transformative social innovation theory

Game-changers & Transformative Social Innovation

Working paper, policy insights, lessons for facilitation tools and workshop report

Deliverable 2.1

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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 game-changers and transformative social innovation, and consists of 4 part: (1) working paper, (2) discussion paper on policy insights (input for policy brief), (3) discussion paper of facilitation tool (input for proto-typing tools), (4) workshop report

Reference:

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Introduction to Deliverable 2.1

This is the first deliverable of TRANSIT's Work Package 2 on "Synthesis" (WP2). The object of WP2 is to safeguard the relevance and applicability of the Transformative Social Innovation Theory through "transdisciplinary translation" into "policy insights" and ideas for the development of "practical tools". More generally, WP2 Synthesis provides scientific recommendation for "transdisciplinary translation" across four cross-cutting themes: governance, social learning, monitoring and resourcing.

Besides these four cross-cutting themes, WP2 has also set itself the task of clarifying the notion of 'game-changers' in relation to transformative social innovation. To this end, WP2 has (1) organised a high-profile workshop on "Game-changers and Transformative Social Innovation", for which leading scholars from across the world were invited, and (2) developed a working paper on this theme, using the Economic Crisis and the New Economy as empirical illustrations. Based on insights from the workshop and the working paper, two discussion papers were produced regarding "transdisciplinary translation" into (a) policy insights, and (b) facilitation tools.

Deliverable 2.1. reports on the outcomes of these endeavours, and consists of four parts (see below). Each of these parts has been/ will be shared as a document (paper/report) in its own right, which has been/ will be shared with specific purposes and audiences, as specified below.

1. Working paper: "Game Changers and Transformative Social Innovation. The Case of the Economic Crisis and the New Economy"

This paper has been circulated to and discussed with the participants of the synthesis workshop on *Game-changers & Transformative Social Innovation* (1-2 September 2014). Furthermore, the paper has been presented at the *5th International Conference on Sustainability Transitions. Impact and Institutions* (27-29 August 2014, Utrecht). Moreover, the working paper is shared as a TRANSIT working paper on the TRANSIT website.

2. Discussion paper: "Insights for Policy on Game-Changers & Transformative Social Innovation".

This discussion paper proposes what are relevant insights (so far) for policy. It serves as input for TRANSIT's first published policy brief (planned for spring 2015), which is to be deliberated in WP2 in the coming months, informed by (a) discussions on the cross-cutting themes, in particular governance (WP2), (b) theoretical reviews and conceptual definitions (WP3), (c) first empirical results from the case-studies (WP4), and (d) insights from the first engagement workshop (WP6). Furthermore, the discussion paper is to be shared and discussed with a selection of TRANSIT partners who are interested in co-operating and co-producing policy insights on transformative social innovation.

3. Discussion paper: "Exploring Tools for Facilitating Transformative Social Innovation (TSI). Lessons from Transition Facilitation Methods"

This discussion paper explores how insights from the scientific working paper and the workshop on game-changers can be useful for the development of 'tools' for facilitating transformative social innovation. Moreover, the paper discusses what one can learn from earlier experiences of applying 'transition facilitation methods' when it comes to facilitating transformative social innovation processes. The paper serves as input for the development of facilitation tools in TRANSIT in WP6, which is to be deliberated with the other WPs as well as with stakeholders in the first engagement workshop (February 2015).

4. Report Synthesis Workshop on Game-Changers & Transformative Social Innovation.

This document reports on the outcomes of the first TRANSIT synthesis workshop on "Transformative Social Innovation & Game-changers" (1-2 September). The workshop report provides a synthesis of main workshop insights and contestation points. Further, the report describes some highlights of the paper presentations and discussions, and a summary of the working group discussions on governance, social learning, monitoring and resourcing. The report has been circulated to all workshop participants and TRANSIT consortium partners, and it has been posted publicly on the TRANSIT-website: http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/blog/game-changers--transformative-social-innovation. This website post also includes links to the workshop agenda, the overview of paper abstracts and a selection of workshop pictures.

Game Changers and Transformative Social Innovation. The Case of the Economic Crisis and the New Economy.

By Flor Avelino , Julia Wittmayer, Alex Haxeltine, René Kemp, Tim O'Riordan, Paul Weaver, Derk Loorbach and Jan Rotmans

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Reference:

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Game Changers and Transformative Social Innovation. The Case of the Economic Crisis and the New Economy.

Flor Avelino[1], Julia Wittmayer, Alex Haxeltine, René Kemp, Tim O'Riordan, Paul Weaver, Derk Loorbach and Jan Rotmans

Abstract

This paper discusses transformative social innovation, conceptualised as the process through which social innovation contributes to societal transformation. A conceptual heuristic is introduced that proposes five foundational concepts to help distinguish between different pertinent 'shades' of change and innovation: 1) social innovation, (2) system innovation, (3) game-changers, (4) narratives of change and (5) societal transformation. The paper elaborates on the background and meaning of each of these concepts, with references to existing literature in transition studies and social innovation research, and through empirical illustrations. The recent economic crisis is taken as an empirical example of a 'game-changing' macro-development, and it is explored how this economic crisis relates to other forms of change and innovation. A central hypothesis is that societal transformation is the result of specific 'co-evolutionary' interactions between game-changers (e.g. the economic crisis), narratives of change (e.g. 'a new economy'), system innovations (e.g. welfare system reform), and social innovations (e.g. new exchange currencies or new design practices). The paper elaborates on this hypothesis and formulates challenges for future research.

Keywords

Transformative social innovation, system innovation, game-changers, narratives, economic crisis, new economy

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1 Introduction

There is an increasing attention for 'social innovation' as a necessary driver for societal transformation. Howaldt and Kopp (2012:48) argue that social innovations are gaining importance over technical innovations when it comes to dealing with societal challenges, and that social innovations "can contribute proactively with regard to anticipated developments, such as demographic developments or the effects of climate change "to modify, or even transform, existing ways of life should it become necessary to do so" (Giddens 2009: 163)". The idea that social innovation is an effective way to deal with societal challenges, is also manifested in policy discourses across the European Union (EU), as illustrated by EU president Barroso's statement that "if encouraged and valued, social innovation can bring immediate solutions to the pressing social issues citizens are confronted with" (Hubert 2012:vi). The *Bureau of European Policy Advisors* (BEPA) defines social innovation as "innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means" and argues that they provide an effective way to "empower people" and "drive societal change", particularly in the context of the recent economic recession: "at a time of major budgetary constraints, social innovation is an effective way of responding to social challenges, by mobilising people's creativity to develop solutions and make better use of scarce resources" (BEPA 2010: 7).

These high expectations regarding social innovation raise the following research question: *how* and *to what extent* does social innovation contribute to societal transformation that responds to societal challenges, and how are people empowered to contribute to such process? This research question has been taken up in a recently started, EU-funded 4-year research project entitled "TRANsformative Social Innovation Theory" (TRANSIT). The TRANSIT project explores transformations towards societies that are more inclusive, resilient, sustainable, and, thereby, hypothesised as more able to respond effectively to societal challenges. Specifically, TRANSIT investigates the role(s) of social innovation within such societal transformations, combining theoretical and empirical research (Haxeltine et al. 2013). Here 'transformative' is taken to mean an irreversible, persistent adjustment in societal values, outlooks and behaviours of sufficient 'width and depth' to alter any preceding situation. The notion of 'transformative social innovation' can be understood in three distinct ways: (1) as a specific *type* of social innovation, i.e. one that contributes to societal transformation, (2) as a social innovation with an *intention* to contribute to societal transformation, and (3) as the *process* through which social innovation contributes to societal transformation. In the TRANSIT projects – and in this paper – we focus on the third understanding, i.e. transformative social innovation as a *process*. Understanding the process through which social innovation contributes to societal transformation, requires one to distinguish the former from the latter. This leads to another more open, fundamental research question: *how does social innovation interact with other forms of change and innovation, and how do we distinguish those?*

The TRANSIT projects utilises a conceptual heuristic that provides five foundational concepts to help distinguish between different pertinent 'shades' of change and innovation: 1) social innovation, (2) system innovation, (3) game-changers, (4) narratives of change and (5) societal transformation. The aim of this paper is to elaborate and empirically illustrate these concepts as a way to explore transformative social innovation. This paper particularly zooms in on the concept

of 'game-changers'. These are broadly conceptualised as macro-phenomena (events and trends) that are perceived to change (the rules, fields and players in the) the 'game' of societal interaction. The dominant understandings, values, institutions and social relationships through which society is organised and defined may fundamentally change in response to game-changing events and trends. The purpose of this 'game-changer' notion is to explore how empirical macro-phenomena are perceived as 'game-changing' – how they are interpreted, (re)constructed, contested and dealt with – by people and initiatives working on transformative social innovation.

This paper elaborates on TRANSIT's conceptual heuristic by using the recent economic crisis as an example of a 'game-changer'. The economic crisis has spurred debates about the unsustainability of our current financial and economic systems. It has drawn new attention to alternative economic narratives and arguably has generated an acceleration of social innovations. Five years after the break out of the recession, attention for the economic crisis has waned, but the concerns expressed by counter-movements such as the Occupy movement live on. They combine with other concerns about inequality and feelings of losing out, anxieties over tax evasion by the wealthy few and multinational companies, the systems of production being environmentally unsustainable, and a range of other issues such as an aging population. Such anxieties interlace with developments on the ground in the form of (transformative) social innovation.

In the section that follows (section 2), we present the background of TRANSIT's conceptual heuristic. Each of the concepts is then elaborated and empirically illustrated, starting with the 'economic crisis' as an example of a macro-phenomenon that is perceived as a **game-changer** (section 3). This particular game-changer comes with various other 'game-changers', e.g. unemployment, budget cuts, social isolation – all developments that are or can be perceived as 'changing the game'. We then move on to discuss the alternatives to mainstream solutions whose emergence, development and diffusion have been or are being influenced by the economic crisis, starting with a discussion of **narratives of change** and related 'counter- movements' around a new economy (section 4), (calls for) **system innovation** in, *inter alia*, financial systems, taxing, state reform, health care (section 5), and **social innovations**, such as new business models, new services, new sharing practices, some of which may hold transformative potential (section 6). We also critically discuss (section 7) how and to what extent the dynamics between all of these can be conceptualised as contributing to and/or shaping a process of **societal transformation**. Finally (section 8), we formulate lessons and challenges for future research on transformative social innovation.

2   A Conceptual Heuristic for Exploring Transformative Social Innovation

The TRANSIT project draws on (1) the emerging field of social innovation research (Mulgan 2006; Murray et al. 2010; Franz et al. 2012, Westley 2013, Moulaert et al. 2013), and (2) the field of sustainability transitions research (Rotmans et al. 2001, Grin et al 2010, Markard et al. 2012). In the very initial phase of the TRANSIT project, the first conceptualisations of transformative social innovation were inspired by the Multi-Level Perspective, a central framework in transition research. The Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) theorises the dynamics of societal transitions (Rip & Kemp 1998, Geels 2005, 2010), distinguishing between three levels: 1) the landscape (exogenous

macro-trends), 2) regimes (dominant institutions and practices), and 3) niches (places of innovative practices). A transition occurs when changes at all three levels reinforce each other into an overall systemic transformation (Schot & Geels 2008, De Haan & Rotmans 2011), one possible pattern being that niche-innovations build internal momentum, while landscape developments (e.g. climate change) create destabilising pressure on regimes (e.g. fossil energy sector), which creates 'windows of opportunity' for niche-innovations (e.g. solar energy).

In its initial phase, the TRANSIT project used the MLP perspective to conceptualise different levels of transformative social innovation. Social innovations were conceptualised as new services, practices or ideas at the micro-level of 'niches'. System innovation was conceptualised as change at the meso-level of 'regimes'. Game-changers were conceptualised as exogenous developments at the macro-level of the 'landscape'. We conceptualised transformative social innovation as a non-linear interaction between these levels of change and innovation, and introduced 'narratives of change' as a particular communication between these different levels (Haxeltine et al. 2013)[2]. We illustrated these conceptualisations by using three empirical examples of 'game-changers', as depicted in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Multi-level Perspective on Transformative Social Innovation
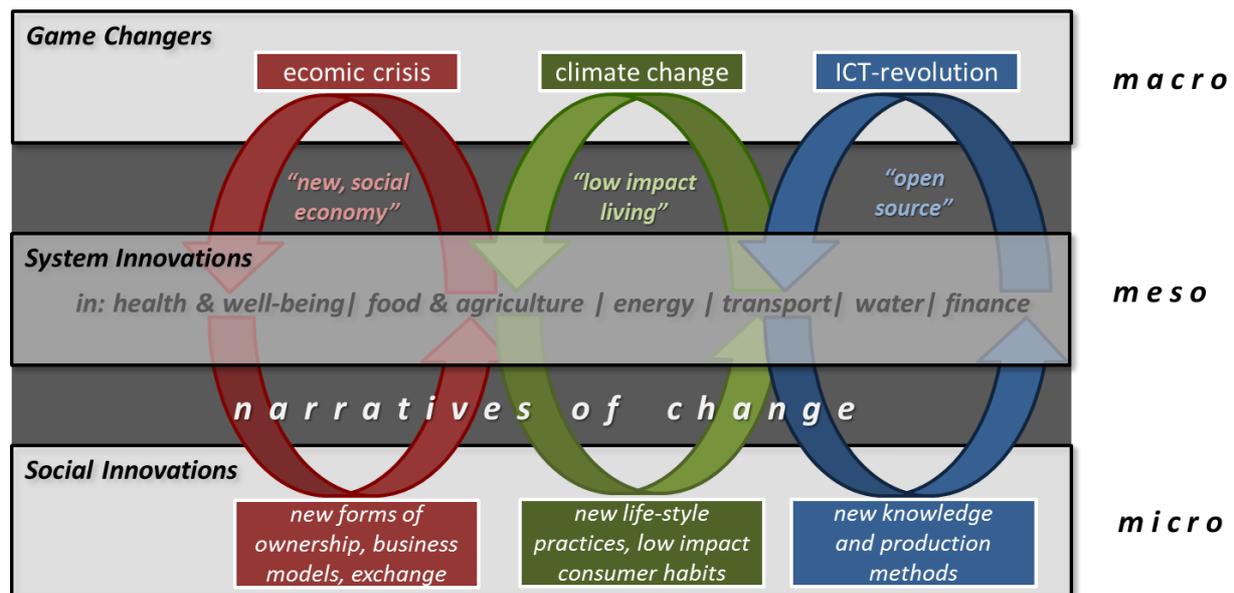
As the TRANSIT project evolved, it became increasingly necessary to 'open up' the initial conceptual framework so as to include a wider diversity of empirical phenomena and epistemological perspectives. This 'opening up' also meant a break with the MLP as a foundational perspective, for several reasons. First, the distinctions between 'levels' in the MLP are contested (Genus & Coles 2008, Smith et al. 2010, Rotmans & Loorbach 2010), one particular contestation being the treatment of macro-developments as inherently exogenous contextual factors outside

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[2] Some concepts have been adapted: 'narratives of change' is a reformulation for the original 'transformative discourses', and 'system innovation' is a reformulation for 'systemic change'. The reformulations are based on a process of clarification and translation to more common sense and/or self-explanatory language.

the main research focus: this inherently 'exogenous' status of the societal landscape needs to be questioned (Avelino 2011, Riddell & Westley 2013), and "transition thinking and policy design need to take this context – in the MLP jargon: "landscape" conditions – more seriously" (Van den Bergh, 2013:2). Moreover, the MLP has been associated with a particular meta-theoretical 'evolutionary' perspective (Garud & Gehman 2010). As the TRANSIT project also wants to explore other meta-theoretical perspectives on transformative social innovation, such as 'relational' and 'durational' perspectives, it has been argued that it cannot have an inherently 'evolutionary' perspective (such as e.g. MLP) as a conceptual starting point (Haxeltine et al. 2014).

