policies, they should not forget that SI takes place within, and possibly supported by, representative democracy, rather than as an (utopian and unrealistic) alternative to it.

5) **SI: Moving fast amidst slowly shifting advocacy coalitions**

Representative democracy continues to matter for SI. This reminder by Veit Bader was only underlined by Victor Bekkers, who usefully suggested to see SI in the context of advocacy coalitions. This well-established framework of 'ACF' is yet another way of acknowledging that SI is strongly shaped by history, and that processes of transformative social innovation develop slowly. As indicated in section 4), the ACF view on SI introduces a 'geological' view on the matter: However dynamic the world may be in the experience of SI initiatives, at the same time it all happens amidst quite solid societal coalitions, and under the circumstance that deeper beliefs about society should be organized are particularly stable.

[9] This concept has been developed in the gamechangers position paper by Avelino et al. (2014)., Cf. TRANSIT deliverable 2.1.

For SI initiatives, this way of framing SI processes within society may not be particularly encouraging. It suggests that the scope for 'radical' change may be not that great[10]. On the other hand, it is also instructive, as it reminds how SI initiatives could be carried by, or hook on onto, these slowly shifting coalitions in society. Partners-in-advocacy can be found in various societal quarters, well beyond the own sector or the social innovation field, if one does this relatively 'slow' scanning of coalitions that work for or against certain changes.

6 TSI Governance: Outlook

As put central in the governance position paper, TSI governance addresses particularly tense processes of institutionalization in which various forms of change and innovation meet relatively stable institutions. Arguably, the above issues and insights confirm in different ways why it is not at all evident to expect SI initiatives to play any significant part in societal transformations: These initiatives are undertaken in densely institutionalized, diverse and in many ways inert and path-dependent societies. More important than this general confirmation are the various amendments, challenging framings and additions however. The workshop speakers not only forced us to reconsider our assumptions about Transformation, Social Innovation and Governance, they also helped us to formulate five key issues for TSI governance, which are : The frictions between internal and external rules, the understanding of SI as historical resultant, the 'performative' aspects of the SI label, the importance of SI-sustaining institutions, and the existence of powerful advocacy coalitions as a phenomenon to deal with for fast-moving SI initiatives.

Obviously, these issues deserve further elaboration. Even when general TSI insights and governance thinking have been translated into more practically relevant knowledge, this effort of concretization and specification merits further development beyond this report. Such stepwise further development, in the form of Policy Briefs, TSI 'instruments', popularizing summaries and engagements with stakeholders, is an integral part of the TRANSIT work plan. We will also benefit from interplay with the other transversal themes, which all have their particular governance aspects and practical implications. The intended refinement will crucially depend on the confrontation with the TRANSIT case studies, however. As has come forward in various ways, TSI governance is very difficult to grasp in isolation from contexts and historical backgrounds. The case studies, all involving comparisons between similar SI initiatives in different contexts, will provide for this sense of context, just as they will test, ground and help refine the theoretical understandings developed thus far. *National characteristics, such as the particular development of a welfare state, seem to mat-*

[10] Or, as remarked by Adrian Smith (SPRU) as a more general reflection on the workshop, the focus on the broader political context of SI reminds us that it's not only a matter of considering how to 'scale up' SI initiatives, but also of considering how open existing political institutions are towards adopting/consolidating transformation attempts.

ter –but how precisely? And more generally, to what extent do these first TSI governance insights hold across various European and Latin-American contexts? These comparative exercises could eventually yield typologies and heuristics, as easy-to-grasp but not simplistic ways to communicate TSI governance insights.

Having explained the importance of and sources to be tapped for further refinement and operationalization, we have planned several activities for 2015 to ensure a sustained development of this cross-cutting theme. We consider this workshop as an intermediary milestone, rather than a concluding synthesis. We intend to follow up with a similar workshop next year. Together with the first workshop, and with conference panels dedicated to the theme, this should allow us to develop joint publications with an emerging group of researchers who are involved with TSI governance and related aspects.

Before that, empirical grounding and testing is the most important step however. We will first share and discuss the identified 'TSI governance issues' with a small panel of local SI actors in early 2015. As said, we will also have TRANSIT (first batch) case materials lined up by Spring 2015 – as a crucial phase for empirically grounded TSI theory in general, but also in particular for a deeper understanding of TSI governance *processes*.

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transformative
social innovation
theory

Governance Position paper

The Institutionalization of Social Innovation: between Transformation and Capture
TRANSIT cross-cutting theme GOVERNANCE - position paper version 07/10/14
Bonno Pel & Tom Bauler (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Centre d'Etudes du Développement Durable)

0 Preface: About governance in TRANSIT

The TRANSIT project seeks to develop a theory of 'transformative' social innovation (TRANSIT 2014). This TSI theory is to articulate how initiatives towards social innovation can bring about (or play a part in) radical societal change. In order to arrive at a solid and grounded theory of TSI, theoretical reasoning and (comparative) empirical investigation are combined. This interplay between deductive and inductive lines of research is guided by four cross-cutting themes: Monitoring, Resources, Social learning and Governance.

