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# Learning for change: Storytelling on Timebanking

October 12, 2017

Paul Weaver

## Exploring the value of elders within the community

Great start to the storytelling session at the table with Barbara Huston telling the story of her mission-led time bank 'Partners-in-Care', which, in her own words 'never quite fit into any existing network' but developed, rather, by staying true to its mission, core values and reciprocity model of circular service exchange. Partners-in-Care was co-founded by three women, all with aging parents and all concerned to help them age 'in situ' in their own homes and communities, living for as long as possible outside care homes and institutions. We learned how, inspired by an article in the Christian Science Monitor about active people staying healthier longer, the three co-founders set about finding how they could showcase the value of older adults as active members of community.

## Reciprocity at the core

At that time, the mid 1990s, the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Foundation had a programme exploring the idea of Service Credit Exchange. In the US, service credit exchange using time as a unit of account had originally been developed by residents of Grace Hill, a poor neighbourhood of St. Louis, Missouri. It involved reciprocal service exchange among members of a network of community members that enabled circular, rather than one-to-one, service exchanges. The community used time spent giving or receiving services as a way to value and track exchanges. The idea had been picked up by the RWJ Foundation and was being promoted also by the Time Dollar Institute. The three co-founders of Partners-in-Care saw potential in a reciprocity-based service exchange model to advance their mission. They were further inspired by the work of Polly Wiessner, a researcher at the University of Utah, who had been researching reciprocity among members of tribal communities in Papua New Guinea. The three decided to place reciprocity at the centre of their work.

## Building knowledge and networks

They originally approached the RWJ Foundation with their idea. In Barbara's words they were "just three women with a mission and an idea" and they knew little about the world of big foundations like RWJ. They were at far too early a stage in developing their ideas for RWJ to fund them, but those at the Foundation listened to what they had to say and took their ideas seriously. RWJ gave, not a grant, but a list of its grantees. This started the three co-founders on a trail, visiting the grantee organisations and learning about what needs they served and about what gaps remained still to be filled. They went to the Department of Aging and to large hospitals to find out more about the needs of older people and the challenges they

face staying in community. Through these organisations they were referred to others and gradually they built up their knowledge and their networks.

### **The beginning: a trusting partner in transport service**

The Department of Aging highlighted that an obstacle to older people living in community is their access to transport and that getting to and from doctor and hospital appointments especially is a critical unmet need. One of the hospitals they'd visited expressed interest if they could provide transport services for out-patients, but it couldn't give them a grant. It would, however, provide them with physical space and support within the hospital building. This was enough for the three co-founders to apply for a Challenge Grant. The terms of the grant required proposers to find matching funds or, as proved critical in this case, in-kind matching contribution. What the hospital was offering made the fledgling Partners-in-Care eligible for challenge grant funding. Partners-in-Care was able to start up its operations, initially drawing on the time of the three co-founders, their family members and some friends (altogether 13 people) offering and organising rides and ride sharing to elderly patients needing to get to and from the hospital. Gradually, the more active elderly and other members of the Partners-in-Care time bank community became ride-givers and the transport service was underway.

### **Expanding the range of services**

Partners-in-Care gradually expanded to other service areas, always asking: what services do people need; what services can people offer; and what partner organisations can we work with? Home maintenance, small repairs and a handyman service was the next to be added. This was another core need of the less able elderly living at home, but their needs could be met by the more active elderly and others within the time bank. United Way, a charitable foundation that had a housing project was willing to fund a repair service if Partners-in-Care could offer one. In such ways, Partners-in-Care started to grow its service offers and its network of partners and funders. Barbara explained that: "Partners don't necessarily understand or need to understand reciprocity – but if you can fill a gap and do so in a way that costs very little, you're interesting for them".

### **The breakthrough**

A breakthrough moment for Partners-in-Care was when a local thrift store was closing down and the organization was offered the chance to take it over. This offered a way for older people to contribute by offering their unwanted goods, by helping sort, restore or upgrade these, and by working in stocks or sales in the boutique. The boutique also provided a focal point – a physical building and space – that gave visibility to the activities of the time bank, making its activities and impact very transparent to the wider community and to other potential partners. It became a place for older people to come together and socialise with each other and with the community at large.