As a result, the TRANSIT project now has as its starting point a conceptual heuristic that proposes five foundational concepts to help distinguish between different pertinent 'shades of change and innovation': 1) social innovation, (2) system innovation, (3) game-changers, (4) narratives of change and (5) societal transformation (see table 1 for working definitions). This heuristic does not preclude at which levels of aggregation specific types of innovation and change do or do not manifest, nor does it preclude whether they are exogenous or endogenous.

The heuristic serves as a cognitive map to empirically and theoretically investigate the central research question: *how does social innovation interact with other forms of change and innovation, and how are actors (dis)empowered therein?* The conceptual heuristic is depicted in figure 2 below. The figure implies our hypothesis that societal transformation is shaped and produced by particular patterns of interaction between social innovation, system innovation, game-changers and narratives of change. Individual actors, initiatives and networks, are empowered (or disempowered) to contribute to this process through different forms of governance, social learning, resourcing, and monitoring (Haxeltine et al. 2013).

Figure 2. Conceptual Heuristic to Explore the Dynamics of Transformative Social Innovation
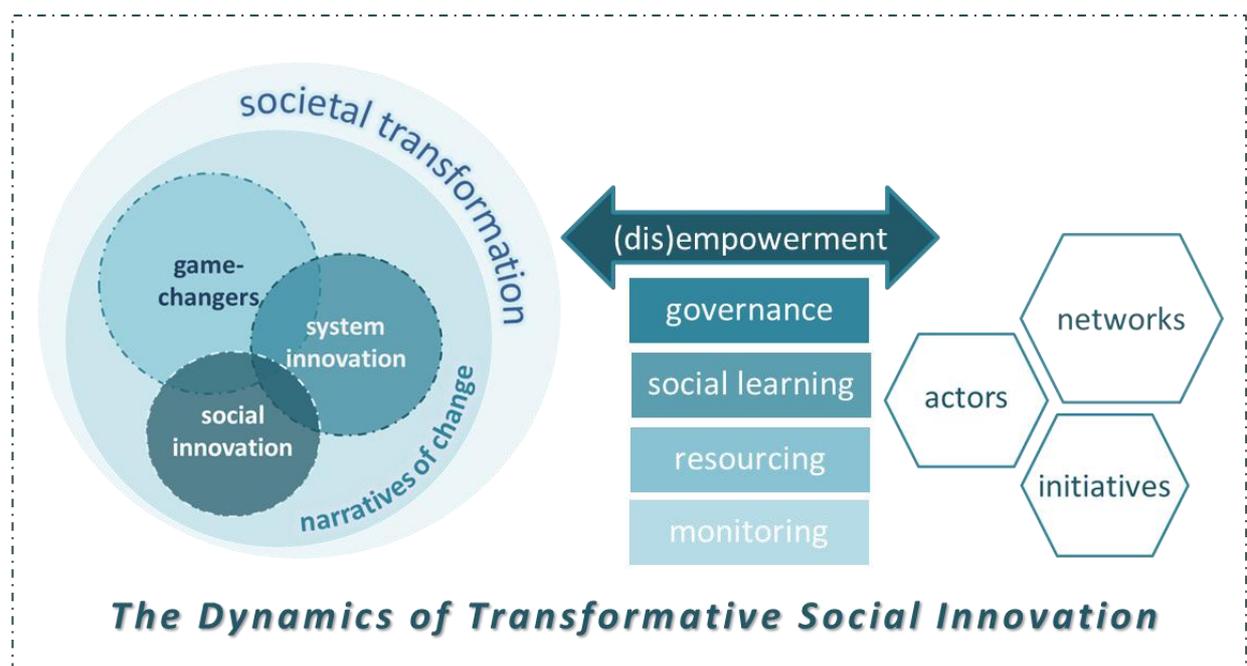
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In this paper, we focus on unpacking the 'left' side of the abovementioned figure 2, i.e. the five foundational concepts distinguishing between different shades of change and innovation. Table 1 below provides short working definitions for each concept,. In the subsequent sections, we then elaborate on each of the five concepts by providing references to existing literature and empirical illustrations.

Table 1. Five Shades of Change and Innovation: Working Definitions (elaborated in sections 3-7)

5 Shades of Change & Innovation	Working Definition[3]
Social innovation	New social practices, including new (combinations of) ideas, models, rules, social relations and/or products *(see section 6)*
System innovation	Change at the level of societal sub-systems, including institutions, social structures and physical infrastructures *(see section 5)*
Game-changers	Macro-developments that are perceived to change the (rules, fields and players in the) 'game' of societal interaction *(see section 3)*
Narratives of change	Discourses on change and innovation, i.e. sets of ideas, concepts, metaphors, and/or story-lines about change and innovation *(see section 4) .*
Societal transformation	Fundamental and persistent change across society, exceeding sub-systems and including simultaneous changes in multiple dimensions. *(see section 7)*

The conceptual heuristic serves to empirically explore how these different shades of change and innovation interact. The working definitions help to guide explorative research on this interaction, in which one can have various empirical starting points. In this paper, our empirical starting point is the economic crisis as an example of a 'game-changer'. In the following sections we explore how this game-changer relates to other shades of change and innovation.

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[3] These concepts, distinctions and working definitions are certainly not self-evident or clear-cut. Some scholars (e.g. Westley 2013) conceptualise social innovation as being 'systemic' by definition. In our conceptualisation, social innovation is not necessarily situated at the level of societal sub-systems (but it can be). A new social practice within a local initiative can be considered a social innovation, regardless of whether or not it coincides with change on the level of a societal system. Social innovation and system innovation might overlap, but not necessarily. The same applies to the distinction between game-changers, narratives of change and societal transformation. According to the working delineations presented above, a societal transformation can be perceived as a game-changer, but not every game-changer necessarily refers/leads to societal transformation. A game-changer can also refer to a short-term trend or hype (possibly having a long-lasting transformative impact, but not necessarily).

3 Game-changers - e.g. the 'Economic Crisis'

We conceptualise game-changers as macro-developments that are perceived to change the (rules, fields and players in the) 'game' of societal interaction. At issue is to explore how game-changing macro-trends are interpreted - *perceived, interpreted, (re)constructed, contested and dealt with* - rather than deciding what is or is not a game-changer 'objectively' speaking. As such, our notion of a 'game-changer differs explicitly from the concept of 'landscape developments' in the multi-level perspective of transitions theory, which are considered in that theory as *exogenous* long term developments (Geels 2005, Geels & Schot 2010). Our notion of a game-changer does not predefine the level of exogeneity or endogeneity, nor its temporal scale. Rather, these characteristics differ across different interpretations of game-changers; some macro-developments may be perceived to be more endogenous than others, or one specific macro-trend may be perceived by some to be exogenous while being perceived as endogenous by others. This means that the notion of a 'game-changer' can include a wide variety of phenomena that are fundamentally different in kind: a demographic development (e.g. ageing population), an ecological phenomenon (e.g. climate change), a socio-political challenge (e.g. the economic 'crisis'), a socio-technological revolution (e.g. the ICT-revolution), or a positively-construed movement or discourse (e.g. 'environmental movement' or 'the sharing economy')[4]. The point of the heuristic framework is to acknowledge and map out the multiplicity of game-changing macro-trends. Regardless of what kind of empirically observed game-changer one starts with, the challenge is to explore it from different perspectives.

The 'economic crisis' is a macro-development of international significance that is widely perceived as game-changing and has deeply penetrated public opinion and political discourses over recent years. This economic crisis has an empirical basis in 'factual' events and economic statistics, but it is also a social construction. In a narrow sense, the term economic crisis refers to the world-wide recession which started in 2007-8 which changed the economic circumstances and outlook of investors and led governments to save banks and to stimulate the economy, inter alia through 'bail outs', expansion of the money supply ('quantitative easing'), and low interest rates. It changed the circumstances of many whose employment or work conditions it affected. It also made many more critical about capitalism and the stability of markets, especially financial markets (Murphy, 2011; Stephen and Weaver, 2011; Hudson, 2014; Rifkin, 2014; Weaver, 2014). In Europe, the economic crisis is accompanied by (perceptions of) a debt crisis, a banking crisis and a euro crisis, which are all interrelated (Hudson, 2014). The financial crisis, debt crisis, bank crisis, 'neo-liberal crisis', 'global financial collapse' are not just different names but also refer to different, albeit closely related, empirical phenomena. Importantly, the perception and representation of such phenomena in crisis terms can give scope for motivating and/or justifying responses. This has implications for our exploration of game changers: when a crisis has passed it may be that it can no longer serve as a reference point for *responsive* action, though a more permanent effect of crises may be the view that the threat of recurrence warrants *pre-emptive* action.

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[4] The only conceptual preclusion is that it refers to a trend at the macro-level, meaning that it exceeds individual sub-systems or practices. Even that is up for interpretation, as the concept of the macro-level inherently depends on one's sub-system focus. For instance, for someone who focuses on a city as a sub-system, a national political discourse may be perceived as a macro-trend. The point of the heuristic framework is to challenge the interpreter to think about trends that go beyond one's specific sub-system focus.

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A common thread through the perceptions of the economic crisis is the **socio-economic perspective**, in which the emphasis lies on growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), household incomes, poverty and employment[5]. The Economist (2013a:59-61) estimated there could be as many as 500 million unemployed young people in the world. Eurostat (2013) reported that unemployment in the Eurozone reached 12% in February 2013. Youth unemployment throughout the EU rose to 24.4% in November 2012. In May 2012, there were 5.517 million unemployed young people in the EU, leading to a worry that many millions of young adults could become a "forgotten generation". A report by the Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent[6] painted a sombre picture of increased poverty, of a new impoverished middle class, of losing hope and of despair across the whole of Europe. The Federation warns of a deepening social crisis of poverty, xenophobia, discrimination, social exclusion, violence and abuse. In England, young people were found to fall behind the rest of Europe in the basic skills of literary, numeracy and computer-based problem solving[7]. Scholars have argued that this circumstance offers the prospect of a deepening skills shortage, throttling growth, whilst creating in its wake an unemployable underclass, and that this widening inequality breeds the antithesis of any successful transition to sustainability (O'Riordan 2013).

Besides the predominant socio-economic perspective on the economic crisis, there are also socio-ecological, socio-technical, socio-cultural and socio-political perspectives. **Socio-ecological** perspectives link the economic crisis to a concern that it may not be possible to recover growth sufficient for widening global prosperity without crossing planetary ecological boundaries, some of which have already been crossed (Rockstrom et al. 2009). Relentless population growth and other demographic changes combined with the overall growth in the overall claims of the human population on natural resources and ecosystem services, create concern over the rate at which ecological boundaries are being approached. Scholars argue that the ecological transition has already 'reached the tipping point phase' (Rockstrom et al. 2009, Schellnhuber et al. 2009). Holzman (2012) argues that every year we lose 3-5 trillion dollars in natural capital, an amount greater than the yearly monetary costs of the global economic crisis.

From a **socio-technical** perspective, Perez (2013) argues that economic crises are recurring phenomena that often overlap with technological revolutions, and that the recent economic crisis was fuelled by the Internet Bubble created by financial innovations in and with ICT. Geels (2013) contends that the economic crisis has a negative impact on socio-technical transitions, as austerity policies reduce public spending on e.g. renewable energy technology. At the same time, the economic crisis opens up opportunities for green growth and "a Green Industrial Revolution" (ibid). Perez argues that "the golden age of each technological revolution has come precisely after the major bubble bust and the subsequent recessions, which is where we are now", and that "the technological transformation that occurred during the past few decades has already provided the means for unleashing a sustainable golden age" (2013:20-22).

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[5] See e.g. the Economic and Financial Affairs Directorate of the European Commission (2013, p. 5) which put a brave face on its winter 2012/3 economic forecasts.
[6] Entitled Think Differently: Humanitarian Impacts of the Economic Crisis in Europe (October 2013).
[7] See report by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development entitled Survey of Adult Skills (October 2013)

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When perceived from a **socio-political** perspective, it can be argued that the economic crisis has created political anger over the accumulations of wealth in the hands of powerful political and financial elites. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) argue that inequality breeds a sense of individualism, excessive and environmentally uncaring consumption, and antagonism to the qualities of democracy. Increasing inequality could give rise to social tensions and a resistance and even hostility towards sustainability unless the explanation of sustainability is geared to the improvement of equality. It can also be postulated that the economic crisis has aggravated a collapse in public confidence in the European Union in many of the traditional institutions that have underpinned political, economic and social arrangements during the 20th Century (Murphy, 2011; Hudson, 2014; Weaver, 2014).

From a **socio-cultural** perspective, the economic crisis relates to the way in which the dominant economic model has impacted on senses of identity and feelings of attachment to place and belonging to a collectivity (Yuval-Davis 2006). Changes in our feelings of belonging have been traced through history: Industrialisation, migration or urbanization lead to what Marx refers to as 'alienation' and are at the origin of the classic distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tönnis, 1940). The economic crisis has contributed to migration of Europe's Youth and to the search for new life meanings (other than e.g. having a full-time job, a house and a family), which may result in the creation of new communities centred around new ideals and values (e.g. Occupy movement, or sharing platforms such as e.g. blog.peerby.com). Thus, the economic crisis can be related to a changing and contested understanding of what constitutes a community or a place of belonging[8]. Such socio-cultural perspective can also be extended to the perceived 'loss of the sacred', relating to existential needs of human beings "driven not by material need but by an inner compulsion to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to take up a position toward it" (Weber 1963, 116-117). Following Emile Durkheim, the 'sacred' can be understood as that which is set apart from society and transcends the everyday life, and is opposed to the profane (i.e. the everyday mundane things and activities). These socio-cultural perspectives on the economic crisis point out a feeling of loss, while at the same time also opening for potentially new ways. This tension can be associated more fundamentally with a materialist worldview that has characterised modernity (and so-called post-modernity) and that has historically arisen in close association with the technological and social transformation of the different stages of the industrial revolution. From this perspective, the economic crisis can be perceived as being related to a deeper systemic crisis in the culture and worldview of western societies.

4   Narratives on Change – e.g. 'A New Social Economy'

We use 'narratives of change' as an accessible and short summary of 'discourses on change and innovation'. A 'discourse' can be defined as "a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities" (Hajer 1995: 44). Discourses include various 'metaphors' and 'storylines': "a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to

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[8] Communities that are defined through (everyday) face-to-face contact, are not replaced completely but integrated with 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991) constructed by people who perceive to be part of this community – more interest-based than geographically-based (McMillan and Chavis 1986).

draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena. The key function of story-lines is that they suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive component parts of a problem" (ibid: 56). We use 'narratives of change' to refer to any kind of discourses about innovation or change[9].