Governance is a very cross-cutting theme indeed. It basically highlights that social innovation, whether transformative or not, is a collective process involving diverse social actors. The concept reminds of the public administration insight that contemporary political life is not an exclusive matter of governmental steering. In practice, and this may be contrary to our beliefs and convictions about the role of governments, it tends to be shaped by networks of public, private and civil society actors (Stoker 1998). Approaching social innovation from a governance perspective thus introduces a network perspective on it. More specifically, the governance view reminds of the circumstance that governing networks form around particular issues and projects because diverse actors have their particular stakes and interests in them, and accord different relevance to them. Crucially, these actors tend not to have all the resources (money, legitimacy, knowledge) available to realize their ambitions alone, and these interdependencies lead them to negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes. These multi-player games are stabilized and channeled by institutions, the rules of the game. An important dimension of governance processes is therefore the negotiation of these rules (Koppenjan & Klijn 2004), as far as they are considered open to change.

A basic understanding underlying this paper is therefore that if we are to gain understanding of the future prospects for transformative social innovation, we need to understand by which actors, interests and perceptions it is carried. Moreover, as we are dealing with networks of actors, we will need to understand the crucial interdependencies and alignments at play. The paper further starts with the empirical observation that social innovation is a concept (with associated practices) that somehow manages to be relevant to various societal actors; somehow it appears to be of instrumental value to them[11]. In various ways and for various reasons, key governance actors are considering how the concept and its associated practices can be institutionalized, i.e. anchored through newly established institutions or embedded in existing ones. It is even somewhat remarkable how social innovation is gaining currency even amongst the institutional constellations it is generally understood to challenge. *How, precisely, i.e. through what institutions, could the alternative 'social innovation' arrangements be embedded in current decision-making structures?* Especially from the perspective of transformative social innovation, the current signals of repositioning beg further questions. *Do these institutionalization processes consolidate novelty by establishing new rules? Or is social innovation rather a marginal add-on that is forced to fit with the same old game?*

[11] From a governance perspective, the recent rise of the concept has little to do with any objective needs for this, and much to do with the concrete benefits it seems to have for societal actors.

From a governance perspective, the prospects for TSI are to be found in the space between consolidated transformation on the one hand, and 'capture' of novelty on the other. This conceptual, agenda-setting position paper is meant to kick-start joint exploration of this grey area. We seek to identify the most pertinent governance issues for TSI. Considering that these will be many-sided and involving both theoretical and practical challenges, we seek to engage a broad variety of actors to answer and specify them: The multiple theoretical lenses available within and outside of TRANSIT, and the practical insights as developed by the various governance actors involved in social innovation processes. We start[12] these engagements with two workshops, one for TRANSIT researchers and invited speakers (October 2014) and one for practitioners (November 2014).

1 Transformative Social Innovation and its governance challenges

Modern history is characterized by continuous quests for restructuring and improvement through innovation. Innovation has generally been undertaken in the context of industrial production, entrepreneurial profit-seeking and technological advancement. On a broader understanding however, innovation also comprises efforts towards social change and policy reforms. Indeed, those latter forms of purposive change are increasingly acknowledged as forms of innovation too, as 'social innovation'.

Social innovation (SI) is a concept that is still in development (Moulaert et al 2013). Possibly therefore, it is also notoriously under-defined (Bekkers et al. 2013). In any case, a defining trait seems to be that SI differs from industrial, economic and technological innovations, i.e. from innovation which has as primary objective to serve markets. Instead, social innovations are understood to have broader purposes, serving societies. Furthermore, SI is commonly distinguished from policy reforms or public sector innovations. As Moulaert et al (2013:2) indicate in their editorial, SI refers to a great miscellany of innovations that typically emerge where neither markets nor states are considered capable of delivering on people's needs: *"SI occurs because socially innovative actions, strategies, practices and processes arise whenever problems of poverty, exclusion, segregation and deprivation or opportunities for improving living conditions cannot find satisfactory solutions in the 'institutionalized field' of public or private action."* In other words, SI seems to occupy the institutional space around and at the interstices with states and markets, the institutional remainder category earlier referred to as the 'third way' or the 'third sector' (Hirst 1994; Defourny & Develtere1999; Bader 2001). For lack of a clearly demarcated locus and originating source, SI can be considered inherently elusive. Moreover, the above citation indicates SI to be two-sided in its purposes – it is aimed both at addressing unmet social needs[13] (substance) as well as at changing social relations (process). In fact, the authors point out that the first tends to presuppose the second, and that current social challenges require empowerment and mobilization of politically marginalized groups (Moulaert et al. 2013:3). This implies that SI is actually *three*-sided, also involving new institutional configurations.

SI refers both to new social solutions and to new processes through which to arrive at them, and reaches beyond current configurations of market and state innovations. Various authors have therefore underlined that this kind of innovation bears particular potentials towards transformative rather than incremental social change (Moore & Westley 2011a; Unger 2013; Jessop et al. 2013; Haxeltine et al. 2013). On those accounts of *transformative* SI, it is considered not for its

[12] We aim for continued exchanges on TSI governance during the next TRANSIT years.