Partners-in-Care operates on an asset-based approach: everyone has something to contribute. Older members unable to be active in the boutique, home repair or offering lifts can earn hours by phoning each other to make sure no one is lonely, left

out or overlooked. They are also its most powerful advocates, phoning relevant agencies and grant givers about the services they receive from Partners-in-Care and how important these are for them.

### Mission-driven

Partners-in-Care is 'mission-driven' and, while at the outset, Barbara and her co-founders made contact with the Time Dollar Institute that was involved in initiatives to grow the Time Dollar network of time banks in the US, they "bumped up" against what Barbara terms "the mission problem". The Time Dollar Institute and later TBUSA were promoting "a tool". By contrast, Partners-in-Care is "mission driven". Partners-in-Care uses whatever tools and mechanisms are helpful in realising its mission. There's an important lesson here. Partners-in-Care is among the most successful and most enduring time banks in the US and to large extent this is because it has maintained focus on its mission and made that and the principle of reciprocity central to its operations and governance.

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# Learning for Change: humanization of the economy through social innovation

October 12, 2017

René Kemp, Julia Backhaus, Tim Strasser and Paul Weaver

At the TRANSIT conference, 25 people gathered to discuss the topic of system changes based on alternative social relations. The session was entitled "humanization of the economy through social innovation" and organized by ICIS researchers Julia Backhaus, René Kemp, Paul Weaver and Tim Strasser.

In an initial plenary discussion led by René Kemp, the group discussed *why social innovation is still so much 'under the political radar'*. Considering that social innovation initiatives based on relational values and voluntary association are viewed as valuable to society by politicians and policy makers, why is social innovation not receiving more attention and funding from government?

Different explanations were offered. One reason suggested was that social innovation initiatives based on transformative values are anti-establishment. For those who are less anti-establishment – and thus less of an "existential threat" – the core value of autonomy leads them to seek independence. Another reason raised was that SI initiatives represent a dispersed phenomenon, which occurs under different names. There is no overriding idea behind it in terms of an "-ism". If there was, the media probably would have jumped on it, as they did with "cultural Marxism" and "right-wing

populism". A related element is that the names under which social innovation are practised (transition town, time bank, and slow food) don't give away the core principles of self-organisation, relational autonomy, reciprocity and collective management. In fact, the label of *social innovation* could be considered a misnomer because cooperatives and community benefit societies have a long history. Comparatively new, however, are the elements of relational autonomy and technologies used. A psychological explanation provided for the 'under the radar' paradox is that *you can only understand what it's about if you have experienced it*.

The discussion about social innovation being under the radar took an unexpected turn based on the remark that social innovation practices are receiving plentiful attention in the lifestyle sections of the weekend supplements, which celebrate food based on traditional seeds (produced by the seed movement) cultivated on the basis of permaculture principles (used in transition town initiatives and in eco-villages). The celebration of practices based on alternative social relations is not limited to food but also include aspects of autonomy, self-development and living a meaningful and ethical life. The irony is that such articles appear next to ads about weekend holidays and designer clothes and watches. The lifestyle supplements are unlikely to discuss the need for an alternative welfare indicator different from GDP. Such discussions are taking place elsewhere, for instance in the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. A sentence easily missed in the report of the Commission proposes that the fraction of time that people spend on activities they enjoy versus the fraction spent on activities they don't enjoy could be used as a progress measure for wellbeing.

Four break-out groups were then formed to discuss the roles of alternative social relations in transforming the systems of education and science, social welfare (including the care sector), cities and company law.

The discussion on **science and education**, led by Tim Strasser, centered on possible contributions and on limitations to be addressed. Disciplinary knowledge offers a too narrow basis for understanding and offering possible solutions to the big problems of society. These require an interdisciplinary approach applying different perspectives, methods and data on an issue and which is mindful about the limits of knowledge and the importance of power and interests. Problem-based education goes some way but it also needs to be complemented by critical investigations of root causes for societal problems. Next to studying problems of change and root causes for this, science should be involved in attempts at change, through action research. Kurt Lewin once remarked: *'If you want truly to understand something, try to change it'*. Fortunately this is happening. Examples are: student-led sustainability initiatives as promoted by the [Green Office model](#), the [DESIS network](#) of design schools and universities supporting social innovation for sustainability and innovative research institutes like the [Institute for Integral Studies](#). To truly change science, changes in funding and evaluation criteria are needed. A key intervention here may be measurement approaches and evaluation criteria that take into account the societal relevance of research. Most social innovation research still operates on 'extractive models' that draw upon the time and energy of research subjects without offering any value in return. There is a lot that science can contribute, like legal knowledge, software, reflexivity and legitimacy. For this academics have to engage with TSI actors in a concrete way, in projects of coproduction. A deeper mental transformation among