Our concept of 'narratives of change' relates to that of 'generative paradigms' as applied in the *Open Book of Social Innovations* (Murray et al. 2010), in which sets of ideas and goals that drive and motivate social innovation are characterised as 'generative'. Narratives of change can be considered to co-evolve with such new 'paradigms' on e.g. the economy. In our narratives of change concept, we can distinguish between different types of narratives as proposed by Roe (1994): policy narratives, non-narratives, counter-narratives and meta-narratives. This also relates to the role of 'social movements' and 'counter-movements' (Polanyi 1944, Worth 2013). A social (counter-) movement, such as the environmental movement or the anti-globalisation movement, can be experienced as 'counter-narratives of change' that co-evolve with the development of a new paradigm on how society deals with the environment or how society approaches processes of globalisation. These social movements "struggle against pre-existing cultural and institutional narratives and the structures of meaning and power they convey" (Davies 2002:25), partly through counter-narratives, which "modify existing beliefs and symbols and their resonance comes from their appeal to values and expectations that people already hold" (ibid). Important here is to employ these notions about counter-narratives to unpack any given discourse under empirical study from different perspectives. This challenges us to expand beyond the hegemonic mainstream narrative on e.g. 'the economic crisis', by including a discussion of counter-narratives around the 'new economy'.

The economic crisis is generally perceived to have profound impacts on society. The resulting 'austerity' measures and governmental budget cuts put pressure on public sector employment, transfer payments and social welfare systems, contributing to rising un- and under- employment among young and old and lower disposable incomes for many in society. There is also a growing dissatisfaction with capitalism leading, among others, to a rise of responsibility pressures on companies, a lack of trust in financial institutions, and a growing pressure on democratic political institutions (Castells 2010; Murphy 2011; Hudson 2014; Rifkin 2014; Weaver 2014). These in turn focus attention on the meaning and quality of life which can intensify individuals' desires to live in a more responsible and meaningful way as citizens, workers and consumers, which again are accompanied by an increasing attention to social value creation (based on the attention to these issues in magazines and business literature).

Intertwined with these developments are counter-narratives and movements that propose alternative visions. From anti-globalisation or occupy movements, we can discern a loss of trust in

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[9] Regarding the distinction between 'discourse and 'narrative', Davies (2002) argues that in narratives "past events are selected and configured into a plot, which portrays them in a meaningful sequence and schematic whole with beginning, middle, and end" (11) but that "the boundary between narrative and other forms of discourse is simply not sharply marked off" (10/11)

the dominant economic model of the growth society and its associated livelihood model where most material needs are satisfied through impersonal market exchange. This formalised and impersonal market exchange is questioned, resulting in concepts such as sharing, reciprocity, generalized exchange, or restricted exchange (see Befu 1977, Peebles 2010 for an overview). These are reflected in calls for a more localized or sharing economy, which are now heard increasingly in many Western countries. While the mainstream discourse is still about how to regain adequate rates of economic growth, and underlying longer-sighted discourse (i.e. counter-narrative) is emerging about what might replace the growth-society model. This includes (longstanding and more recent) ideas on de-growth (Schumacher 1973, Fournier 2008), green growth (OECD 2013), or post growth (Jackson 2009). These (counter-)narratives also question the market logic that constructs human beings as well as nature as resources and commodities in the production of goods (Freudenburg et al. 1995).

Contemporary discourses on a 'new economy' include calls to replace, complement, or transform the mainstream economic system with alternative paradigms. These include a wide variety of notions, e.g. 'social economy', 'informal economy', 'solidary economy', 'sharing economy', the 'cooperative movement', 'the commons', 'green economy', 'blue economy', 'circular economy', and so on (e.g. Rifkin, 2014). Many of these narratives and associated ideas are not necessarily 'new' as such. Indeed many have existed for decades (or even centuries), but the 'game-changing' economic crisis has triggered new and revitalised interest in these narratives, thereby translating relatively 'old' narratives into a modern narrative on 'the new, social economy' as a forward-looking response to contemporary challenges (ibid).

Exactly 70 years ago, Polanyi published his influential book *The Great Transformation*, in which he described 'counter-movements' as critical responses to the rise of liberal market economies in the interwar period (1944). Polanyi argued that counter-movements tend to include both 'progressive' and 'regressive' forces, and he related the rise of fascism as part of a 'double counter-movement' in reaction to the rise of liberal market economy (Worth 2013). Similarly, contemporary counter-narratives do not only include 'progressive' sustainability-oriented ideas, but also more 'regressive' ideas as e.g. manifested in populist and/or extremist political parties. Moreover, 'counter-narratives' and 'grassroots movements' are also not always easily discernable from mainstream discourses. While discourses on e.g. 'solidarity economy' can be constructed as 'counter-narratives', they have considerable overlaps with mainstream policy discourses on the 'Big Society' (UK) and 'the participation society' (The Netherlands). When comparing discourses on the 'circular economy' and the 'sharing economy', one can find differences in the former being partly associated with a corporate movement (see e.g. McKinsey and the Ellen McArthur Foundation) and the latter being more associated with a grassroots social movement (e.g. Peerby), but the narratives involved show considerable overlaps (e.g. reducing private property and approaching waste as a resource). Different discourses are intermingled, changing over time, forming 'double movements' (Polanyi 1944), or rather *multi-layered* narratives of change.

5 System Innovation – e.g. Welfare Reform

transformative social innovation theory

We conceptualise **system innovation** as a process of structural change at the level of societal sub-systems with functional and/or geographic delineations (e.g. energy, transport, city, region). System innovations are "profound transformations in social systems", which involve "changes in established patterns of action as well as in structure, which includes dominant cultural assumptions and discourses, legislation, physical infrastructure, the rules prevailing in economic chains, knowledge infrastructure, and so on" (Grin et al. 2010). As such, system innovation is distinguished from product innovation. In the Multi-Level Perspective (see section 1 and 2), system innovation is conceptualised at the meso-level of 'regimes', i.e. the dominant structures and practices that dominate a societal sub-system. As such, system innovation requires regime change[10]. In our conceptual heuristic, system innovation does not necessarily refer to socio-*technical* systems or regimes. Various perspectives on societal subsystems can be employed, ranging from socio-technical (e.g. Geels and Schot 2007) to socio-ecological (e.g. Westley 2001), geo-spatial (e.g. Coenen et al. 2012), socio-economic (e.g. Fine and Leopold 1993, Loorbach & Lijnis-Hueffenreuter 2013) or socio-political (e.g. Voss et al 2009, Rotmans & Loorbach 2010).

The economic crisis fosters various system innovations and/or calls for these, from government administrations as well as civil society. So far, such system innovations called for have often been at the level of the financial sector, health care system reform, and reform of the social domains more generally (welfare, care, education etc.). Many developed nations are now changing social support policies, limiting access, decreasing budgets and arguing for more participation in the economy. These dynamics are accelerated by related changes in the demographic build-up of developed societies with a stabilizing and ageing population, in which the balance between workers and pensioners is slowly tilting.

Nations in the European Union witness a progressive collapse in public confidence in many of the traditional institutions that have underpinned political, economic and social arrangements during the 20th Century. These include the institutions of the formal economy (including the tax system, finance, money and banking), state government, representative democracy, social security and welfare systems (including pensions, healthcare, etc.). As the formal economy comes under stress there is also growth in the informal (grey) and illegal (black) economies and a blurring of the distinctions between all of these, such that it is increasingly difficult to establish or to uphold clear distinctions between them (Hudson 2014). Weaver (2014) has argued that the state role as a direct actor in the economy is receding and needs to be re-asserted through indirect roles in providing regulatory and policy frameworks that help facilitate and orchestrate actions by others. Instead, states often tend to compete with each other to offer tax breaks and legal loopholes to transnational corporations and individuals of high net wealth, effectively ensuring a 'race-to-the-bottom' in terms of states' capacities to ensure that the wealthiest corporations and citizens pay their 'fair' share of taxes. A two-tier system of taxation is emerging with the richest corporations and individuals paying least tax in relation to gains alongside an increasingly non-level playing field for competition between global/local, richer/poorer and mobile/fixed players (Unger and Rawlings 2008). This is increasing the polarisation of wealth in society, and is argued to undermine

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[10] If we take the electric car as an example of a product innovation, the equivalent example of a 'system innovation' is the creation of an electricity-based transport system, including e.g. the replacement of gasoline station by charging points, tax-incentives for electric cars, electric buses in public transportation, a new cultural status around electric cars, etc. (Geels et al. 2012). System innovation would require change in the existing gasoline- and ICE-based car regime.

the capacity of the state to act directly to reduce inequalities and provide security for the most vulnerable citizens (Christensen 2011).

The breakdown in state capacity to tax capital adds to the need for governments to find new ways to secure social and economic welfare of citizens. This is stimulating governments to find new ways to engage with the private sector through new models for financing social welfare in which, in principle, all parties (public sector, private sector, and civic society) hold interests as stakeholders. Examples are decentralising care, pension fund reform, welfare privatisation, which aim to deliver welfare and security benefits to citizens while also appealing to the private sector in terms of ensuring favourable operating contexts for business and to the public sector by relieving the state of the full financial and operational burdens of direct provision.

6 Social Innovations – e.g. Complementary Currencies

We conceptualise social innovations as new social practices, comprising new ideas, models, rules, social relations and/or services. By doing so, we follow Franz et al. (2012:4) who argue that the "decisive characteristic of social innovation" lies in the "fact that people do things differently due to this innovation, alone or together. What changes with social innovation is social practice, the way how people decide, act and behave, alone or together" (Franz et al. 2012:5, cf. Howaldt & Kopp 2012). These changing social practices include changing roles, relations, norms and values (ibid, cf. Hochgerner 2012). Howaldt & Kopp (2012:47) define social innovation as "a new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts prompted by certain actors or constellations of actors in an intentional, targeted manner with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices".

Social entrepreneurs, organisations and networks across the world are working on a wide range of such social innovations, often through very context specific and bottom-up initiatives. At times they directly address persistent problems in the current economic system, while seeking to establish concrete alternative solutions. Transnational and local networks that have been working on such social innovations for several decades are now experiencing a 'new boost' in response to the economic crisis and to the emergence of narratives around a new economy. We here shortly discuss two (out of many) examples of initiatives working on social innovation, and how these relate to the economic crisis: (1) Time Banks and(2) Transition Towns initiatives.

Time Banks are systems of reciprocal service exchange and manifestations of a 'complementary currency' (Seyfang 2000, 2002, Blanc 2011, Seyfang & Longhurst 2013). Services are traded by a Time Bank network of members on a broader than one-to-one basis. Services range in sophistication from simple services, such as dog walking and car washing, to more complex services, such as teaching piano or languages, to sometimes sensitive personal services, such as child-minding or providing care and help to elderly people or people with disabilities. Time Banks are based on a philosophy of building strong communities, providing care-in-the-community and incentivising and rewarding volunteers. Poverty, unemployment, and skill honing are some of the ways through which the economic crisis comes in. For those with little money, the provision of a

service is a way to obtain a return service of their own choice. For those without a job it is a way, *inter alia*, to contribute usefully to society, to be included in society, to maintain or establish a sense of purpose and identity, to develop contact networks, and to maintain or build skills and experience.

Another pertinent example of social innovation can be found amongst the many local initiatives and networks joined in the **Transition Towns** movement (Seyfang & Haxeltine 2012). There are now hundreds of communities across Europe and beyond, which empower citizens to build community resilience and pioneer alternative economic and social solutions. This includes the (re)discovery of (new combinations of) old and new skills and services to increase socio-economic independence (e.g. permaculture design principles for urban farming and local food production). Several Transition Towns initiatives have also initiated and experimented with time banks and other complementary currencies (Seyfang & Longhurst 2013), illustrating how different social innovations can spur and empower one another. Interestingly, the concept of Transition Towns was initially formulated as a response to the 'game-changers' of Peak Oil and Climate Change, focusing on a guiding metaphor of 'energy descent' (drastic reductions in levels of energy usage) to prepare communities for a future where fossil-based energy would be absent or prohibitively expensive. After the economic crisis of 2008, the movement was, to a significant extent, reframed as a response to austerity and possible further financial and currency crises. It thus provides an illustration of how such an initiative can adapt its narrative in the face of new game-changers. When we probe a little more deeply it becomes clear that the initiative in fact emerged from a rich historical tradition of radical alternatives associated with the very small town in the UK, Totnes, where it first started (Longhurst 2013). Thus while Transition Towns can be correctly interpreted as a social innovation network that facilitates and empowers responses to the game-changer of the economic crisis, it can also be understood as the latest manifestation or 'wave' in a long tradition of anti-capitalist initiatives that can be historically associated with particular persons, places and portrayals (narratives and discourses).

7 Societal Transformation

We conceptualise societal transformation as fundamental, persistent and irreversible change across society. It is distinguished from system innovation in that societal transformation exceeds individual sub-systems. Examples are the industrial revolution, European integration, or the rise of the market economy and the ideology of economic liberalism, as described by Polanyi[11] in *The Great Transformation* (1944)[12]. Such societal transformation requires simultaneous change in multiple dimensions (not in only one dimension) of social systems, with these changes occurring widely across society (not in only one place).

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[11] Karl Polanyi has coined the term "the great transformation" to the rise of the market economy in society, together with the ideology of (economic) liberalism and the use of the gold-standard to extent the market internationally, resulting in inequality, relationships of exploitation and a lesser role for moral considerations, community management and religion (Polanyi, 1944).

[12] Other examples of societal transformation are: female emancipation, abolishment of slavery, rise of the welfare state, secularisation, individualisation, democratisation

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We hypothesise that societal transformation can be understood as an (emergent) outcome of co-evolutionary interactions between changing paradigms and mental models, new political institutions, new physical structures and innovative developments on the ground. In terms of TRANSIT's conceptual heuristic, we postulate that societal transformation results from a specific interaction between game-changers, narratives of change, system innovation, and social innovation, as distinct but intertwined dimensions of innovation and change (see figure 2)[13]. We refer to this interactive, co-evolutionary process as 'transformative social innovation'.

This concept of *transformative* social innovation overlaps with more systemic perspective on social innovation such as e.g. Westley's (2013) definition: "social innovation is any initiative product process, programme, project or platform that challenges and over time contributes to changing the defining routines, resources and authority flows of beliefs of the broader social system in which it is introduced; successful social innovations have durability, scale and transformative impact". However, rather than defining transformative social innovation as a particular *type* of *successful* social innovation initiative, we conceptualise it as the *process* through which social innovations gain "durability, scale and transformative impact" by interlocking with system innovation, narratives on change, game-changers and societal transformation.

So when we apply this concept of transformative social innovation to our empirical example of the economic crisis – and the processes of change and innovation around it – what do we observe? Which interactions do we observe between the game-changer of the economic crisis, the narratives of change around the 'new economy', the (called for) system innovations in financial and welfare system reform, and social innovations such as complementary currencies and resiliency communities? What evidence is there, if any, that these interactions might be leading to emergent 'societal transformation'?

Over time, the path-dependent development of the neo-liberal, capitalism based financial-economic system has not only led to increasing concentrations of power and wealth, but also to increasing tensions and urgency around the mentioned persistencies. However, the counter-narratives and 'alternative' social innovations have also matured over time, gaining (in some instances but not all) increasing attention, support and legitimacy. Combined, these forces could now be understood as facilitating processes of change that can (eventually) provide the right ingredients for a transformative social innovation dynamic that could lead to 'societal transformation' (presumably towards enhancing global well-being and achieving ecological sustainability). A game-changer such as the economic crisis can offer scope for progressive developments, including (renewed debates about) a 'merging' of the public, private and civil

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[13] As such, the concept of 'societal transformation' is also distinguished from the concept of 'transitions'. In transition research, the notion of 'transition' is often used to refer to a specific type of change at the level of (socio-technical) sub-systems, i.e. what we here refer to as 'system innovation'. We use 'societal transformation' to refer to a more fundamental change at a higher level of aggregation: i.e. 'societies' rather than functional sub-systems. In recent years, some transition scholars have argued that 'societal transitions' also 'transcend individuals systems and comprises various system innovations at different scale-levels and over a long-term period of time' (Rotmans and Loorbach 2010). In that case, a societal transition can be distinguished from a societal transformation in the sense that a transition can be considered to be *a specific form of transformation*. A transition is defined as radical change that follows a particular non-linear path, typically over a period of one to two generations. Such societal transition can be considered a type of societal transformation. However, not all societal transformations necessarily follow such a transition path. As such, societal *transformation* as a concept is broader than the concept of societal *transitions*.

spheres to support social innovation, opening the possibility for all of these sectors to work together in creating/supporting social innovation based around new economic models. The economic crisis contributes to the collective understanding of the persistency and unsustainability of the dominant discourse and practices and seems to encourage a diffusion of alternatives.