[13] The Marxism-inspired notion of 'meeting needs' is somewhat static and reactive, neglecting how social innovation also can be undertaken to create or change needs. However important, this nuance does not detract from the point that SI has a dual process and substance orientation.

immediate problem-solving or meeting of needs alone, but also as an essential resource for social system resilience (Moore & Westley 2011a), a challenge to hegemonic 'economism' (Jessop et al. 2013) or as a lever in system innovations and transitions towards sustainability (Avelino et al. 2014; Grin et al. 2010). Likewise, the transformative account of SI does not so much consider its problem-solving capacities within, and additional resources for, existing institutional constellations. Instead, the transformative, 'maximalist' (Unger 2013) understanding of SI considers how it could be an alternative to the currently dominant coordination mechanisms of markets and states (Unger 1987; Scott-Cato & Hillier 2010), and how it could bring about changes in the very system that gives markets and states their place (Kawano 2013).

This TRANSIT position paper is aimed to explore the governance challenges of transformative social innovation. We hold that there are indeed convincing grounds, or at least sufficiently serious 'matters of concern' (Latour 2004), for such a maximalist understanding of SI: Arguably, current persistent challenges of social, economic and ecological sustainability are deeply rooted in our societies. Other than incremental improvements that fail to mitigate path-dependencies, these systemic problems then require shifts on the level of locked-in socio-technical 'regimes' (Rotmans 2006; Grin et al. 2010). Likewise, we feel that SI should be considered especially in the light of undesirable path dependencies. Notwithstanding these normative commitments however, we seek to steer clear from idealism. A practical consideration is that SI initiatives are not launched on pristine territory, but take their course within diverse societies and matured governance systems. Moreover, there is the normative consideration that it remains to be seen whether, in which respects, and under what conditions, particular SI schemes would be preferable to existing arrangements. Utopian expectations of transformative social innovation (TSI) are therefore met with critical inquiries and demands of concreteness – *what agents, capabilities and dispositions do these visions presuppose? What institutional arrangements would have to be in place, and which rules does it seek to break with?* Arguably, it is by asking and answering such questions that practicable, normatively balanced and sufficiently informed TSI advice can be formulated.

In line with this somewhat sobering emphasis on institutional concreteness, the paper starts with the observation that SI has gained currency well beyond revolutionary circles (Cf. Defourny & Develtere 1999; Poirier 2013; Jessop 2013; Dinerstein 2014). Other accounts of SI exist than the transformative ones sketched above. Even when it is often understood as relatively informal action at a distance from, or even in opposition against, formal institutions, SI is increasingly endorsed by politicians, policymakers and business leaders. Likewise, it can be seen to be moving from the local and small-scale towards regional and national levels, and even to form part of globalized aspirations. Both these moves, from the local to the global and from the informal to the formal, can be witnessed through the rise of worldwide SI networks alone. They also become most apparent through the inclusion of social innovation discourse in global NGO strategies and national policies. Moreover, the very emergence of an EU-level i.e. transnational policy discourse displays how SI is institutionalizing. The typical EU efforts to coordinate across administrative and cultural borders and to align sector policies are most illustrative for the variety of motives and ambitions at play in SI institutionalization. Alongside the rather transformative ambitions towards addressing 'grand societal challenges', there are also the somewhat less revolutionary-minded considerations of efficiency, demand-oriented governance and citizen empowerment (BEPA 2011). Likewise, the grassroots SI discourse of spontaneous, small-scale and do-it-yourself action can be seen to make way for an SI discourse in which institutional anchorage, policy transfer, transparency, standardization and evidence-based action are central guiding concepts. Apart from governmental actors attempting to fit in and consolidate the new way of doing things, this may also reflect how the social innovators themselves are repositioning, and becoming co-producing 'insiders'. From the viewpoint of TSI however, these movements towards institutionalization are ambiguous

feats. As has often been brought forward regarding the mainstreaming of transformation attempts (Hess 2005; Smith 2007; Kemp & Rotmans 2009; Voß et al. 2009; Jensen et al 2012; Pel 2014; Geels 2014), SI institutionalization warrants a consideration of the cooptation or 'capture' dynamics in play. Hence the following questions: *Do we see social innovation breaking through, with transformative novelties becoming mainstream? Or do we rather witness the domestication, capture and stifling of transformative potentials, through the inertia and cooptation powers of existing governance constellations?*

Of course, this dichotomizing line of questioning begs for nuance, and for further exploration of the grey zone in between these extreme outcomes. In the following parts, it is therefore considered which social forces are shaping SI institutionalization. First we develop a dynamic conceptualization of this process. SI is positioned as a deeply political 'boundary concept' that co-evolves with other processes of innovation and change **(section 2)**. Next, SI is considered from the viewpoints of different groups of actors or institutional logics. This 'inventory of forces' will substantiate why our boundary concept is so deeply political, and also bring out how SI typically operates at the institutional interstices **(section 3)**. Only after having explored through which ambitions SI is carried and continues to evolve, a picture arises of the space between transformation and capture. To chart this space is to elucidate the prospects for TSI, and therewith, the scope for strategically aware TSI action. As this is an explorative paper, it concludes with the formulation of questions on TSI governance. These serve as starting points for further inquiry and specification of issues **(section 4)**.