academics and funding actors is needed for this, besides changes in incentives, opportunities and evaluation criteria.

**Cities** as the locations of work, administration and land use and places of physical infrastructures and cultural diversity are interesting from a social innovation perspective and addressed in two rounds of lively discussion facilitated by Julia Backhaus. In view of the continuing growth of, especially, bigger cities, session participants agreed that cities are bound to become more powerful actors in national or even global governance arrangements. To date, most municipal governments operate within the 'old paradigm' and commonly sell property to commercial parties or decide on urban and infrastructural design 'top-down'. There are, however, an increasing number of towns and cities that venture off the 'beaten track' and infuse the old paradigm with social innovation. Examples in case are [participatory budgeting initiatives](#) or citizen councils like in Genk (Belgium) or Amersfoort (Netherlands). Other cities provide support for cooperatives and social innovation initiatives more generally. Session participants dreamed of 'urban social innovation centers' as hybrid work spheres for 'city makers' and 'civil servants' and as platforms where different social innovation initiatives can meet and network – all to establish stable, long-term collaborative relationships. Other ideas for transformative social innovation initiatives to get 'on the radar' and bring about transformative change included connecting cities to stimulate learning and exchange, lobbying for more local economy initiatives, including local public procurement, and offering trainings to officials in participatory tools, processes and institutions – or, inspired by citizen movements in Barcelona and Madrid: run for office.

In the break-out groups facilitated by René Kemp, **company law** was revealed to act a constraining factor for social enterprises in some countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands, in the absence of a formal legal basis. Social enterprises in the UK, Belgium and Switzerland were less constrained legally but things are presently not always moving in the right direction. Belgium has a legal form for social enterprise for as much as 20 years but this is currently under attack because of a political project of administrative simplification. So far, platforms of sharing are subject to light forms of regulation but this is likely to change because of the expansion of commercial forms (such as Uber and Airbnb). In the case of shared ownership of a resource (as in the case of cohousing), there are complicated issues of partnership, equity, accountability and ownership to be managed. A lot of coordination is needed beyond choosing an organizational form. Most eco-villages fail in the stage of planning. In general, the restricted nature of forms available for social innovation activities is not the biggest limiting factor. A culture of individual ownership and traditional structures of ownership (of land and companies) constitute far bigger problems for shared ownership and for producing social value.

In the **social welfare** group discussion hosted by Paul Weaver there was broad agreement that government and professional welfare organisations have lost sight of core values of care-taking in family and community. What is our goal as a society? Is it to make profit, to be efficient? Or is it to create wellbeing for everyone, to care for the unfortunate, to care for ourselves and each other, to arrange care giving and receiving as people want? Societal goals, progress indicators and even the tax system set perverse incentives. GDP is bigger if more people are sick and more money is spent treating symptoms of (often avoidable) sickness. A re-orientation to focus on

health and wellbeing creation could reduce avoidable cost, but the political system is locked in a point-scoring debate around marginal changes to the existing welfare systems or in stigmatizing and blaming system users even when what is needed is system change. There's a need to organise and empower people to take care of each other. Social innovation initiatives can contribute to care-taking in the community and to creating wellbeing directly through their activities. There are already bottom-up self-organised social insurance initiatives that mobilise community members and look, not at people's needs, but at the assets they bring and the contributions they can make.

## Learning for Change: A call for academics to get out of their comfort zones and transform the knowledge production and education systems.