However, empirical observations also suggest a more nuanced interpretation: while indeed the crisis has encouraged the search for alternatives, these seem still very diverse, fragmented and small scale to provide a full scale solution. While the legitimacy of capitalism has been questioned, this has not as yet proven to be a 'fatal blow'. The same pressures (and power relations) that led to the economic crisis not being foreseen (and/or allowed to happen) may likely affect the way in which the game-changer is understood and acted upon by society. Actors have developed certain (counter-)narratives in response to the economic crisis, but at the same time, the economic crisis has been used to support pre-existing ideological positions and narratives. Nevertheless, the search for new and adapted models of capitalism as well as for alternative, complementary and blended approaches to how societies meet their needs, has been boosted and given added urgency by the tensions and contradictions that the economic and financial crises have brought to the fore (Hudson, 2014; Weaver, 2014; Rifkin, 2014). The economic crisis can be interpreted then as both a symptom of the underlying persistence and unsustainability of the currently dominant system, as well as a trigger for the acceleration of transformative social innovation.

8 Conclusion: Future Research on Transformative Social Innovation

In this paper, we have discussed the concept of transformative social innovation, as the process through which social innovation contributes to societal transformation. We have introduced a conceptual heuristic that proposes five foundational concepts to help distinguish between different pertinent 'shades' of change and innovation. Our central hypothesis is that societal transformation is *the result of specific 'co-evolutionary' interactions* between social innovations, system innovations, narrative of change, and game-changers, as distinct but intertwined and partly overlapping dimensions of innovation and change (see figure 2 and table 1). We have elaborated on the background and meaning of each of these concepts, with references to existing literature in transition studies and social innovation research, and with empirical illustrations. After introducing this conceptual heuristic for studying transformative social innovation, we have explored its application to various dimensions of change and innovation associated with the economic crisis.

We have taken the recent economic crisis as an empirical example of a 'game-changing' macro-development, and discussed how it is perceived to cause tensions under the prevailing logic of existing arrangements (e.g. unemployment, public funding crises, inability to pay pensions, etc.) that cannot be solved within that current logic. The economic crisis have spurred debates about the unsustainability of our current economic systems, and has drawn new attention to various 'narratives of change' around a 'new economy' (e.g. the 'sharing economic', 'circular economy' or 'Big Society'). Intertwined with those narratives of change, are (calls for) 'system innovation' in the form of e.g. welfare system reforms and new financial investment schemes. Meanwhile, 'social innovations' on the ground provide alternative socio-economic practices, such as complementary currencies and new design principles for local production (as manifested in initiatives and networks such as e.g. Time Banks and Transition Towns). None of these examples are entirely 'new', nor are they explicit 'responses' to the economic crisis. However, the perceived economic crisis has provided these alternative narratives, structures and practices with a 'boost' of renewed interest and with opportunities for new combinations. Combined, these forces can be understood as providing necessary (but not necessarily sufficient) ingredients for a transformative social innovation dynamic that could lead to a 'societal transformation' of modern societies and their socio-economic paradigms.

A major challenge for future research lies in further empirical and theoretical research to (1) scrutinise these hypothetical insights on the dynamics of transformative social innovation, and (2) further develop and deepen the conceptual heuristic. This is part of the mission of the TRANSIT-project for the next three years. Theoretically, TRANSIT aims to draw on a variety of research fields and (meta-) theoretical perspectives on social change and innovation, so as to develop a 'middle-range' theory of transformative social innovation (Haxeltine et al. 2013, 2014). This theory-development is grounded and tested in empirical analysis of 20 networks/movements that (aim to) work on transformative social innovation, including an analysis of the manifestations of these networks/movement in a total of 200 initiatives across Europe and Latin-America[14]. This will partly be about investigating how individual actors themselves perceive and (re)construct

[14] An overview of networks/movement under study so far, can be found at http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/

different forms of change and innovation, and how actors are (dis)empowered to contribute to transformative social innovation.

This future research will also require a deepening of different 'shades' of such (dis)empowerment. The perspectives introduced in this paper could imply that 'social innovators' can increase the transformative potential of their social innovations, by smartly playing into the societal 'game-changers' of their times, while simultaneously connecting to political (calls for) 'system innovation', as well as linking up with multi-layered 'narratives of change' in both mainstream and grassroots movements. By anticipating game-changers and the inevitable tensions in perceived 'crises', actors can prepare for strategically proposing 'systemic alternatives' when key windows of opportunity open up (Rotmans et al. 2001, Loorbach & Lijnis-Hueffenreuter 2013). A related challenge and aim in the TRANSIT project is to further specify and translate these insights into concrete and accessible recommendations and 'tools' that can be used by social entrepreneurs, activist and policy makers who aim to facilitate transformative social innovation.

The (dis)empowerment of actors also raises questions about the politics and governance of transformative social innovation. Game-changers such as the economic crisis tend to give rise to (or at least coincide with) emerging social unrest, political debates, discussions about the dismantling/redefining of the state, and debates about the (re)scaling of governance mechanisms. Social innovation initiatives such as the examples discussed in this paper (e.g. complementary currencies and resilient communities), often go hand in hand with narratives on '(re)localisation' (Bailey et al. 2010), 'self-governance' and 'self-organisation' (Eriksson 2012, Meerkerk et al. 2012, Boonstra & Boelens 2011). A pertinent question is how these narratives on new forms of governance relate to the role(s) of governments and inter-governmental institutions such as the EU, and how (the interaction between) different type of governance responses and approaches influence the dynamics of transformative social innovation.

By investigating these different dimensions of transformative social innovation, and by developing a conceptual heuristic to do so, TRANSIT aims to contribute to the emerging field of social innovation research (Franz et al. 2012, Moulaert et al. 2013), in particular regarding its increasing attention for issues of 'systemic change' and 'scaling' (NESTA 2013). These issues confront us with a paradox inherent to the social sciences: on the one hand the need to distinguish conceptual levels and scales, and on the other hand the risk of reducing these to abstract ideal-types separated from experiences in practice. Another complicating factor concerns the interdisciplinary context in which the debates on social innovation take place. As argued by Westley (2013): "social innovation is not really a field yet, it is a set of new interests that are deeply grounded in tradition" across a variety of fields and disciplines, including innovation process theory, social movement theory, social entrepreneurship studies, institutional entrepreneurship, research on sustainability transitions and system innovations, resilience and socio-ecological resilience and transformation, and several others. Each of these fields has its own conceptions and languages when it comes to distinguishing different scales and levels. As such, there is a need for a conceptual language that offers flexible distinctions between different dimensions of innovation and change and can be used for an *interdisciplinary* and *transdisciplinary* dialogue between academics and practitioners. With our conceptual heuristic and its further development in the TRANSIT project, we hope to contribute to such dialogue on the transformative potential of social innovation.

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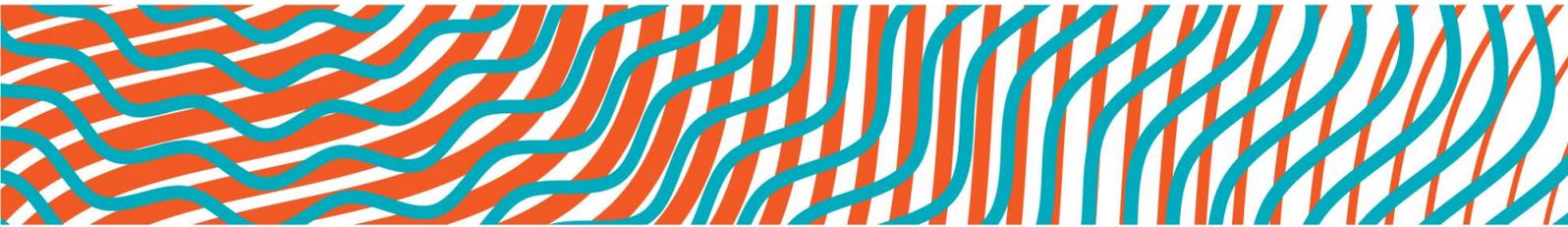
Insights for Policy

On Game-Changers & Transformative Social Innovation.

Discussion Paper

By Flor Avelino & Julia Wittmayer

Deliverable 2.1 Part 2/4

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Introduction

This is not a policy brief. This is a *discussion paper* that proposes what are relevant insights (so far) that seem worth including in a policy brief. TRANSIT's description of work has promised to distil its empirical and theoretical insights and 'translate' these into policy briefs. This discussion paper provides *suggestions and input for* TRANSIT's first policy brief, which is to be deliberated in WP2 in the coming months, based on (a) discussion of the cross-cutting themes, in particular governance (WP2), (b) theoretical reviews and conceptual definitions (WP3), (c) first empirical results from the case-studies (WP4), and (d) insights from the first engagement workshop (WP6).

In this discussion paper, as part of D2.1, we focus on discussing what are the main relevant insights for policy that we can distil from the first working paper[1] and synthesis workshop[2] on game-changers and transformative social innovation. We have identified three main insights on transformative social innovation in terms of (1) co-evolution, (2) game-changers and (3) multi-actor dynamics, which seem relevant for policy and practice. This discussion paper shortly summarises each of these insights and specifies why and how we believe that these insights are relevant for policy-stakeholders. In the last section we discuss what are the next steps for the TRANSIT project to further develop these insights into a publishable policy brief.

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[1] Avelino, F. Wittmayer, J., Haxeltine, A., Kemp, R., O'Riordan, T., Weaver, P., Loorbach, D. and Rotmans, J. (2014) *Game-changers and Transformative Social Innovation. The Case of the Economic Crisis and the New Economy*, TRANSIT working paper, TRANSIT: EU SSH.2013.3.2-1 Grant agreement no: 613169

[2] Avelino, F., Wittmayer, J. and Kirner, B. (2014) *Report Synthesis Workshop Game-changer & Trans-formative Social Innovation*, TRANSIT Proceedings, Synthesis Workshop Rotterdam, 01-02 Sep-tember 2014, TRANSIT: EU SSH.2013.3.2-1 Grant agreement no: 613169

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Insight #1. Transformative social innovation is a co-evolutionary process

We approach "transformative social innovation" as the process through which social innovation contributes to broad, societal transformation. This process is relevant for policy, as the policy interest in social innovation is based on an assumption that social innovation helps people to deal with certain societal challenges such as the 'economic crisis'[3].

Our first argument, is that we need to understand transformative social innovation as a **co-evolutionary** process between different types of change and innovation (see Table 1). The idea of 'co-evolution' helps us to think beyond simplistic linear causalities. It is not a matter of asking what comes first or what causes what, but rather a matter of acknowledging how different phenomena shape and relate to each other over longer periods of time.

Table 1. Different Types of Change & Innovation

| 5 Types of Change & Innovation	Working Definitions	Examples from the Economic System
Social innovation	New social practices, including new (combinations of) ideas, models, rules, social relations and/or products	New business models, new services, new sharing practices…
System innovation	Change at the level of societal sub-systems, including institutions, social structures and physical infrastructures	Welfare system reform, financial system reform, tax reform…
Game-changers	Macro-phenomena that are perceived to change the (rules, fields and players in the) 'game' of societal interaction	Economic crisis, financial crisis, unemployment, aging population…
Narratives of change	Discourses on change and innovation, i.e. sets of ideas, concepts, metaphors, and/or story-lines about change and innovation.	The 'New Economy' – 'circular', 'social', 'solidarity', 'sharing', 'blue', 'green' etc. economy…
Societal transformation	Fundamental and persistent change across society, exceeding sub-systems and including simultaneous changes in multiple dimensions.	Industrial revolution, European integration, rise of the market economy… … ongoing transition towards a more 'inclusive' economy?

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[3] See also working paper (Avelino et al. 2014) TRANSIT starts off from the premise that dealing with challenges such as the economic crisis, requires an understanding of societal transformation. As such, understanding how social innovation can contribute to dealing with a challenge such as the economic crisis, first requires an understanding of how social innovation contributes to/ interacts with societal transformation.

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Understanding transformative social innovation in terms of 'co-evolution' requires a differentiation between **different types of change and innovation**. In our working paper we have distinguished between five different types of change and innovation, and illustrated this with an example in the economic system. This has been summarized in the table above.

The central question in the TRANSIT-project is: *How and under what conditions do social innovations contribute to societal transformation, and how are actors (dis)empowered in that process?* The answer to that question will be the outcome of the TRANSIT project in 2017, so it can obviously not be given here. However, what is worthwhile sharing is the idea that societal transformation is the result of a specific 'co-evolution' between social innovations, system innovations, narrative of change, and game-changers (see Figure 1). In order for social innovation to contribute to societal transformation, it is necessary for it to co-evolve with other types and levels of change and innovation. For instance, whether or not a particular new business model (e.g. crowdfunding) can contribute to societal transformation, depends on how and to what extent this new business model interacts with system innovation (e.g. welfare system reform), game-changers (e.g. the economic crisis) and narratives of change (e.g. the 'sharing economy').

A relevant implication of this first insight, could be that policy-makers and/or 'social innovators' can increase the transformative potential of social innovations by playing into such 'co-evolutionary' processes. By smartly playing into the societal 'game-changers' of their times, while simultaneously connecting to political (calls for) 'system innovation', as well as linking up with multi-layered 'narratives of change' in both mainstream and grassroots movements. By anticipating game-changers and the inevitable tensions in perceived 'crises', actors can prepare for strategically proposing 'systemic alternatives' when key windows of opportunity open up.

Figure 1. Co-evolution between Different Types of Change & Innovation
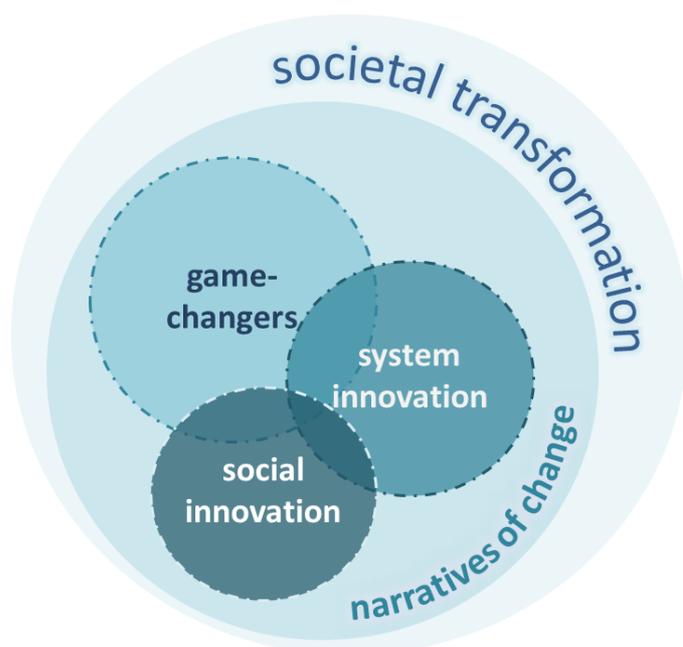
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The distinction between different types of change and innovation (if made more accessible) could be helpful for policy-makers and other social innovation actors to (re)consider how to play into different types of change and innovation – making use of their knowledge and building their actions upon this. Knowing about different types of change and innovation can support social innovation actors in playing into contemporary developments, e.g. play into the economic crisis to postulate the importance of socio-economic resilience (as e.g. the Transition Towns Movement does). In anticipating and or re-framing game-changers, and by relating to policy reform challenges, stakeholders can strategically propose specific social innovations as 'systemic alternatives'. It could also mean to actively influence and work towards the creation of a 'narrative of change' or to smartly play into existing ones; such as the narrative on the 'Sharing Economy' which is currently actively construed and played into by a myriad of actors and networks (e.g. businesses such as Air BnB or initiatives such as TimeBanks which are supported by both communities but also by policy makers for filling the gaps of a retreating welfare state).