2 Between Transformation and Capture: The dialectics of TSI

As we can learn from SI practitioners, the institutionalization of SI is an ambiguous process of somewhat hesitant repositioning. Identity-defining oppositions dissolve, roles change and instruments are reconsidered. From the viewpoint of TSI, which introduces the yardstick of systemic change, it is a particularly tense affair however. Institutionalization is then the structuration process in which new rules are established or existing ones are reaffirmed – the difference between system change and system reproduction.

On the bright side, institutionalization could mean that the transformative seeds are starting to grow: One can think of energy cooperatives or alternative currencies reaching the critical mass to make them reasonable, viable options in an otherwise unfavorable selection environment, or of sharing schemes and informal service provision schemes that become embedded in and supported by regulations and policies. The feed-in tariffs for alternative energy are exemplars for such feeding-in more generally. In terms of transition theory, these bright examples of SI institutionalization could be considered cases of evolutionary 'niches' inducing a restructuring of 'regime' constellations (Grin et al. 2010; Smith & Raven 2012). On the dark side however, institutionalization could also be a forebode of transformative impulses being channeled, encapsulated, domesticated and eventually stifled by the very institutional structures they were to change. One can think of sustainable houses being stripped from their social sustainability principles (Jensen et al. 2012), sharing schemes being commoditized into crypto-businesses that merely mimic the communicative-rational sharing philosophy (van Veelen 2014), renewable energy activists transforming into defenders of sector interests (Geels 2014), or citizen empowerment acting as Trojan Horse for neoliberal ideology (Swyngedouw 2005) – 'Yes, you can'. In transition-theoretical terms, SI institutionalization is then seen as yet another display of incumbent regimes exerting their tendencies towards system stabilization, and towards absorption of the novelties that perturb their deep structure. In fact, transitions theory suggests that the default evolutionary course for SI institu-

tionalization is system reproduction - SI is bound to be domesticated into incremental change, unless there are intervening developments (Geels & Schot 2007).
Whether bright or dark, a basic observation is that the rise and institutionalization of social innovation is carried by a multitude of actors and associated action programs. Somewhat postponing the assessment of whether transformative potentials are actualized or squandered, it can also be considered that 'SI' is just appealing to many audiences, and that it is a highly mobile concept. In other words, SI can be conceived of as a boundary object (or rather *concept*) that is sufficiently flexible[14] to bridge different social worlds (Star & Griesemer 1989) and to travel swiftly between quite remote places of application (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996). Viewed as a boundary concept[15], with its unstable identity that typically remains contested throughout its lifetime (Star 2010), it can be elicited how the institutionalization of SI will generally be a tense affair. Travelling ideas tend to change while underway; they tend to transform and be translated (Akrich et al. 2002a,b; Latour 2005) through various actors who deal with them out of different forms of intéressement[16]. Further it needs to be considered that social innovation, just like processes of system innovation and transitions, is a kind of innovation with particular high stakes and tendencies towards disruption. This underlines why we need to consider it bound to become subject to strategic interpretation and games of power (Meadowcroft 2009; Grin 2010; Avelino 2012).

To consider SI as a boundary concept helps to bring out the politics involved with its interpretation and application. This conceptualization situates SI in the middle of governance networks. It is considered as a contested novelty, with various actors attempting to make it instrumental to their particular ambitions, and seeking to promote their particular understanding of it. Still, this tracing of actors' intéressement is at risk of yielding a rather incomplete and static picture of SI uptake and institutionalization. The picture will be incomplete if it remains confined to a local inventory of actor perspectives and interests, for example. This would miss out on the broader discursive dynamics within which these take place, on the broader 'resonances' that SI seems to have throughout current differentiated societies (Luhmann 1989). Moreover, the picture of SI as a boundary concept within a network of actors seems a bit static as it does not help us understand how the translations of the concept may shift. *How would the associated windows of opportunity open and close? How could changing circumstances open windows for more than reproductive and actually transformative translations of SI?* Precisely in this respect we can build on transitions theory: Geels & Schot (2007) have earlier explained how the evolutionary junction between system reproduction and system transition pathways depends on combinations of endogenous renewal, pressures from innovative outsiders and quasi-autonomous societal trends. Along the same line of thinking Avelino et al. (2014) instructively situate social innovation in a broader process in which different 'shades of change and innovation' co-evolve. Figure 1 sketches the bigger picture in which our boundary concept develops, also helping to understand the dynamics of SI institutionalization.

[14] Begging for the question whether SI is sufficiently coherent to survive as a concept, or to operate in TSI theory formation.

[15] Here we treat SI mainly as an idea, as an intellectual concept, and therefore we speak of a boundary concept. For more detailed analysis it is important to remember how the idea is transformed into objects and actions and back again – and in particular, how the SI idea materializes into boundary *institutions*.