October 12, 2017

Tim Strasser

*About the author: Tim Strasser is a PhD Researcher at ICIS, Maastricht; TRANSIT researcher and session co-host at the Learning 4 Change conference. Social innovator at rootAbility, empowering student-led change for sustainability in higher education.*

Are you frustrated about how the knowledge production system confines the possibility for research and education to be truly meaningful and transformative in practice? Here's a call to action to do something about it, based on various discussions at the L4C conference (in particular the session on Humanizing the Economy and the Critical Talks session).

What moved me most deeply during the L4C conference was the topic of how **the science system itself is called to evolve**, being a core part of a society undergoing transformation as a whole. Academia has a vital role to play not just in studying and (at best) contributing to the transformative efforts of social innovators. Academia also needs to address its own **systemic barriers that are inherent to the institutions of research and education**. Also on a more personal level, as academics we need to go beyond our comfort zone and get more active in challenging those institutions, and challenging ourselves in our personal commitment to change.

What we saw largely missing is a sense of courage and vulnerability to acknowledge our co-responsibility in re-enacting patterns that are in fact part of the larger

**problem**, part of our collective irresponsibility. Some examples of this are how the pressure to produce publications and citations enacts an inherent growth logic of the knowledge production system that is similar to how production in the market economy is oriented towards growth in GDP. That is, the system of production is structurally disembedded from the societal value it is intended to serve.

**Knowledge production could be much more transformative** in many ways. Some suggestions that surfaced in our discussions at L4C included:

1. **Possibilities for real co-design and co-production** of research in non-hierarchical ways, with practitioners who are properly co-funded to act as co-researchers. Too often research on social innovation is still „extractive“ as social innovators working with little payment are expected to offer their scarce and valuable time for interviews, while receiving little benefit of the research outcomes. This requires changes in funding regulations and research contracts.
2. **Quality of research being evaluated by actual learning outcomes** among social innovators, not just by paper outputs and citation impact. More holistic evaluation mechanisms and impact indicators are needed that take societal relevance into account.
3. **Embracing emergent processes and unpredictable outcomes** in the way research is designed and funded could allow for deeper learning. This is seldom possible, as the research outcomes already need to be known at the start of the project and the research processes hardly allow for deeper reflexivity and flexibility to re-frame the underlying questions and approaches along the way.
4. **Research, teaching and societal-engagement being more integrated** in a way that synergies between knowledge production, education and real-world practice could be realized. The disciplinary fragmentation and the separation between theoretical and practical realities is structurally embedded in how universities are organized.

**Now what could be the role of academics to realize these possibilities?**

We see many academics and students frustrated by the dehumanizing pressures of how we research and learn. So let's take this frustration as a resource for motivated action. Let's go beyond our comfort zones as „observers from the outside“ and actually take a stand: let's identify as social innovators within the systems of knowledge production and education.

Why don't we apply more of what we learn from our studies of social innovators to ourselves? Maybe because it's scary to acknowledge our co-responsibility in reproducing the rules of the game instead of challenging them? Because we fear a loss of status, security and legitimacy? Maybe also because we don't realize how deeply we have internalized those rules of the game in our own sense of identity?

Here are some concrete pathways for action...

1. **Nurture the capacities of students** to become transformative researchers: through exploring non-conventional ways of teaching and embedd transformative



learning in curricula... even if this challenges the expectations of evaluators, or even of the students themselves.

**2. Develop your own capacities to practice** transformative research: learn how to effectively co-design and facilitate collaborative research, integrating diverse ways of knowing and fields of practice... even if this requires more time and dedication than granted by the project funds and if it may feel risky to engage with practice more deeply than „observing from the outside“.

**3. Challenge dominant academic institutions** of research: such as funding and partnership legislations, publication pressures, citation indexes, quality standards and evaluation mechanisms. Be more pro-active in challenging how universities are organized... even if this may involve conflicts and backlashes.

**4. Reinvent conferences** and the way we learn as academics: go beyond top-down knowledge transfer and engage in spaces for real dialogue and deep listening. Embrace the personal and emotional aspects of ourselves in addition to the abstract and rational ways of knowing that constitute our masks as “experts”... Even if this makes you feel uneasy and vulnerable.

Conferences like **Learning for Change** and the [Transformations conference](#) could be seen as niche examples of transformative academic conferences: that co-design engaging learning events together with practitioners, that allow spaces for the arts and ritual, that provide opportunities for real co-creation and that support academics in their efforts to challenge institutions of academia as much as they support social innovators in other fields. Let’s start re-envisioning and re-designing conferences more as part of a wider ecology of learning and action among academics and practitioners equally engaged in social innovation for transformative change.