An important part of the TRANSIT-project is to empirically analyse how such strategic behaviour currently unfolds across various networks, organizations and initiatives. Such analysis includes critical attention for the risks and unintended effects of such strategic behaviour. Cautionary insights and warnings from such critical empirical analysis should be included in a policy brief.

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Insight #2: "Game-changers" are both real and constructed

In TRANSIT, we have broadly conceptualized game-changers as macro-phenomena (trends, events, developments) that are perceived to change the rules of the game. The purpose of this notion is to explore how empirical macro-phenomena are perceived as 'game-changing' – how they are interpreted, (re)constructed, contested and dealt with – by stakeholders working on social innovation and transformation.

We argue that the way in which 'game-changers' are perceived, has a significant impact on the transformative potential of social innovations. For instance, the global economic crisis is a phenomenon that has been presented as 'game-changing' in European and national policies and in public opinion[4]. As such, the economic crisis has spurred debates about the (un)sustainability of our current economic systems, and has drawn new attention to various 'narratives of change' around a 'new economy' (e.g. the 'sharing economic', 'circular economy' or 'Big Society'). Intertwined with those narratives of change, are (calls for) 'system innovation' in the form of e.g. welfare system reforms and new financial investment schemes. Meanwhile, 'social innovations' on the ground provide alternative socio-economic practices, such as complementary currencies and new design principles for local production (as manifested in initiatives and networks such as e.g. Time Banks and Transition Towns). None of these examples are entirely 'new', nor are they explicit 'responses' to the economic crisis. However, the perceived economic crisis may have provided these alternative narratives, structures and practices with a 'boost' of renewed interest and with opportunities for new combinations. At the same time, however, the economic crisis has given rise to (or at least coincided with) emerging social unrest and discussions about the dismantling of the welfare state. Some would argue that the same pressures (and power relations) that led to the economic crisis not being foreseen (and/or allowed to happen) may likely affect the way in which the game-changer is understood and acted upon by society.

Other examples of 'game-changers' that were identified (in preliminary TRANSIT discussions) include climate change, the ICT-revolution, unemployment, aging population, increasing inequality, the dismantling of the welfare state, biodiversity loss and increasing social unrest. During the synthesis workshop on game-changers, scholars around the world added to this list of game-changers with various historical and contemporary examples. Examples included weather storms, droughts, the rise of new technologies (such as rice intensification technologies in India), the commodity boom (which greatly affects Africa), the Anthropocene and World War II. The multiplicity of the concept of a 'game-changer' is reflected across the 10 workshop papers[5], which provide a rich variety of typologies, characterisations and empirical illustrations of 'game-changers'. Therein, a distinction can be made between exogenous versus endogenous, objective versus constructed, obvious versus less obvious game-changers. During the workshop discussions,

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[4] See Avelino, F., Wittmayer, J., O'Riordan, T., Haxeltine, A., Weaver, P., Kemp, R., Loorbach, D. and J. Rotmans (2014) The Role of Game Changers in the Dynamics of Transformative Social Innovation. Presented at Workshop 'The Role of Global Game-changers in Transformative Social Innovation', September 1-2, 2014, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

[5] Avelino, F., Wittmayer, J., Kirner, B. (2014) Workshop Report. Synthesis Workshop: The role of Game-changers in Transformative Social Innovation. September 1-2, 2014, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

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it was argued that game-changers should not be equated with macro-developments., i.e. not be confined to any specific level (macro, meso or micro). If the 'game' consists of rules, fields and players, all these elements can act as 'game-changers' in their own right. Game-changers acquire meaning in the context of a particular game; it links global changes to situated practices. The question is how and to what extent the players in the game acknowledge, experience and perceive something as a game-changer.

In order to understand the impact of such 'game-changers', it is necessary to acknowledge both their bio-physical reality as well as their social constructions (in reference to Hulmes who distinguishes 'climate change' as biophysical reality and 'Climate Change' as the way in which it is politically and socially constructed). Such social constructions are not less 'real', for they become 'social facts' which are acted on (in reference to Durkheim).

This insight is relevant for policy, in terms of creating awareness about the various perceptions of game-changers and the impact thereof on the dynamics of social innovation. Policy discourses play a significant role in the public perception and social construction of game-changers, and in the subsequent responses to such game-changers. Inducing reflexivity is needed in the policy making realm with regard to the respective game changers that one aims to play into. What is being constructed as game changers by actors (e.g. also the media, business or lobbyists) is done so for their specific reasons – whether this is in line with the long term policy goals is a question that needs careful consideration. Rather than going along with specific framings, a policy decision might be to propose new frames or counter-frames on the same issue. The way in which policy discourses construct game-changers impacts the transformative potential of social innovation. TRANSIT aims to contribute to such awareness by empirically studying how networks and initiatives under study perceive of and relate to (which) 'game-changers', and how this in turn relates to European, national and local policy discourses.

Insight #3: Transformative social innovation is shaped by multiple actors

The many different interpretations of what 'social innovation' constitutes, are closely related to assumptions about where social innovation originates. While some emphasise social innovation in the public sector, others focus on social innovation as emerging from social entrepreneurship. Many consider social innovation as something that originates outside conventional market and government logics, in the community, in 'civil society' and/or in the 'Third Sector'.

In TRANSIT, we approach transformative social innovation as a process that brings together actors at the fringes of institutional logics. Shifting relations and boundaries between the different institutional logics is part of what is 'socially innovated'. With institutional logics we refer to the logics of the state, the market, the community and the third sector. This implies that a differentiated understanding of institutional 'logics', 'sectors' and 'actors' is needed.

When actors from different institutional logics meet, their discussions tend to be hampered by their different particular positions. Having a differentiated understanding of these positions allows to distinguish between a variety of actors and their approach to social innovation. For example, community actors complaining about apparently inert government structures, or governments seeking to facilitate, or regulate, or integrate, particular social innovation initiatives. Rather than assuming that SI originates from a particular logic or actor, we propose to consider social innovation as a collective process that happens at the interfaces between sectors, out of collaboration and negotiation between actors, through changing roles and redistribution of responsibilities between actors. The collective process is not owned by a particular actor, there is no obvious set of goals or values that can be assumed for its evaluation (although process criteria are available), and it cannot silently be assume that governance should be instrumental to one actor in particular. Also social innovation can be featuring as an expression of different relations between sectors. The workshop showed that social innovation can be directed against the state out of disappointment with failing welfare states (e.g. Local Exchange Trading Systems), or can develop in the absence of a strong state (e.g. South Africa) or being propagated by an activist state (e.g. Argentina)

If policy is directed towards nurturing and supporting social innovation, the policy implications that can be drawn from this insight is that interaction between actors at the interfaces between sectors and institutional logics should be fostered. Policy can support this by providing deliberative spaces for interaction, or by engaging in initiatives to discover barriers which hamper interaction between sectors that can be addressed through policy. Another implication is that the government logic is also always part of social innovation, meaning that the policy perspective in processes of social innovation is needed for societal transformation to happen.

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Summing Up Insights & Challenges for the TRANSIT project

Based on the working paper and first synthesis workshop, we have identified three main insights that we believe to be relevant for policy-makers and other stake-holders.

1. Transformative social innovation is a co-evolutionary process between different types of change and innovation
2. Game-changers are both real and constructed drivers and/or barriers for transformative social innovation
3. Transformative social innovation is shaped by multiple actors across different institutional logics

The next steps in the TRANSIT project are to sharpen, test and refine these insights based on (a) discussion of the cross-cutting themes, in particular governance (WP2), (b) theoretical reviews and conceptual definitions (WP3), (c) first empirical results from the first batch of case-studies (WP4), and (d) insights from the first engagement workshop (WP6). Subsequently, the next step is for WP2 to distil and translate these into a first policy brief to be published and communicated in Spring 2015. Such process includes a careful consideration on how to translate the selected insights into a more accessible language and whom to distribute it to.

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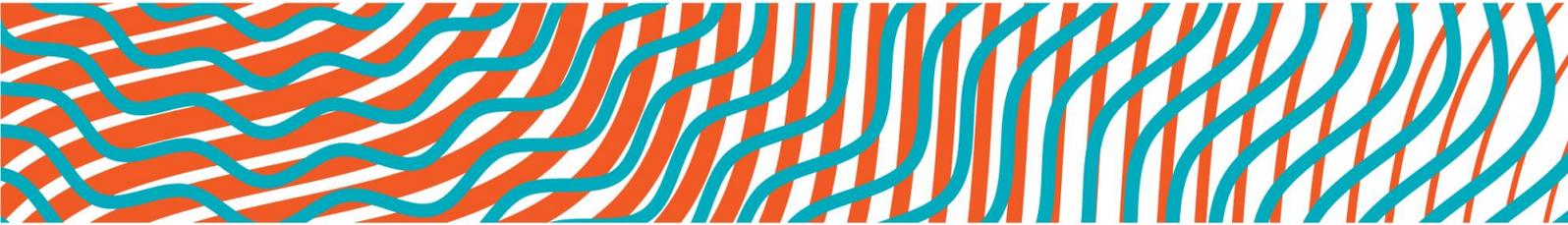
Exploring Tools for Facilitating Transformative Social Innovation (TSI): Lessons from Transition Facilitation Methods

Discussion Paper

By Flor Avelino & Julia Wittmayer

Deliverable 2.1 Part 3/4

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/.

Reference:

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1 Introduction

TRANSIT aims to develop a middle-range theory of transformative social innovation that is useful for both theory and practice. Besides its vast theoretical ambitions, TRANSIT's description of work has promised to "develop a toolbox of concepts, tools and methods to support policy makers and (other) social innovation actors" so as to ensure "capacity building" and "transdisciplinary translation" of research insights.

Within this overall ambition to 'develop tools', the more specific task of *WP2 Synthesis* is to provide "scientific recommendations that are used as input in WP6 [*Communication & Engagement*] to develop and translate these into training tools"[1]. More generally, *WP2 Synthesis* provides scientific recommendation for 'transdisciplinary translation' across four cross-cutting themes: governance, social learning, monitoring and resourcing. Besides these four cross-cutting themes, WP2 has also set itself the task of clarifying the notion of 'game-changers' and global societal challenges in relation to transformative social innovation. The outcomes of this first task have been reported in the working paper on game-changers (Avelino et al. 2014a) and in the workshop report (Avelino et al. 2014b).

In these early stages of the TRANSIT project, the first working papers and workshops have spurred numerous debates and insights on 'transformative social innovation' in theory and in practice. In these discussions, the initial notions of 'toolboxes' and 'training tools' have been critically interrogated. This included amongst others accompanying assumptions with regard to researcher/practitioner relations, target group for tools, as well as position and situatedness of practitioners in societal developments. Many alternative notions and ideas have been proposed, ranging from 'play book' to 'heuristics', 'thinking tools' or 'facilitation methods'. These deliberations on how TRANSIT goes about developing 'tools' are still ongoing as we write this deliverable, and will be clarified as part of WP6 activities in the coming months, in dialogue with the other Work Packages.

Meanwhile in this discussion paper on tools, our aim is to explore how insights from the working paper and the workshop on game-changers could be useful for the development of 'tools'. For the purpose of this paper, we use the word 'tool' in a broad sense, referring to a heuristic that is used to facilitate a learning process, whether we characterise this as 'thinking', 'training', 'facilitation' or 'engagement'. We use the term 'TSI-tool' to refer to a heuristic that can be used to facilitate learning processes in/for/about transformative social innovation (TSI).

Gaining insight on TSI is just as much about understanding 'transformation' as it is about 'social innovation'. Transformation has been addressed in various fields, one of them being the field of transition research (Grin et al. 2010, Markard et al. 2012). Several partners in the TRANSIT-consortium have a background in this field of transition research, which clearly features in the proposal and in the resulting description of work. On the one hand, TRANSIT builds on transition

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[1] The dissemination strategy of WP6 (D6.1) is currently being reconsidered and elaborated, especially regarding the development and communication of training tools.

knowledge for developing TSI-theory. On the other hand, TRANSIT aims to move beyond and/or outside the socio-technical system focus of transition research, so as to ground and enrich TSI-theory with other more diverse social science perspectives on transformative change and social innovation (Haxeltine et al. 2013, Avelino et al. 2014a).

When exploring the development as TSI-tools, we propose to take a similar approach as with the development of TSI-theory: building on existing transition knowledge, but also moving beyond and outside it. The field of transition research has much knowledge and experience to share when it comes to action research (Wittmayer and Schäpke 2014), transdisciplinarity, and to the development and use of 'tools' for facilitating learning processes. Here we use the word 'transition facilitation methods' to refer to 'methods that transition (action) researchers use to facilitate participatory learning processes in/for/about transitions'. Such methods are not only specified and used in transition management (Loorbach 2007, 2010, Loorbach & Rotmans 2010) or strategic niche management (Hoogma et al. 2007, Smith & Raven 2012), but also in other contexts in which simplified and/or stylised versions of analytical transition frameworks such as the Multi-level Perspective (MLP) are used as heuristic 'tools' to facilitate learning processes. The *Competence Centre for Transitions* (CCT) has collected a wide range of "transition-in-practice tools and competences" on a designated website that was especially created "as a tool for anyone involved in efforts to make the transition to sustainable development"[2].

The learning processes that employ such transition methods (tools or competences) differ widely, ranging from 'classical' university education, to executive trainings for professionals and more intervention-oriented learning such as 'transition arena' trajectories (Loorbach 2007, Henneman et al. 2012, Roorda et al. 2014, Frantzeskaki et al. 2012, Wittmayer et al. 2014a, b). Trainings for professionals include short in-company trainings, intensive courses, 3-day workshops, or extensive master classes covering several days, as offered by e.g. the *Transition Academy*[3] and the *Climate KIC Pioneers into Practice* programme[4]. Participants in such learning processes 'for professionals' range from policy-makers in government or business, to activists and self-employed (social) entrepreneurs. Most of the time, the methods or so called 'tools' are not used for one-directional knowledge transfer or 'training', but rather to facilitate participatory learning processes in which 'professionals' (1) experiment with the application of transition concepts to their own practice and (2) share practical experiences and dilemmas from their own working field with each other.

So how does this matter for TSI-tools? We propose that the knowledge about and experience with 'transition facilitation methods' may provide some valuable insights for the development of tools in/for/about TSI. At the same time, we also recognise that these transition facilitation methods still have many limitations and certainly do not provide ready-made answers for the development of TSI-tools. First, there is contestation around the very 'instrumentalisation' of transition knowledge. Second, methods designed for facilitating (learning in) 'sustainability transitions' and 'socio-technical system innovation', may not be adequately translated to the context of 'social innovation' and 'societal transformation'.