[16] This can be economic interest, but is not confined to that.

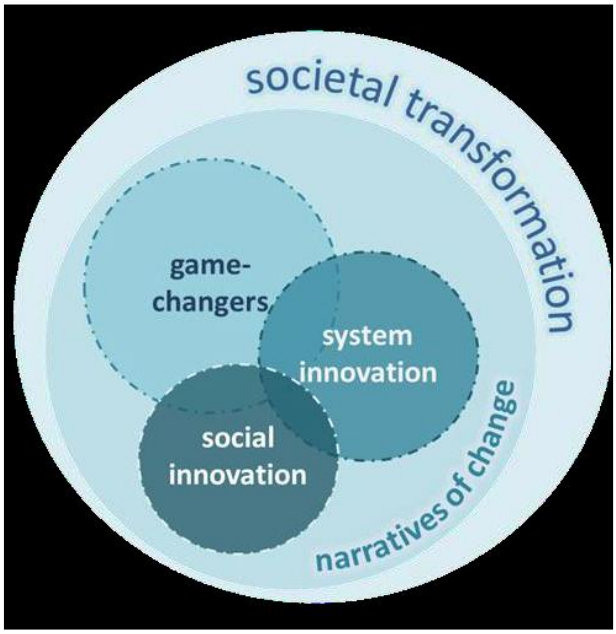

Figure 1 SI and surrounding 'shades of innovation and change'. Adapted from Avelino et al. (2014)

The figure indicates how SI[17] develops in an institutional environment that tends to be matured[18] and path-dependent. SI develops alongside and through other changes: First there are the 'game-changers', the macro-developments that are perceived to drastically alter the rules, the fields and the players in the 'game' of governance interactions. Governance actors draw upon these game-changers when considering what SI should be and how it should be undertaken. The recent financial-economic crisis, for example, is a 'game changer' that has been explained in various ways to legitimize particular SI understandings: The crisis has inspired towards understandings of SI in which it amounts to a rediscovery of the 'autonomous individual', but also towards SI as radical response to persistent market failure. Likewise, it can be considered how an incident[19] like the tearing down of flight MH17 above the Ukraine changes the selection landscape for local, cooperative modes of production. Second, there are ongoing processes of system innovation, of change at the level of societal subsystems or policy sectors. One can think of ongoing reforms in the healthcare, finance or housing systems. Social innovations take place within such broader processes of change; filling in the space by retreating government, for example, or meeting the demand for modes of production and consumption that are considered more 'responsible' or trustworthy. Third, there are the 'narratives of change', the discourses pervading society that shape governance actors' ideas of what change is desirable, how it can be effected, and what futures can be considered 'realistic'. Well-known examples of these (proto-)theories of change are the slogans of 'Yes we can' or 'wisdom of the crowd', but one can also think of more specific concepts such as the sharing economy, the resilient community, or societal transitions. These 'narratives of change' pervade the

[17] It remains difficult to speak of SI, a highly diverse set of practices, in the singular, of course. This is why TSI theory formation is informed by substantial empirical research, involving both in-depth case analyses as well as larger-N comparison.

[18] Although Swilling (2014) reminds us that the assumptions of institutionally dense environments easily neglects how much SI develops in environments of lacking or weak institutions. TSI theorization should be aware of possible eurocentrism or other forms of unwarranted universalism.

[19] Compare the notion of 'wild cards', i.e. high impact/low probability events, in futures studies.

other processes of innovation; they also mediate in the social construction of game-changers, for example.

Fourth, it needs to be considered that SI may exist in the form of clusters or ecologies of innovation (Nicholls & Murdock 2012; Chilvers & Longhurst 2013). In line with the general conceptualization of SI co-evolving with other processes of change and innovation[20], it also makes sense to observe the multiplicity of similar initiatives (Schot & Geels 2008). Societal conditions may prompt simultaneous and similar change attempts from states and civil society actors for example (Bartholo et al. 2014), and more and less radical initiatives may be undertaken under one and the same banner. Moreover, it can be considered how SI initiatives may mutually reinforce or rather interfere with each other, as their decision arenas intertwine (Jørgensen 2012) and their developments intersect (Pel 2014a). This issue of multiplicity seems to be relevant especially for SI – as indicated by Scott-Cato & Hillier (2010), the actors involved with SI are not necessarily aiming for critical mass, transformative power, 'upscaling' or the development of 'Mc SI ™'. SI champions may even ideologically embrace the dispersal of innovative effort that others may deplore as fragmentation.