## Learning for Change: BEGIN

October 3, 2017

Ellen Kelder

Attendees of a fully booked workshop at the TRANSIT “Learning for Change” conference were presented with the BEGIN project. Social innovation experts from the Erasmus University Rotterdam facilitated the BEGIN workshop and representatives from Dordrecht presented their pilot to demonstrate some of the real-world impacts of social innovation on infrastructure and urban planning.

The BEGIN project has implemented social innovation theory as a way to present climate adaptation efforts to the public, and involve them in the planning and maintenance of blue green infrastructure, such as parks, canals and green spaces. The

BEGIN case was unique in that it was the only one presented, at the conference, on Urban Planning.

[Read the rest of the blog on the BEGIN website!](#)

## Learning for Change

October 3, 2017

Jürgen Howaldt

Jürgen Howaldt and Dmitri Domanski spoke about social innovation research and policy at the "Learning for Change" conference, which was hosted by SI-DRIVE's "sister" project [TRANSIT](#), in Rotterdam, on September 14-15.

Jürgen Howaldt from TU Dortmund University – sfs chaired a session "On the Future of Social Innovation Research and Policy" and presented the results of the global research project [SI-DRIVE](#). Particularly, he focused on social innovation as a part of a comprehensive innovation policy.

Julia Wittmayer from [TRANSIT](#)'s lead partner [DRIFT](#) commented on his presentation from her project's perspective. Furthermore, Dmitri Domanski (TU Dortmund University – sfs) talked about the emerging international research community in the field of social innovation. He presented the results of the study "Exploring the Research Landscape of Social Innovation", conducted within the framework of the international project "[Social Innovation Community \(SIC\)](#)". The [findings of the report](#) confirm that in recent years, social innovation research has further established itself as an autonomous research field.

[Read the rest of this short report on the TU Dortmund website!](#)

## Learning for change: how social innovation can empower youth people and engage them in community action

October 3, 2017

Ramine Felicia

Working towards a social economy requires the creation and existence of social innovation leading to a transformative change in society. Social innovation in the form of community work may be one of the most active and meaningful activities for people to participate in and should, together with new strategies regarding building a social economy, be strongly held and emphasized. However, our social base within society is becoming more mature. An essential, and in this panel session the main, question while being in this situation is how to engage young people in social innovation.

In a community where the impact of people's input is of great influence on the general state of mind and, so, determines the outcomes social innovation creates, motivating people to participate in activities and contribute to society may eventually lead to the transformative change we are striving for. Among strategies to achieve this motivation of our youngsters are creating a respectful environment and trust-building cooperation, experimenting with new forms of acting and thinking and making people feel part of a group of like-minded others. It is that energy of the participants that build and run an active and social community.

What the organizations and their representatives during the session had in common is the fact that they recognize and identify the issue of a lack of participation of the youth. Sandra Rakocevic, regional coordinator of the youth platform YouSee!, implies that it is of high importance that youth employment is stimulated and young people are encouraged to overcome difficulties to get into the labour market. By reaching a more significant amount of active young people and social interaction we can achieve a development with regard to community and its social state of mind.

An influential, but rising, factor within the process towards more sustainable and social economies is the presence and contribution of the concept Time-Banking, which builds a bridge back to community by exchanging with no money or costs, but time as currency, as was being explained by Time Bank Coordinator of Time Bank Hull, Kate MacDonald. The concept can be used as a way of training people as well as a way of thinking towards a new economy. Time-banking can, in this manner, be interpreted as a start or tool to, in combination with other tools, provide engagement in communities, says Michael Marks with a PhD on time-banking.

A highlight during the discussion at the end of the session, is the recognition that the

area of Europe might be afraid of innovation and it is a major issue and possible barrier regarding the road to a transformative change. To build and, ultimately, achieve a social economy, it is essential that the current state of mind is reformed, as 'we' generally want to keep the situation politically in the same position and are dependent of the government. Educating our people from a young age and making them realise that their engagement in communities can have a high impact on the development within the community, may reform the 'welfare' state of mind we are currently stuck in and that constantly presents itself as an issue, regarding social innovation and transformative change.