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[2] http://www.transitiepraktijk.nl/en/experiment/method
[3] http://transitionacademy.nl/
[4] http://www.innovationbham.com/projects/pioneers-into-practice/

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This is why in this discussion paper, we discuss what we can learn from earlier experiences of applying transition facilitation methods when developing facilitation tools in/for/about TSI. Obviously, a full scale evaluation of all transition facilitation methods is far beyond the scope of this discussion paper[5]. Instead, we focus on discussing three specific transition facilitation methods that seem particularly relevant for TSI. The three methods below are tools for systems mapping, network analysis and futures scanning. They have in common that they are geared for processes which are understood to be complex.

1. **Multi-level Perspective (MLP)** (as a heuristic tool). The MLP provides a heuristic for getting a sense of complex system dynamics and so-called 'co-evolution' between structure and agency. The experience of the MLP as a heuristic tool offers lessons for developing a tool that can provide a sense of **'TSI-dynamics'**. See more in section 2.
2. **Multi-actor Perspective** – MaP. The MaP has been developed as a heuristic tool to demonstrate the diversity of sectors and actor roles, and how the shifting power relations between them confront us with dilemmas in transition processes. This topic is equally crucial for understanding TSI processes. The challenge lies in linking it to TSI theory and grounding it in more sophisticated understandings of **governance and institutional logics** (Pel & Bauler). See more in section 3.
3. **Transition Scenarios & Back-casting**. TRANSIT's description of work has promised to develop a tool for the "forward-looking analysis on how to deal with game-changers". Also in the working paper and in the workshop, the importance of such 'forward-looking' exercise has been emphasised. Facilitation methods for co-creating transition scenarios (e.g. 'back-casting') provide valuable lessons for this. The remaining challenge is to translate such insights to the development of **TSI-scenarios**, which relate to theoretical notions-in-development around TSI-pathways and TSI-narratives. See more in section 4.

For each of these examples, we (1) identify what we can learn from these transition facilitation methods, (2) specify what the limits of these methods are for TSI, and (3) explore new and improved avenues for developing TSI-tools. Identify what we can learn from earlier experiences of applying these methods, but we also discuss shortcomings when it comes to using these as tools for facilitation learning processes in/for/about TSI. Furthermore, in section 5, we discuss what the TRANSIT project can offer (so far and in the coming years) in terms of further developing TSI-tools.

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[5] For more information on transition methods, see e.g. the elaborate manuals on how transition arena methods were applied across 5 European cities: http://www.themusicproject.eu/content/transitionmanagement

2 The Multi-level Perspective > 5 Shades of Change

2.1 The Multi-Level Perspective (MLP)

The Multi-Level Perspective (MLP, see working paper Avelino et al. 2014a) has been applied as a heuristic for transition practice in various different contexts. One example is the Smart CSO (Civil Society Organisation) Lab, an international network of more than 1000 activists, CSO leaders and researchers "aiming to fundamentally rethink and redesign how activists and change agents in civil society can effectively work towards a systemic change" . This systemic change is referred to as "the Great Transition". They have used the MLP as a conceptual basis to formulate 5 "leverage points" as a basis for "a meta-theory of change for the Great Transition from a CSO perspective" , as visualised in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Adaptation of MLP in SmartCSO report (2011) "Meta-theory of change for the Great Transition from a CSO perspective"[6]

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The MLP has also been applied in numerous transition arena processes and in various education and training programmes for professionals (as outlined in the introduction). In those cases, a simplified characterisation of the MLP, as visualised in figure 2 below is used. Despite of the sophisticated theoretical considerations behind the MLP, some of the main ideas can be communicated in a rather accessible and succinct manner. Our experiences are that most of the participants (ranging from policy makers to social entrepreneurs) find the concept of the MLP in itself insightful and empowering, in that it helps them to (1) understand why the social changes that they have often been working on so long and so hard are so difficult to achieve, and (2) understand how innovative practices that may seem small and marginal may still have a significant impact if aligned with other innovations and with landscape developments. This 'heuristic moment of enlightenment' is very related to one of the main strengths of the MLP, namely its ability to explain both inertia and change. We hypothesise that this explanatory power makes the MLP a particularly empowering heuristic.

Figure 2: Simplified MLP figure
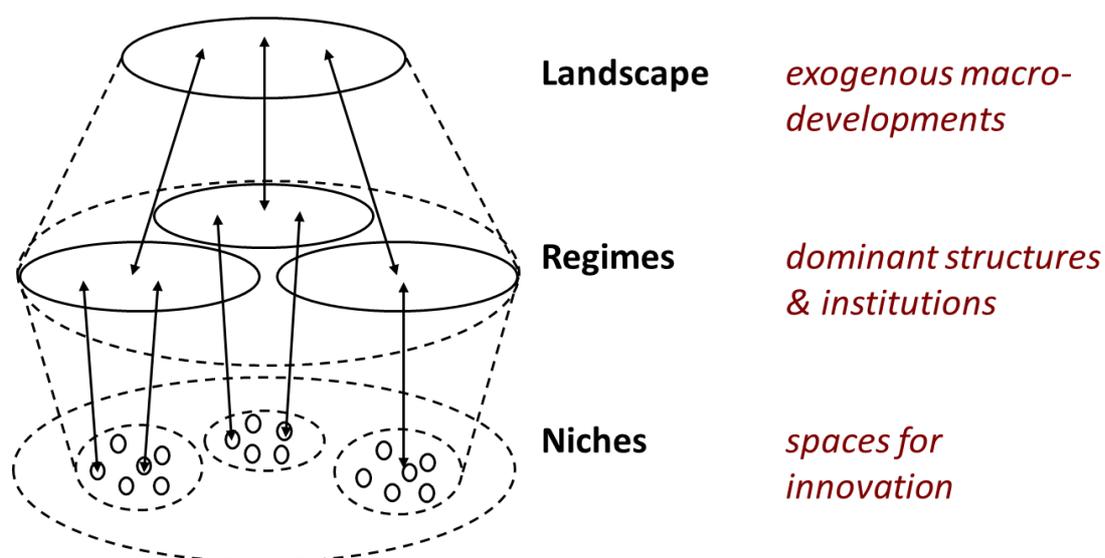
There is a wide variety of participatory facilitation methods to use the MLP for (inter)active learning, all differing in terms of time length, intensity, preparation requirements, and so on. One example of a 'light' MLP-exercise consists of working groups of 5-10 participants making a MLP-sketch for a particular sub-system[7]. Ideally, participants apply the exercise to a subsystem that at least some of them are working in, so as to translate the MLP concepts to real life experiences, expertise and challenges. Obviously, such 'MLP-sketch' does not need to involve a full-fledged historical MLP analysis. Rather it consists of discussing answers to three questions about the sub-system under study:

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[7] This light MLP-exercise has been applied in several in-company workshops, Master Classes and the transition workshop for Climate KIC's Pioneers into Practice programme

1. Regime: what are the dominant structures, cultures and practices in the sub-system (e.g. the Rotterdam Energy System);
2. Landscape: what are the relevant macro-trends that place pressure on this regime and can be seen as drivers for change; and
3. Niches: what are examples of innovative practices and technologies that deviate from the regime?

Answers to these questions are typically collected on a flip-over sheet, which the working groups then use to discuss the MLP-dynamics with each other and to compare it to the MLP-sketches of other working groups who have passed through the same exercise. Especially the discussion after this exercise provides a sense of system complexity. Guidance by a facilitator helps the interpretation and sense-making process of the participants, e.g. through an emphasis on the choice for system boundaries.

Another strength of using the MLP as a facilitation tool is that participants themselves reason about possible ways of influencing such systems based on the insights from the MLP. This includes, e.g. the importance of/ need for (1) relating to landscape developments, (2) challenging regimes, (3) connecting and empowering niches. These are important principles of e.g. strategic niche management and transition management. As such, participants themselves arrive at a good and intuitive understanding of what governance in complex systems entails. Rather than prescriptive management tricks, this is first and foremost an understanding of the complex dynamics of societal systems[8].

2.2 Beyond MLP > exploring 5 Shades of Change & Innovation

The MLP has a number of shortcomings in the context of transformative social innovation. First, the distinctions between MLP 'levels' are contested. One contestation is the treatment of macro-developments as inherently 'exogenous' factors outside ones system focus. Second, the MLP has been associated with a particular 'evolutionary' perspective. As the TRANSIT project (also) wants to explore other more 'relational' perspectives on transformative social innovation, it has been argued that it cannot have an inherently 'evolutionary' perspective (e.g. MLP) as a conceptual starting point. Another short-coming of the MLP, when applied in participatory contexts, is that the 'regime' context sometimes becomes an 'excuse' for inertia, and/or is used to justify and legitimise the status quo. The distinction between 'niches' and 'regimes' can have the unintended effect of reinforcing existing power-relations, rather than overcoming them[9].

In our working paper (Avelino et al. 2014a), we have proposed the "five shades of change and innovation" (see figure 3 below) as an alternative complementary understanding. It aims to move beyond the MLP-levels, to provide for an unpacking of the black box "landscape", and to more explicit address socio-cultural dimensions (e.g. narratives of change).

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[8] Obviously, there are fierce epistemological disagreements regarding questions about the extent to which understanding of complexity enables us to better influence systems > Avelino 2011, Avelino & Grin 2014

[9] For more background information on the (dis)empowering effects of MLP and other elements in transition discourses, see Avelino 2011

Figure 3. Five Shades of Change & Innovation (source: working paper Avelino et al. 2014)

The Dynamics of Transformative Social Innovation
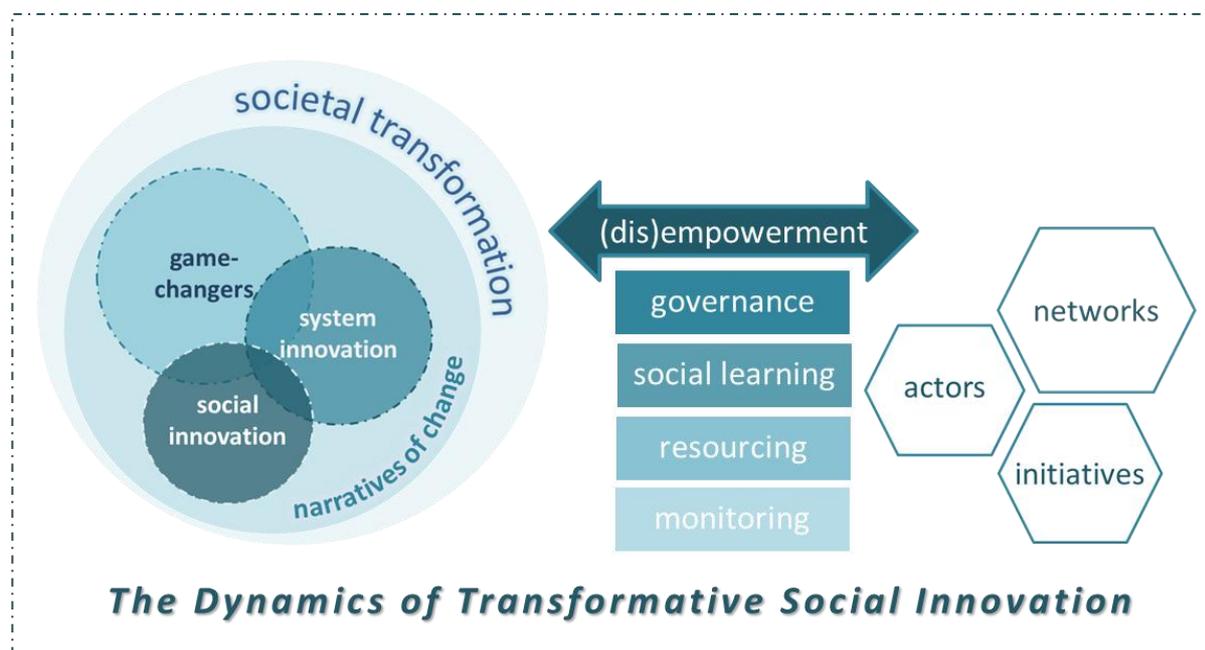
Transformative social innovation is understood as a "co-evolution between different shades of change and innovation" (see working paper Avelino et al. 2014a), which might provide some heuristic insights for policy makers and other stakeholders (see policy insights Avelino and Wittmayer 2014a).

However, before we can start thinking about whether and how this conceptualisation of *5 shades of change & innovation* can be used as a 'tool', the TRANSIT project first needs to sharpen and refine its distinctions between different types of change and innovation. The further conceptualisation of *5 shades of change & innovation* needs to address a number of aspects. For instance, to date it lacks an understanding of inertia and stability. Second, it contains self-referential contradiction in that it claims to let go of levels while at the same time still including levels (e.g. 'system innovation'). Third, it is not clear how this model can or cannot provide intuitive insights for governance and actions (in contrary to e.g. the MLP). While this looseness can be considered a weakness, it can also be considered a strength.

As such, the conceptualisation of different forms of change and innovation needs to be scrutinised in terms of further theoretical development (WP3), empirical analysis (WP4, WP5) and participatory use (WP6). With regard to the latter, the *5 shades of change & innovation* have been used as basis for an interactive exercise during the synthesis workshop on Game-changers for 'formulating a TSI-journey' (see Avelino et al. 2014b). However, this exercise was done with academics only and, based on their feedback and beyond needs to be further developed and tested.

3 Multi-Actor Perspective > Institutional Logics

3.1 Multi-Actor Perspective

The Mulit-Actor Perspective (MaP) provides a heuristic for understanding one of the blind-spots of current transition research, the phenomena of multi-actor processes. It aims to provide a handle to differentiate between institutional logics as well as kinds of actors. The institutional logics it distinguishes are the logic of the state, the market, the community and the third sector (see figure 4). In terms of kinds of actors, it distinguishes between sectors, collective actors such as organizations or individual actors (see figure 5). These differentiations make it possible to conceptualise (shifting) power relations between actors in sustainability transitions (see figure 6).

The MaP has been proposed as a heuristic for transition practice mainly in the context of professional training and education as well as the transdisciplinary translation of theoretical insights to recommendations for a variety of actors (e.g. Avelino et al. 2014c). In trainings it is used to stimulate reflexivity of participants in terms of defining their own individual and collective roles, or in terms of thinking about the shifting power relations in their field of work. This is done through individual exercises and/or group work.