This is how SI institutionalization can be seen to unfold in the context of societal transformations, the overall canvas in Figure 1. These major societal shifts emerge out of the multitude of other 'shades of change and innovation'. One can think of secularization, the rise of the welfare state, or the rise of the market economy. Borrowing the imagery from economical innovation, these can be considered the societal 'long waves', somehow resulting from a manifold of minor pulses and waves. Yet whatever the precise shapes of these aggregated changes, the more relevant insight conveyed by figure 1 is that the institutionalization of SI can be considered as a collective, emergent process. As is also implied with the idea of it as a boundary concept, transformative SI and its flipside of 'captured', system reproducing SI are two sides of a somewhat Janus-faced SI. The emergence of either of these forms can be considered to result from the interactions between different social actors' particular understandings and deployments of it. Arguably, this process becomes all the more dynamic through the other 'shades of change and innovation' with which SI co-evolves. Consider for example how the concept of 'social economy' has been around for ages, taking various shapes: As integral parts of a feudal system, as safety valves for a political economy under high pressure, as a labour reintegration sector, as a green economy and as a black economy. As indicated by Defourny & Develtere (1999), these changing shapes reflect changing social conditions and needs, but also different social ideologies and alliances that organized collective action.

In passing, the checkered history of the social economy has reminded that transformation and capture are not the only possible outcomes in SI institutionalization. Qualitative changes and diversification are likely to come forward as well. This reminds that our conceptualization of SI institutionalization is essentially a dialectical one (compare Hargraves & van de Ven 2006). SI is considered to co-evolve with different 'shades of innovation and change', and this may appear as an abstract, distanced and disengaged approach of it. All of these surrounding developments tend to be imbued with ambitions, power and political direction however, and that is why SI is such a deeply political 'boundary concept'. SI institutionalization is subject to a dialectical struggle; the main societal contenders of this struggle, and their approaches to it, will be traced in the next section.

[20] The internal segmentation of SI was not included in the above diagram, but is arguably implied with the underlying line of thinking.

3.0 SI dialectics; actors & institutional logics

The institutionalization of social innovation can be considered as a dialectical struggle. It involves a multitude of actors, all with their particular interest in this polyvalent concept, and all with particular ideas about suitable institutions for SI. Some of this intéressement can be considered 'transformative' (and this is the particular deployment TRANSIT seeks to support), other engagements with it not particularly so. Actors will come in shades of grey, however, and they may deploy SI in ways that do not easily fit in with the transformation/capture dichotomy. So even when it seems reasonable to classify and merge actor perspectives along the lines of institutional logics or systems of meaning, these distinctions should be taken as tentative classifications only - to get our analysis going. After all, it is about charting the diversity of perspectives and programs involved in a dialectical, *dynamic* struggle. Shifts and mutations in the contending visions and actions are therefore to be expected; they can be considered part and parcel of SI (Nicholls & Murdock 2012). And then there are of course practical reasons for not reifying the 'institutional logic' categories: We are at the start of TRANSIT explorations, it is yet to be explored how concrete SI processes develop, what the crucial challenges are, and what bodies of knowledge can be tapped from to further our understanding. The leading questions for this section are the following: *So what are the motives of the actors involved with SI institutionalization? What (possibly transformative) goals do they pursue? And now that social innovation is traveling from the local and informal to the transnational and formal modes of governance and is being 'transferred', what are the notable changes, translations or possible perversions that SI seems to undergo?*
In the following, it is considered how SI is relevant to and deployed by various groups of governance actors. The 'first batch' of TRANSIT case studies[21] gives an idea of the different groups of actors involved:

- The Impact-Hub, Global network of social entrepreneurs
- Ashoka, Network for financial support to social entrepreneurs
- Time Banks, Network facilitating reciprocal service exchange
- Credit Unions, Different types of credit cooperatives
- RIPESS, Network for the promotion of social solidarity economy
- FABLABS, Digital fabrication workshops open to local communities
- Hackerspace, User driven digital fabrication workshops
- Living Knowledge Network, Network of science shops and community-based research entities
- DESIS-network, Network for design for social innovation and sustainability
- Global Ecovillage Network, Network of villages that promote ecologically friendly development
- Transition Towns, Grassroots communities working on 'local resilience'
- INFORSE, International network of sustainable energy NGOs

This set of initiatives already sketches the broad group of actors that translate and carry 'SI' – especially when considering the groups of actors that would be involved in the institutionalization of these initiatives. Subdividing involved actors along 'institutional logics', we will briefly consider how the struggles around SI institutionalization can be appreciated from the perspectives of its main contenders. This rough overview serves to highlight, first, how each of these logics brings

[21] These case studies are underway at the moment of writing. Case insights should be inserted into a 2.0 version; not only to fill in, but also to reconsider the very categories of actors used in this section.

forward its more and less transformative SI deployments, and second, to substantiate how SI can be seen to be pursued in different normative directions and societal sectors. Beyond this scan of political forces, this section is meant to identify the relevant questions as they arise from different societal quarters, and to consider the sources of knowledge that can be tapped from to answer them. In the following we consider actor perspectives from government **(3.1)**, markets and business **(3.2),** civil society **(3.3),** and science **(3.4)**. Taken together, these perspectives help us select the most challenging issues for TSI governance.