An inspiring part of not only this panel session, but the TRANSIT conference in general, is the fact that the power and say of the community is being recognized and focused on. It is indeed the youngsters who determine the future state of the current and upcoming generations, as it is their energy that stimulates the amount of participation within the society. It is by all means essential that we focus on the good deeds being practiced by this group of people.

What is interesting is the fact that, on the other hand, the current generation of a higher age also seems to notice the importance to influence the state of mind of their children and grandchildren. An evident example of this results from a talk I personally had with a visitor and at the same time representative of Slow Food Nederland that stands for "good, clean & fair food". The organization was founded as a reaction to the popular system of fast foods in current society.

Besides being a part of this initiative, she also has founded her own enterprise, which is focused on personal franchise support and motivating people towards a healthy lifestyle. Her company puts the attention on people by providing them support in two ways; both by helping them maintain a lifestyle based on more organic products and more sustainable ways of living, as well as giving insights on how to build a franchise in the most effective and sustainable manner. Her enterprise and personal ideas are based on giving a helping hand to the community in general and also younger people, and can so be seen as a small contribution to the large socially active community. By being in charge of running a profit organization, her company cannot be considered as community work. However, she is driven by passion and the want to help, which are major keys in order to have a social behaviour.

Actions of individuals within a society will most probably not have a significant influence on the social development, for the eye, that is. The moment that each

person puts on a more collaborative attitude and realises social interaction is essential for a more stable and sustainable state and, as a result of this, participates more in positive, engaging and meaningful activities, more significant outcomes will most probably be noticed on the long term.

## Learning for Change: learning about social resilience through play

October 3, 2017

Claasje Beyen

At the "Learning for Change" conference (organised by [TRANSIT](#)) we held a workshop on the Social Resilience Monitor (SRM) – developed by [het PON](#) and Telos – and on the social resilience dialogue game. In the monitor, social resilience is defined as the capacity of people or communities to deal with changes and the access to external resources that enable different strategies that enhance the resilience. The SRM distinguishes three types of resources: personal resources, social resources and (essential) services in the (immediate) vicinity.

The social resilience dialogue game is a method which enables stakeholders to discuss problems in society from the perspective of social resilience. In the workshop we introduced the issue:

*"How do you achieve that young adults with a mental illness participate in the neighbourhood in accordance to their abilities?"*

We asked the participants to come up with a desirable result.

*"What is your ambition? What do you want to achieve?"*

In the game, each participant had to decide for themselves which personal, social and community resources are most important in relation to the issue. And each participant had to explain to the others why he or she thinks these resources are important. Finally, the group decided on 3 final resources. Based on these resources, the group explored which activities are necessary to achieve the desirable result and who is going to do it.

The participants were very positive playing the social resilience dialogue game. The game stimulates conception of social resilience and the understanding of dynamics in resources. It enables to formulate concrete governance interventions based on the dynamics in personal, social and community resources.

# Learning for Change: Exploring the Patterns of Small Groups Spawning Changes

September 26, 2017

Abbie Caldas

*Everyone in society has a role to play in any change. For those of us trying to impart positive change in communities, it can be helpful to know the characteristics of these roles and how they interact with each other. This workshop explored that process.*

To better understand how Social Innovation spreads, we worked with the analogy of an Amoeba to explore the roles people take on in society that help or hinder transformation. Imagine an organism moving towards its food, putting out receptors into new territory, the rest of it slowly following, with the nucleus finally reaching the new point. Now consider human culture and the individuals that make it up as these various molecules of the amoeba. Some lead with new ideas, others take their time to consider it, and others still hold back until the last moment. This workshop invited participants into a facilitated role play, where we explored how change happens as a result of several factors.

Based on a game invented by the Context Institute Executive Editor, Alan AtKisson, we were given a scenario of a community divided over a large shopping area's impact on their neighbourhood. Some felt the strain of bringing consumption and waste as others saw the benefit of jobs and recreation. We each read a small background to prepare our character and then delved into our role of an Amoeba molecule to experience how ideas can spread through a culture.