Figure 4. Multi-actor Perspective: level of sectors The Welfare Mix (Source: Evers & Laville 2004:17 , adapted from Pestoff 1992:2537) (Avelino & Wittmayer forthcoming)
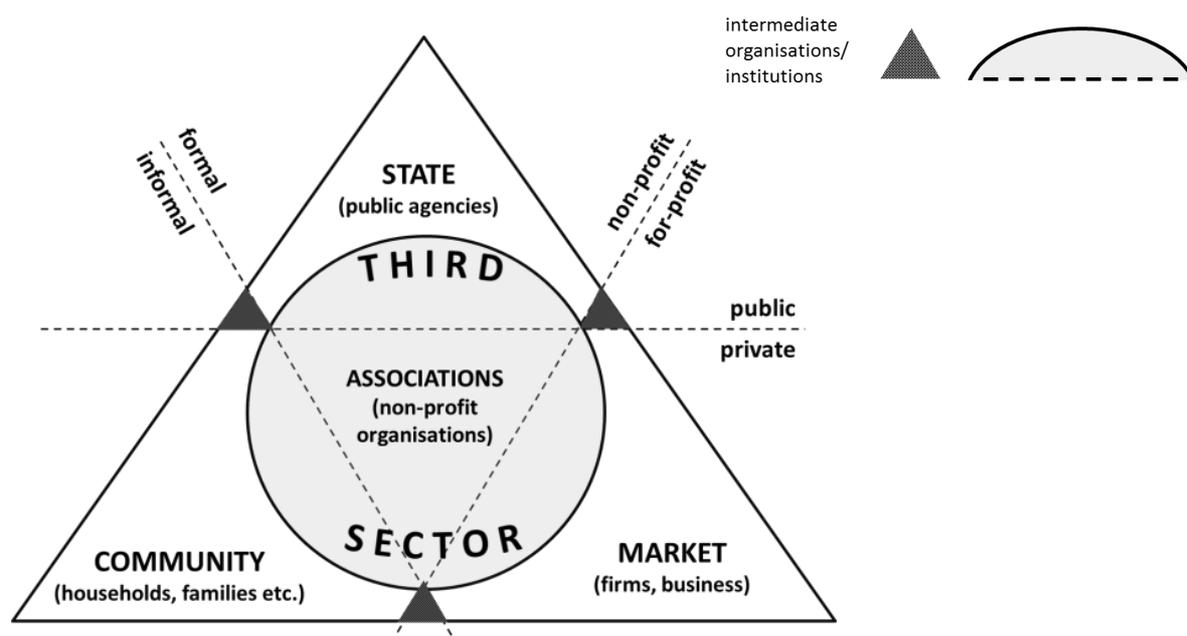
Figure 5. Multi-actor Perspective: level of individual roles (source: Avelino & Wittmayer forthcoming)
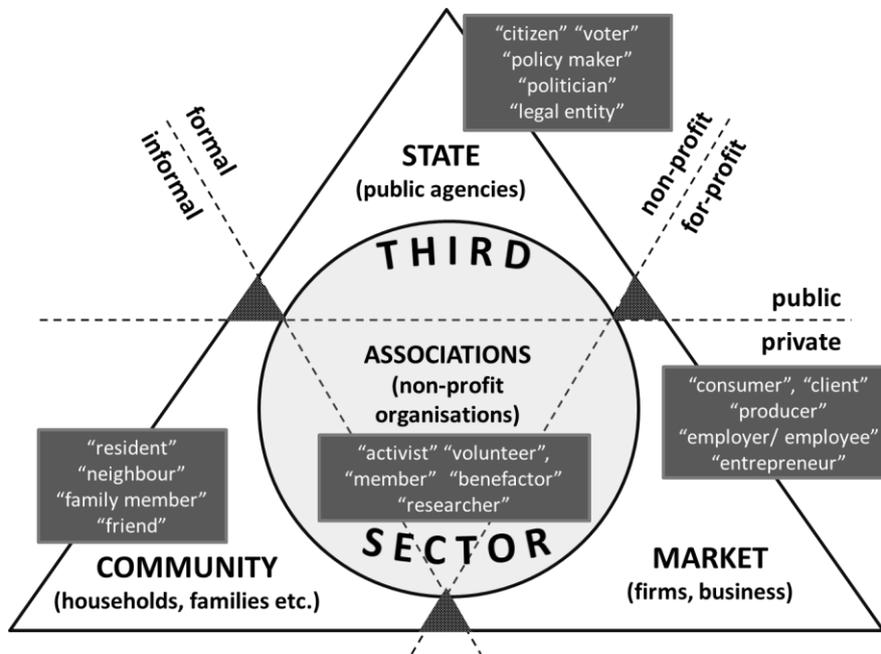
Figure 6. Dominance of State-Market Sectors and Public-Private Partnerships (source: Avelino & Wittmayer forthcoming). PPP = public-private partnerships
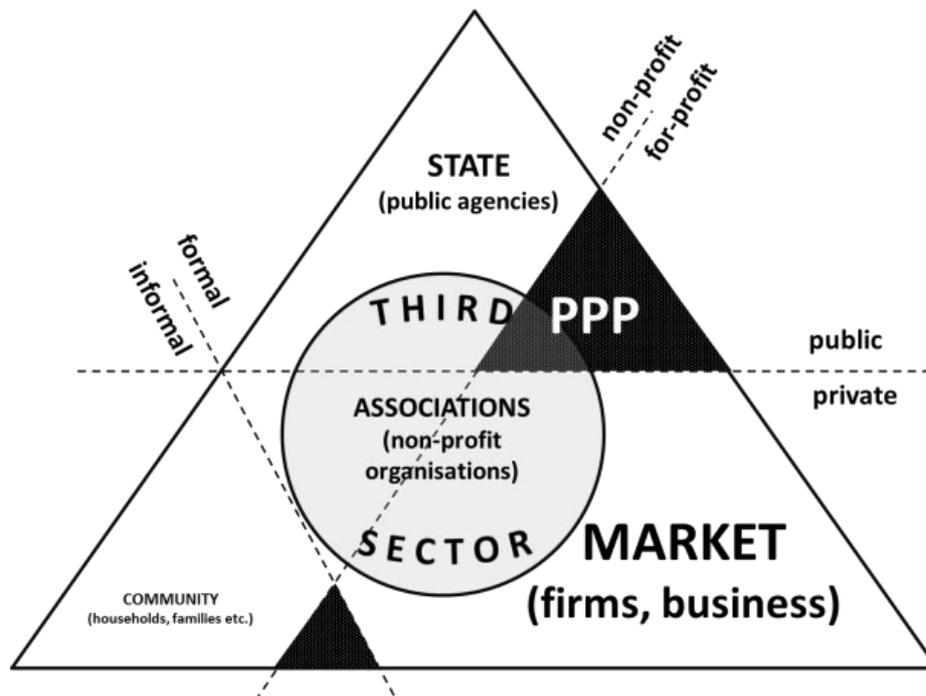
So far, the MaP has been used as a heuristic for facilitating learning processes[10], in which it seemed to help participants gain understanding that:

- each individual plays different roles in different sector logics
- 'state' or 'market' are not monolithic or hegemonic entities entirely separated from us, that we, as individuals, are part of (shaping) them as e.g. citizens and consumers,
- there is more than simplistic dichotomies between "state and citizen" or "state and market",
- power relations between and within these sectors shift over time and that this is an important aspect of societal transformation, and
- the latter also points to 'dangers' of certain transformation or innovation discourses (such as e.g. 'social innovation'), e.g. if the state retreats, there is a risk that the market 'takes over' informal sphere.

The MaP has also been used for challenging academics to translate insights to specific recommendations for actors who want to contribute to a specific societal challenge. By doing so, it aims to assure that practical recommendations are not exclusively directed at policy makers, but also more specifically targeted at other kinds of actors. The problem with recommendations to policy-makers is that it often contains a simplistic overestimation of the power of policy-makers and of the state more generally. The MaP compels researchers to systematically think about different types of actors roles in different types of sector logics as target groups for research findings and practical recommendations.

3.2 Testing and Grounding MaP

The MaP also faces a number of challenges, i.e. relating it more consistently to ongoing TRANSIT theory development (WP3). A work that might be appropriate as part of the topic of 'governance' and 'institutional logics' (see working paper Pel & Bauler October 2014) or social learning. This work needs to pay specific attention to the nature of the boundaries between sectors – which are contested. Not only is the separation of community (informal) and third sector (formal) contested, also the fact that science is not seen as a specific factor is contested. Next to the theoretical development, another challenge is to further test the suitability of the heuristic for use in participatory settings. This is to be further explored in TRANSIT settings (e.g. engagement workshops) and beyond (e.g. training courses in the Transition Academy).

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[10] The MaP has been used and tested in several training contexts of the Transition Academy

4 Transition Scenarios & Backcasting > TSI-scenarios

4.1 Transition Scenarios

A way to 'start' sustainability transitions is simply to imagine them. Transition scenarios do provide a future vision as well as pathways which connect short term activities to long term visions. These pathways also help to deduce appropriate short term actions. Scenarios in the context of transition thinking are taking stock of dynamics and complexity of sustainability transitions. As defined by Sondeijker et al. (2006) they are "participatory explorations of possible long-term development trajectories that incorporate a structural systems change towards a desired, sustainable future state of the system". As such, transition scenarios do have different components, namely taking stock of the present, envisioning the future, backcasting to define specific pathways and the elaboration of short term projects. A specific method herein is backcasting, which is based on a reasoning back from the future vision along the following questions: what changes were needed to bring about the vision, how were these changes brought about, and who contributed to these changes? (see figures 7 and 8 for an example).

Figure 7: Example of the visualisation of transition pathways in the Dutch region of Zeeland (Henneman et al. 2012)
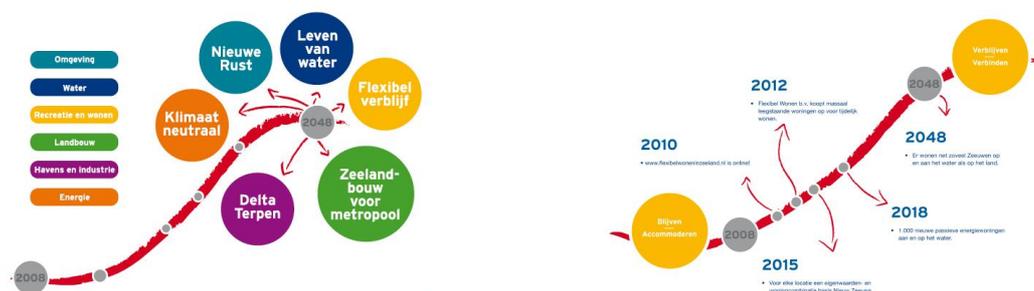
Transition scenarios and backcasting have been used in participatory settings as part of numerous transition arena processes, e.g. in the context of EU-Interreg project MUSIC (Roorda and Wittmayer 2014, Roorda et al. 2014). As part of MUSIC, five cities were coached by researchers to initiate a transition arena process, including the participatory drawing up of a common problem statement, a future vision, transition pathways (through backcasting) and immediate activities. A number of participatory sessions are dedicated to this process, making it a very intensive trajectory which uses a number of different actual facilitation methods.

A lighter version has been used in several professional trainings to break through the 'tyranny of the present': by not starting from the now when drawing up transition pathways, but from the assumption that the vision has been accomplished. This twist helps participants to better let go of current confining frames in thinking. This is done for example by using four big sheets of papers each representing a year (e.g. 2014; 2020; 2035; 2050). These sheets are laid out on the ground making to symbolize the transition pathway. The group starts in the future (e.g. 2050) and not only

cognitively but also physically moves 'backwards' to the last sheet marking the current year. For each milestone year, they outline what change has happened, how and who was involved. Arriving in the present, the group looks forward to strategize what would be the appropriate and inspirational first step. By first going backwards to the present and then start forecasting again (thus the combination of backcasting and forecasting) – the resulting pathway is both inspiring, creative, out of the box as well as achievable and realistic. The paths do usually refer to a transition image, a cluster of innovations and themes that is part of the transition vision. A vision is never only one image, rather it includes a broad range of images.

Figure 8: Example of the visualisation of transition pathways in Ludwigsburg as part of the MUSIC project
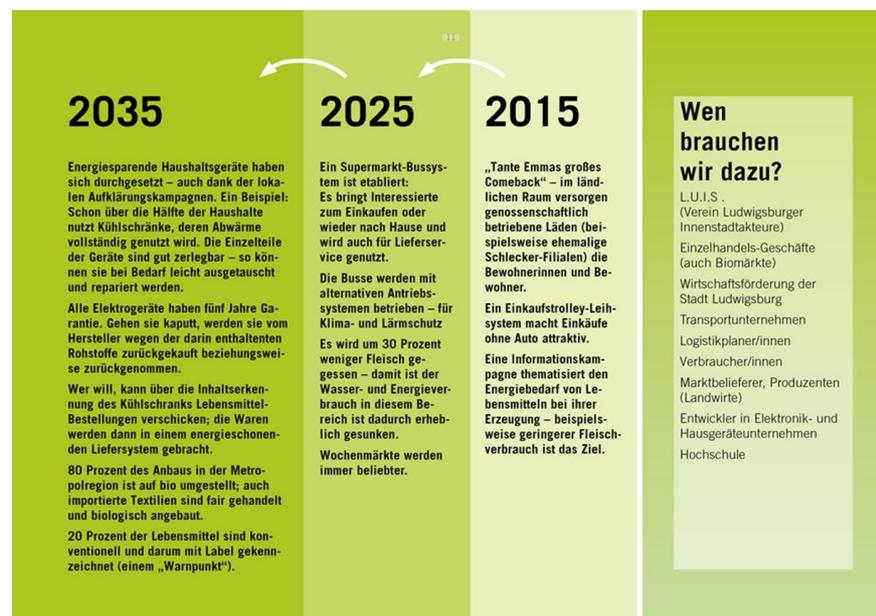
4.2 Beyond Transition Scenarios > TSI-scenarios

Next to a number of strengths, the transition scenario work also has a number of shortcomings, especially when transferred to the context of 'social innovation ' and 'societal transformation'. Transition Scenarios are very much applied in the context of *sustainability* transitions; which means that these are usually used in a context where the aim is to explore a desirable sustainable future. TRANSIT does not necessarily focus on sustainability transformations, rather, the aim is to explore 'open ended' scenarios - including a broad range of scenarios which might not all be viewed as desirable by a majority. A participatory back-casting exercise is to be developed in conjunction of WP3, WP2 and WP6.

Transition scenarios focus very much on the development of 'paths' and 'pathways', giving testimony to the socio-technical background of most work in transition studies. Within TRANSIT, next to 'paths' or 'pathways' we have also been discussing other, possibly more helpful, concepts such as TSI-journeys, or TSI-narratives. There will be more work in theory development (WP3) dedicated to theorise these notions further.

5 TRANSIT Challenges for developing TSI-tools

After having outlined three transition facilitation methods and having connected them to the current and ongoing discussions in TRANSIT on similar concepts and heuristics, we now focus on what the TRANSIT project can offer in further developing TSI-tools.

Firstly, next to exploring facilitation methods used in the transdisciplinary work of transition studies[11], TRANSIT should also explore other **facilitation methods that are used already in the field of social innovation**. The field of social innovation is closely connected to social entrepreneurship, which includes a focus on methods and instruments with regard to 'incubating methods' and other 'scaling' methods, which might be worth exploring. A systemic state-of-the-art of existing tools and facilitation methods relevant for TSI (rather than a general overview) can help us in positioning our work in relation to existing resources.

Secondly, we should employ the **cross-cutting themes** not only for developing TSI-tools around these themes, but also for employing insights from these themes to better understand the transformative and/or (dis)empowering potential of TSI-heuristics. The **governance** theme can give deeper insight into different institutional logics and multi-actor dynamics, and critically assess the possibilities and limits of TSI-governance and of facilitation tools to enhance such governance. The theme of **social learning** can help to explain and specify how, when and to what extent 'tools' can help to facilitate social learning processes. Besides the idea of developing a tool to 'evaluate' and 'monitor' TSI processes, the cross-cutting theme of **monitoring** can also provide a critical understanding of how existing heuristics are (mis)used for monitoring and evaluating on-going (T)SI initiatives. Last but not least, the **resourcing** theme can explicate how TSI-heuristics relate to new forms of capital and valuation and provide insights for constructing a facilitation 'tool' for (learning about) TSI-financing and -funding.