3.1 SI for government

SI is often considered as a beyond-the-state activity (Swyngedouw 2005), or as a manifestation of new social movements that operate in the shadow of or against the state. On the other hand, seen from the side of politicians, public servants and administrators, SI is also a possible source of energies to tap from. It is then considered as a potential policy instrument, that as such merits institutionalization and embedding in policy. SI then becomes blended with policy reform, public innovation (Bekkers et al. 2013) or innovation-in-governance (Voß 2007), or is even formalized into a 'sector' (Gordon et al. 2014; Bartholo et al. 2014). Still, there are various broader programs and motives under which SI could be formalized and made instrumental. It can play a part in strategies towards efficient and versatile government, for example, and merge with New Public Management (Cf. Lévesque 2013). It can also play a part in the austerity policies following the financial-economic crisis. Besides these deployments in terms of instruments, SI can also be a part of somewhat more principled and ideological visions. It can be invoked to reinvent government (such as 'Big Society', 'energetic society', or 'participation society') or to refocus governments to confront the 'grand challenges' of our time in partnership with other societal actors. Notwithstanding these opportunities to liaise with SI, governmental logic will always consider the desirability, accountability and lawfulness of any innovation however. It is not that evident to consider SI an instrument or an opportunity for co-production. Illicit, uncoordinated, unaccountable SI entails problems of regulation. Moreover, disruptive innovation poses grounds for exerting governmental control almost by definition.

Some questions:

- *How to turn SI into a policy instrument, or to develop instruments to support SI? How to create administrative capacities and competences in line with SI development ?*
- *How to regulate, coordinate or 'tame' SI, considering the phenomena of undesirable, illegitimate, unaccountable or otherwise undesirable SI?)*
- *How to mobilize SI for the grand challenges? And how to mobilize it for efficiency and continuity?*
- *Is SI a 'necessary evil' in times of austerity or a deliberate move towards Big Society? How lasting/temporary is governmental enthusiasm?*

3.2 SI for the market

Similar to its common juxtaposition with state-centered modes of governance, SI is often considered as a thrust against market logic. It is often seen to pursue the provision for needs not met through current organizations of markets, and to create alternative economies that are fundamentally more inclusive, fair, or sustainable. Indeed, there are many SI initiatives that seek to unsettle consolidated property rights, or capital accumulation through interests. Quite typical is also the strategy of establishing shadow systems, based on access to goods, shared services, and re-

valuation of efforts. On the other hand, different from the apparent attempts to break with the laws of Capital, SI can also be considered as an extension of market logic. It is then a way of reinventing entrepreneurship, or a way of introducing new but not fundamentally divergent business models (such as corporate social responsibility). SI is then a kind of ecological modernization, re-embedding and integrating market logic with social and environmental considerations. The invisible hand is considered indispensable for sustainable development; the invisible elbow is considered controllable. Finally, next to these transformative and reformist accounts of SI, there are also deployments that can rather be considered system-reproducing[22]. There is an unmistakable liberal spirit in SI, of course, and it has a long history (Defourny & Develtere 1999). SI tends to confirm individual choice and free association as cornerstones of society, and this can take both communitarian and libertarian shapes. In this regard Swyngedouw (2005) already pointed out how SI could become the Trojan horse that hollows out the state, and hauls in neoliberal ideology. Similarly, one could consider the libertarian mobility service provider Uber, or the silently-for-profit business models developing under the header of 'sharing economy'. Especially these libertarian, system-confirming branches of SI can be distinguished from the 'transformative' and 'reformist' ones.

Some questions:

- *How to integrate the 'shadow systems' into the main economy? What institutional measures would be needed to guide it?*
- *How to mobilize SI for a just/green/solidarity-based economy, and prevent it from becoming a Trojan Horse for neoliberal modes of economical organization?*
- *Are we seeing a SI 'bubble' in business, or lasting and sustained shifts in various economical sectors? How lasting/temporary is entrepreneurial enthusiasm?*

3.3 SI for civil society

As sketched in the introduction, SI is often located in the institutional space around markets and states. It is then primarily considered a matter of civil society, of 'grassroots innovation', and its transformative contents can then be described as asserting communicative rationality against the dominant instrumentalist logics of markets and states. Indeed, civil society actors can be seen to undertake SI in various sectors of society, providing for services not delivered, taking care of the marginalized, or leading the way in sustainable development. In many ways, civil society actors are engaged in transformative social innovation of some sort. Still it needs to be considered that civil society actors can hardly be grouped together under a particular institutional logic. This group infuses SI with a broad variety of values, such as mutual trust, social inclusion, the well-being of groups rather than individuals, authenticity, cultural reproduction, spiritual growth, free artistic expression, and religious service, to name but a few. So when civil society SI actors share the will to associate and pursue joint objectives, it is not necessarily transformative. It can be the bottom-up mode towards major system transformations and transitions, and action that is global in its aspirations. It can also be quite modest however, aiming for local solutions, relief for particular communities, or even amount to a retreat in the personal sphere. Next to these different values and directions for change however, there are the issues of motivations, collective will formation, capacities, and the societal role accorded to civil society more broadly.

Some questions:

[22] In key dimensions but not all dimensions – they're innovative practices, after all.