**The key players and their roles:**

**Innovator:** Generates new ideas, leads research or inventions; pulls amoeba/change from in front.

**Change Agent:** Slightly more accessible by the mainstream, promotes the new ideas, solutions, directions, somewhat on behalf of the Innovator.

**Transformer:** Open to new ideas and wants positive change; Within the mainstream, yet adopts the idea earlier; Can sometimes be an ambassador who may be hesitant to get on board, but once they do, they can influence many others.

**Mainstreamers:** Consumed with their own life and doesn't take strong opinions, not aware of issues; the majority; will change when other Mainstreamers change.

**Laggard:** A Mainstreamer who doesn't like change in general and adopts change late, only when pressure from the majority.

**Reactionary:** Actively resists the new idea because s/he benefits from keeping the status quo or moving in the opposite direction; sometimes has economic or power interest.

**Iconoclast:** A silent partner to the Innovator who also believes things must change for the better; often a journalist, critic, or artist; keeps Reactionaries busy and pushes change from behind.

With two that operate outside the amoeba membrane:

**Spiritual Recluse:** The monk or meditator who inspires the Change Agents and Innovator; generally more preoccupied with eternal truths than realities.

**Curmudgeon:** The complainer who tried and failed and has lost faith in society; can sometimes create an antagonistic subculture.

It was interesting to note that everyone can play any of these roles in different contexts and/or at different times in their lives.

We witnessed - and actually unknowingly created ourselves - this natural paradigm of a culture adopting an innovation. Discussion afterwards revealed that research has discovered a fairly predictable pattern in this process: The innovator proposes the idea, it slowly spreads through the change agents' promotion and picks up momentum as transformers get on board.

We saw how the lagging center represented the tendency for the mainstream to be far from the forefront of cultural advance. Though as more people adopt this idea, others easily followed.

*Group debate, the pushes and pulls of a new idea.*

*Photo by Abbie Caldas*

## Lessons Learned

### Innovators:

- *Because the idea(s) can be so radical to some, you're probably a quite ineffective Change Agent; so enlist their help to be more accessible to the mainstream.*
- *Be careful not to be too attached to your original idea as it reduces the diffusion potential.*

### Change Agents:

- *You're more effective when you work together.*
- *A big return on your effort lies in working with Transformers.*
- *You may waste time trying to change Reactionaries and they are most effective when they discredit or disempower you. So remember it's easier to stop change (their role) than to push it forward and facilitate others' understanding (your role).*

### Iconoclasts:

- *Your time is well spent keeping the Reactionaries busy.*
- *You often make terrible Change Agents, and vice versa.*

- *Don't give much time to the Curmudgeons - maybe they used to be a Change Agent and got burnt out from disappointment and disillusion.*

**Applying this in Social Innovation work:**

- *Enlist key players in your community for support, ensuring their skills blend well together and their roles and responsibilities are clearly communicated.*
- *An effective implementation plan is simple, flexible, and broken into achievable parts*
- *To give strength to the plan, ensure all those pushing the message area also living it, keeping consistent and genuine messaging.*
- *Develop enabling structures such as training, and pilot programmes.*
- *Celebrate and promote achievements, communicating these to the wider community.*

## Learning for Change: Organisational Forms in transition. Co-creative explorations based on learnings from TRANSIT and social innovation initiatives

September 25, 2017

By Iris Kunze, BOKU University, Vienna, TRANSIT researcher

After two concise inputs by [Iris Kunze on research outcomes of TRANSIT](#) and by Robert Hall on learnings from the [Global Ecovillage Network](#), participants were invited to share their experiences in break out groups. In the next step we asked for key insights in the plenary and then harvested key learnings and needs from initiatives for innovative organisational forms in a Fish Bowl setting which are the following:

- Initiatives apply a diversity of organisational forms to choose from for depending and ensuring on purpose and member state (e.g. cooperative, association, foundation).
- Innovative, empowering organizational forms for engaging and empowering active members in the initiatives need to be supported by respective legal forms.
- These forms should ensure equal access to power by inclusive decision-making (e.g. elaborated, adapted forms of sociocracy) based on co-ownership of company, real estate etc. by the members and a value-based common ground (e.g. social just and ecological).
- Institutional obstacles are faced: NGO and cooperative legal forms are not harmonised while easy business registration seems to be promoted widely by national governments.
- Personal growth, social skills and connecting on a heart level (individual empowerment, authentic, deep communication, being able to take sophisticated individual responsibility and commitment for the community) is a necessary base for making innovative organizational forms really work.