- *How to align civil society actors' SI strivings with the logics of markets and states? How can civil society actors deal with the commoditization (market) and instrumentalization (state) of SI initiatives?*
- *How to deal with the possibility of SI winding up into particularistic conspiracies (Bader 2001) or unaccountable networks (Swyngedouw 2005)?*
- *What are the prospects for interactive, socially-innovative citizenship (van Oenen 2006 2010) and for collective will formation (Defourny & Develtere 1999)?*

3.4 SI for science

Even when SI is usually understood as a phenomenon of shifts in the state-market-civil society triangle, it's not confined to these institutional logics. It is not accidental that TRANSIT features a case on the Living Knowledge Network (see §3.0). Science has a distinct and important role in the 'differentiated responsibility architecture' (WBGU 2014:113) developed through SI. There is SI, or in any case change, going on in science in the sense that researchers, research institutes, funding institutions and various intermediary organizations are considering that science practice should somehow be reinvented. A prominent consideration is that this is needed to better meet current and future societal needs. Also in these quarters of society there is a great variation in SI understandings and deployments, however. Indeed there are the claims for 'transformative' science *"that not only observes transformation processes in society, but itself initiates, catalyses and accompanies them"* (WBGU 2014:88). Of course there have been earlier arguments for trans-disciplinary 'mode-2 science' and co-produced science that similarly reconsidered the proper place of science in society, but this explicitly transformative (catalyzing, experimenting) role seems new. 'Transformative' science being generally promoted in the context of grand societal challenges, there are also the calls for co-production that stress the importance of valorization. Today's many triple-helix and quadruple-helix consortia testify how this 're-embedding of science' has caught on. On the other hand, there are also tendencies that rather argue towards somewhat less embedded and especially less instrumental science: Science should be measured and objectified in order to avoid sloppy science, or it should rather be 'slow' to diminish the perverse incentives of quantified outputs. With regard to innovation theory and SI, Jessop et al. (2013:120) warn that academic practice has largely surrendered to the 'de-ethicization' accompanying SI mainstreaming. They argue that SI research should be fundamentally more reflexive than the rather functionalist 'innovation systems approaches' developed under the EU Framework programs.

Some questions:

- *How to understand TRANSIT in terms of SI? What surrounding changes and selection pressures is it a product of, and from what position does it speak?*
- *What roles of science are implied in/asked for by TSI?*
- *How to deal with the 'de-ethicization accompanying SI mainstreaming' (Jessop et al. 2013)? How to account for ethics in TSI theorization?*
- *Where is science heading? What seem to be the lasting SI processes in science?*

3 Between transformation and capture: TSI lines of inquiry

However broad-brushed, the previous section substantiated how the institutionalization of social innovation is carried by a broad set of actors. We have considered SI as a deeply political 'boundary concept' that co-evolves with different shades of innovation and change. This leads to a dialecti-

cal view on SI institutionalization, in which SI is pulled in both transformative and rather system-reproducing directions. Highlighting this dialectical struggle from four different institutional logics, it only becomes more clear that we're dealing with a grey zone. SI institutionalization takes place in what tend to be differentiated and multi-level actor networks. Such context of distributed power and diverse motivations defies dichotomous, zero-sum understandings of transformation and capture (Pradel Miquel et al. 2013). A dialectical perspective means that we need to investigate the grey zone and not the extremes, and that especially the diverse and hybrid outcomes of SI institutionalization matter (Hargraves & van de Ven 2006). We have taken a first step in exploring the grey zone by charting the forces that shape SI. Underway we have learnt about the main governance challenges of TSI, in the form of the following issues and questions: *Who are the key actors striving for TSI? Who are the key actors striving for capture of SI? What are the crucial interpretations of game-changers, system innovation processes and narratives of change that inhibit/support TSI? What are the emergent alliances, the Trojan Horses and the goal intertwinements that can be found around SI? What are the institutions of SI? How do the institutions of SI relate to the discourses on SI? Is TSI a good bet for societal transformation, or does it rather distract from structural inequalities and system lock-ins? What lines of convergence can be found between state/market/civil society/science innovation? What mechanisms of cooptation can be observed, and what strategies are developed to deal with it? And how can the gained insights on TSI governance be translated in practical advice?*

A note on the last question is in place. TRANSIT upholds a transformative understanding of SI, and is committed to a kind of 'transformative science', as briefly mentioned in §3.4. To a certain extent, TRANSIT strives for knowledge that can be of instrumental value. So next to the question of further developing and deploying our conceptualization of 'boundary concept SI', there is the parallel activity of translating governance knowledge into management knowledge. Our first step in that respect has been to make the case for what we earlier called 'strategically aware' advice. We have sought to sensitize TSI-minded actors to the power-invested environment they are operating in, beyond the 'tool kits' that easily introduce illusions of solipsism and controllable social systems. Such systems mapping, especially if it helps to consider strategic options in the concrete case, can empower. We have also highlighted the particular diversity of values at stake in SI. Arguably, that helps deal with the dilemmas and tradeoffs that transformation tends to entail.

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