Concerning the learning of how we applied facilitation methods in the session (as 'walk our talk' exercise of innovative organizational forms) we observed that the process managed to facilitate the needs of getting information (by the concise inputs), expressing one's own experiences in relation to the inputs (by giving space to talk for everyone in break out groups) which then prepared an insightful base for the sharing in a Fishbowl format. We consider it as a successful dialogue session because each of the 25 participants have been in the Fishbowl and was giving a focused and valuable statement. We draw from the facilitation method 'Collaboratory' we are developing in the Leadership for Transition (LiFT) project.

## Learning for change: experimentation and the co-production of knowledge in urban labs

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Blog post by Julia Backhaus, ICIS, Maastricht University

This session, co-organised by Philip Marcel Karré (Kenniswerkplaats Leefbare Wijken) and Timo von Wirth (DRIFT), turned out to be a lucky, organizational co-incidence: due to too many applications, some session proposals were merged, including this one which now addressed 'living labs' and 'knowledge labs' under the common theme of 'urban labs'.

The session was kicked off by Timo von Wirth who shared results of the [large research project GUST](#) on the Governance of Urban Sustainability Transitions. Besides elaborating on different processes (or strategies) for diffusion and transformation that living labs can engage in, including embedding, translating or replicating, and scaling, he offered critical reflections on 'LabWashing': radical ideas around which stakeholders gather and engage in experimentation may lose their transformative capacity when the mainstream becomes involved – a process also discussed [in the TRANSIT project as the dialectic relation between transformation and capture](#). Research findings on the different institutional set-up of living labs were illustratively complemented by Derk Loorbach (DRIFT) who revealed his 'practitioner alter-ego' by sharing the history of the BlueCity, a living lab on circular economy practices and our conference venue. Seated underneath a set of lamps from re-cycled plastic and next to an exhibition of up-cycled products, the audience listened to the entertaining story of how the BlueCity came into being (in short: the unexpected happened not least because a philanthropist committed to turning experimenting idealists into entrepreneurial change-makers).

Next, Philip Marcel Karré explained the rationale behind seven knowledge labs that were formed in Rotterdam in 2012 based on a collaboration between Rotterdam municipality and several higher education institutions. Their goal is to develop practicable strategies to address wicked urban challenges, including public health, quality of life, social cohesion or poverty. Next to the giant task of addressing

persistent, interrelated and complex problems, the collaboration between policy-makers and researchers poses some challenges.

Researchers may lack a 'political antenna' to communicate effectively or they may struggle with developing concrete suggestions in a short time-frame. Policy-makers, in contrast, may become frustrated with researchers who try to make decisions for them. Moreover, both groups work in different communities and are part of different systems – including performance assessment according to different indicators (NB: the betterment of actual problems not being one of them). Wim van der Zanden, researcher at Rotterdam municipality, made clear how knowledge has become a valuable currency with over 50 people working for Rotterdam municipality to derive useful information from data. The question how to navigate the 'information cloud' has become central to decision-making. Wim seeks to provide a radar and a compass by delivering courses to policy-makers on how to create and apply knowledge.

The lucky match-making of the two session hosts allowed for an intriguing comparison of two rather different projects. The BlueCity is a place (a landmark even) that offers space, literally and figuratively, for research and experimentation by people housed under the same roof – and thus resembles the 'classic laboratory' more closely. However, a lot is done regarding outreach and communication, as well as cooperation with other initiatives and higher education institutions. The BlueCity has been created 'bottom-up', albeit building on "established connections that provided a facilitating environment".

The Rotterdam knowledge labs, in contrast, were created 'top-down' based on an initial agreement between the mayor and the Board of Erasmus University and are a dispersed, collaborative network of people working in different places. Moreover, municipal and scientific members study various places, neighbourhoods or communities in the city and reach out to citizens for participation. Crucially, initiatives thus brought into being are followed and evaluated which implies an action research-inspired approach to science and policymaking – and seems to turn the entire city into a 'laboratory'.