Thirdly, in close cooperation with theory development, TRANSIT explores the state of the art of thinking about **metaphors, framings and narratives** and its relation to tools. These are seen as 'thinking tools' in their own right – structuring reality and as such providing us with options for acting. Metaphors allow us to conceptualise something of one sort (often novel/unfamiliar) as if it were another (usually more familiar). Transition scholars are using metaphors from ecological systems to explain societal systems. They do so in theory development but also in current transition trainings and lecturing, using notions such as 'co-evolution', 'variation and selection', or 'the butterfly effect'. In the theoretical development of TRANSIT we are searching for appropriate metaphors for explaining how social innovation interacts with societal transformation.

As a last point, TRANSIT can add value in thinking about the context in which these 'tools' might be used, by whom, when and how. This challenges us to not only think about the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying our theory development, but also about how we perceive the science-society interface and the axiological assumptions we are holding. As such the context of tool development is formed by calls for new forms of science, such as 'transformation and

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[11] This field harbours a range of other tools and methods that might be of interest for TSI development, e.g. the concepts of deepening, broadening and scaling up (Van den Bosch 2010).

transformative science' or 'mode-3' science. Questions that need to be explored when developing tools concern the role of the researcher, the role of the 'other' as well as the relation between them. It also includes questions relating to the contexts in which 'tools' might be used and the power relations that are expressed through them. This challenges us to not only question social innovation out there, but also take a look 'inside' and question the system we are part of.

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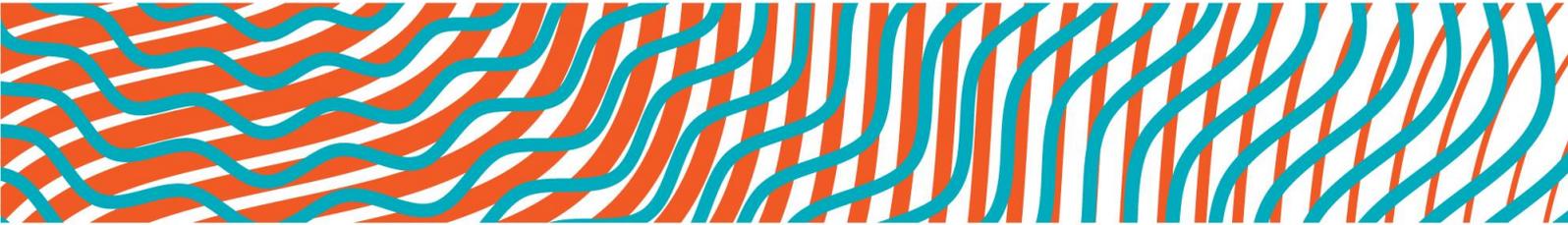
Workshop Report

Synthesis Workshop:
The role of Game-changers in Transformative Social Innovation

Report by Flor Avelino, Julia Wittmayer and Bernadette Kirner (eds.)

Rotterdam, 01-02 September 2014

DRIFT | Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Setting the Workshop Scene

During a 2-day academic workshop at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, 25 scholars from across the world gathered to discuss the role of 'game-changers' in transformative social innovation processes, from the perspective of various inter-disciplines and world regions. This workshop was part of the research project TRANsformative Social Innovation Theory (TRANSIT, http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/). TRANSIT seeks to theorise the dynamics of transformative social innovation, understood as the process through which social innovations contribute to societal transformation.

The focus of this synthesis workshop has been on unpacking and discussing – both theoretically and empirically – the 'game-changers' of our times (*inter alia* climate change, resource depletion, economic crises, increasing inequality) and to explore how these game-changers relate to different forms of social innovation and transformation. The workshop consisted of discussions around 10 paper presentations. The papers were distributed beforehand to allow for in-depth discussion. At the end of the workshop, participants were challenged to discuss the practice of transformative social innovation, across four cross-cutting themes: governance, social learning, monitoring and resourcing.

This document provides a synthesis of main workshop insights and contestation points (p. 3-5). Further, it describes some highlights of the paper presentations and discussions (pp. 6-10), and a summary of the working group discussions on governance, social learning, monitoring and resourcing (p. 11). More background information and impressions of the workshop can be found in the **workshop agenda**, the **overview of the paper abstracts** and a selection of **workshop pictures**.

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Synthesis of Workshop: Main Insights & Contestations

The central, overarching topic of the workshop was transformative social innovation. Unsurprisingly, one of the recurring questions throughout the workshop was: what is transformative about transformative social innovation? What does this concept mean for our understanding and research of social change? During our "syntheses sessions" on day 1 and day 2 of the workshop, we identified a total of five 'points of contestation' revolving around Transformative Social Innovation (TSI):

- Game-changers > Game Metaphor
- Agency as/in/for TSI
- Structural context as/of/for TSI
- Research as/for/on TSI
- Narratives as/for/on TSI

1. Game Changers > Game Metaphor

In the run up to the workshop, game-changers were broadly conceptualised as macrotrends that are perceived to change the rules of the game. The purpose of this notion was to explore how empirical macro-trends are perceived as 'game-changing' – how they are interpreted, (re)constructed, contested and dealt with – by people and initiatives working on social innovation and/or societal transformation. The multiplicity of the concept of a 'game-changer' is reflected across the 10 papers, which provide a rich variety of typologies, characterisations and empirical illustrations of game-changers. Weather storms, socio-technical movements, the commodity boom, the economic crisis, climate change, the Anthropocene and World War II, but also narratives, creative dissent, conflict, influential individuals, or social innovations in themselves, all can be discussed in terms of 'game-changers'. Therein a distinction can be made between exogenous versus endogenous, objective versus constructed, obvious versus less obvious game-changers. During the workshop discussions, it was argued that game-changers should not be equated with macro-developments., i.e. not be confined to any specific level (macro, meso or micro). If the 'game' consists of rules, fields and players, all these elements can act as 'game-changers' in their own right.

2. Agency in/ for TSI

Much of the discussions around the papers revolved around the issue of (human) agency *in* TSI, and agency *for* TSI. Agency is closely intertwined with questions on power. Who's game is being played and to what extent is there a playing level field for acting and steering the direction of TSI? To what extend do actors act consciously or unconsciously? To what extent is 'empowerment' a useful concept to discuss the processes by which actors gain transformative capacity? If agency means human intentionality and 'free will', it implies that processes of TSI will serve a variety of human goals and ambitions. These orien-

tations will differ and result in ideological projects, which in hindsight will be judged as 'evil' or 'good' by different people. As such, the 'dark' side of TSI is a recurring topic, and many agree that this dark side deserves more attention. There may also be a bright sight to seemingly 'dark' phenomena, as dissent, violence, crisis and conflict may at times be experienced as drivers for transformative agency. The discussion on 'bright' and 'dark' sides of TSI raised the question of how normative orientations such as 'sustainability' should be addressed in TSI-research.

3. Structural context of/for/under TSI

The papers, respective presentations and discussions, demonstrated a rich variety of perspectives on structural context. Different words were used to describe this context, ranging from 'regimes' and 'institutions' to 'fields' and 'rules'. Both material, biophysical structures as well as social structures were discussed. Such structures are not only manifested in laws and public policies but also in cultural habits and routines. The importance of this cultural context for our understanding of TSI is emphasised by the geographical diversity of the case-studies in the 10 papers, ranging from Europe to North-America, Latin-America, Australia, India and Africa. We see great differences across institutional frameworks and governance arrangements. Some argue that weak institutional frameworks are beneficial for TSI, while others argue that TSI requires a strong institutional framework. For some, the structural context is – by definition – the object of TSI, in the sense that the transformative aspect of social innovation is defined by the extent to which the structural context is altered (be it change in 'regimes', 'institutions' or 'rules'). For others, the context is part of the agency of TSI in that it is framed by those engaged. Social innovation, actors and structures co-develop and can all be understood as constantly being negotiated and re-shaped.

4. Research as/ for/ on TSI

Most papers and discussions demonstrated an interdisciplinary approach: they acknowledge (different perspectives on) the interaction between culture, politics, technology, ecology and economy to understand processes of transformative change. Moreover, there is a shared sense of 'interparadigmatic' research: to understand the role of e.g. 'planetary boundaries' or 'climate change' in TSI, it is necessary to acknowledge both their biophysical reality as well as their social constructions (ref. to Hulmes who distinguishes 'climate change' and 'Climate Change'). These social constructions are not less 'real', for they become 'social facts' which are acted on (paraphrasing Frances Westley in ref. to Durkheim). Besides research *on* TSI, some papers also address the issue of research *for* TSI, i.e. how research can engage with societal challenges. Transdisciplinary research and action research wee discussed as ways to move beyond a closed academic realm, to involve the experience and tacit knowledge of practitioners. Specific research approaches can in themselves be seen as a social innovation that transforms the way in which knowledge is produced. While the papers and respective research approaches differ in their transformative and activist ambitions, a commonality lies in reflexivity and (a call for) awareness of

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the normative orientations of TSI cases. A major point of contestation is the extent to which researchers themselves need to choose or communicate their our normative position (e.g. 'sustainability' or 'social justice').

5. Narratives on/ for TSI

A substantial part of the discussions revolved around the issue of language; which words we choose to tell empirical and theoretical stories about TSI. Which narratives increase our understanding on TSI, and which seem to help foster TSI? What kind of public discourses on (T)SI do we observe in our empirical case-studies? Different concepts and theoretical approaches lead to different narratives on how TSI develops through time – as emergence, in cycles, through co-evolution, by market scaling, and so forth. Metaphors play an important role therein. During the workshop, several metaphors were mentioned, ranging from TSI as a 'journey', to institutional 'bricolage' and 'sleep-walking' individuals subconsciously imitating one another. The 'strongest' metaphor during the workshop is that of a 'game', consisting of rules, players and a field. While this game metaphors works to emphasise the need for 'changing the rules' (i.e. structural 'transformative' change), one could also argue that the game metaphor invokes a way of thinking (e.g. in terms of winners and losers, beginning and end, competition) that could reproduce those very structures which some TSI endeavours aim to challenge. This same concern can be applied to various other metaphors and words – e.g. 'empowerment' or 'innovation'. There is no need to discard such words or metaphors altogether, but there is a need to be aware of the role of such metaphors and associated narratives, both in our empirical observations, as well as in our own academic perspectives.

Hybridity and Complexity

Many of the contestation points relate to complexity and hybridity as an underlying property and condition for TSI. Do we need weak or strong institutional frameworks for TSI? We probably need a combination of both: hybrid institutions and 'up-down' strategies, adapted to specific contexts. Is TSI a matter of empowerment and transformative agency, or is it a matter of structural change and power struggles? It is obviously an interaction of all that. Are game-changers endogenous or exogenous, macro or micro, bio-physical realities or social constructions? Clearly, all such forces can contribute to changing the game, both from within and without. Due to the complexity and interconnectedness of TSI processes, we need a diversity of research approaches, narratives and metaphors to unravel how social innovation and transformation is empirically manifested across different world regions. The 10 papers as discussed in this workshop offer exactly that: a preciously rich diversity of perspectives and case-studies of TSI processes across the world. Although we do not have definite answers on what is or is not a transformative social innovation or what enables it, we do share some main research questions and can agree on major points of contestation for future research.

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Overview of Papers

	Author(s)	Title	Discussant
1	Flor Avelino*, Julia Wittmayer, Tim O'Riordan , Alex Haxeltine, Paul Weaver , René Kemp, Derk Loorbach, Jan Rotmans	Game Changers & Transformative Social Innovation. The Case of the Economic Crisis and the New Economy	-
2	Frances Westley*, Katharine McGowen, Nino Antadze, Jaclyn Blacklock, Ola Tjornbo, Erin Alexuik	Romanticism, Assimilation and Women's Rights. Three cases of how game changers catalyzed, disrupted and incentivized social innovation	Derk Loorbach
3	Marc Swilling	Sustainability and Structural Transformation in Africa: Some Preliminary Notes	René Kemp
4	Fjalar de Haan*, Briony C. Rogers	How Game Changers Influence Transitions - A Framework for Analysis and an Application to the Australian Millennium Drought	Jan Rotmans
5	Shambu Prasad	Innovating at the Margins: Sustainable Transitions and Game-changing Ideas from SRI in India	Paul Weaver
6	Per Olsson	The Anthropocene as a game changer for sustainability innovations and transformations	Alex Haxeltine
7	Jürgen Howaldt*, Michael Schwarz	Social Innovations as Drivers for (Transformative) Social Change	Alex Haxeltine
8	Inês Campos*, André Vizinho, Filipe Moreira Alves, Gil Penha Lopes	An ART Approach to Climate Adaptation Research: Action-Research; Reflexivity and Transformation	Derk Loorbach
9	Roberto Bartholo*, Carla Cipolla, Rita Afonso	(Im)mobility in Brazilian Cities: Macro Trends and Innovative Experiences	Gilda Farrell
10	Ariel Gordon*, Mariano Fressoli, Lucas Becerra	Perspectives on Social Innovation from the South: power, asymmetries and the role of the State	Frances Westley

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Highlights from Paper Presentations & Discussions

In their papers, authors were invited to discuss: (1) societal challenges and 'game-changers' in specific countries or world regions, related to issues of (un)sustainability, development, justice, equity etc., (2) theoretical and/or methodological reflections on the study of social innovation and/or societal transformation, and (3) interdisciplinary perspectives, including socio-ecological, socio-technical, socio-economic, socio-spatial, socio-political and/or socio-cultural perspectives. For more information on the written papers, see overview of paper abstracts.

Paper 1. "Game Changers & Transformative Social Innovation. The Case of the Economic Crisis and the New Economy" by Flor Avelino*, Julia Witmayer, Tim O'Riordan, Alex Haxeltine, Paul Weaver, René Kemp, Derk Loorbach and Jan Rotmans. Transformative social innovation is the process through which social innovation contributes to societal transformation. Five "shades of change and innovation" are distinguished: social innovation, system innovation, game changers, narratives of change and societal transformation. Game-changers are presented as macro-developments that are perceived to change (the rules, fields and players in the) 'game' of societal interaction. The discussion questioned why a game-changer needs to be a macro-development. Why not an individual (e.g. Poetin) or a social innovation itself? If the 'game' consists of rules, fields and players, can players also be game-changers? These questions highlighted the need to better address the role of actors within transformative social innovation; transformative capacity and strategic agency.

Paper 2. "Romanticism, Assimilation and Women's Rights. Three cases of how game changers catalyzed, disrupted and incentivized social innovation" by Frances Westley*, Katharine McGowen, Nino Antadze, Jaclyn Blacklock, Ola Tjornbo, and Erin Alexuik. The impact of game-changers is studied in three case-studies: wilderness protection, women's rights and assimilation of indigenous children in **Canada.** Three different game changers are identified: (1) seminal game changers, (2) exogenous shocks and (3) endogenous game changers. The discussion addressed the dark 'manifestations' of social innovation: (1) social innovations that are (or turn out to be) 'dark' in themselves (e.g. assimilation schools), (2) the effects of 'dark' game-changers (e.g. 2nd World War), and (3) social innovations that may be/seem positive in themselves, but have dark sides. It highlighted the need to remain attentive to this, for "every innovation is the beginning of a new cycle, with its own shadows" (paraphrasing Frances Westley).

Paper 3. "Sustainability and Structural Transformation in Africa: Some Preliminary Notes" by Mark Swilling. The unstable global commodity market has a profound impact in **Africa**. The commodity boom changes everything; it can be seen as a "mega-game-changer". Other

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game-changers include democratization processes, ICT revolution, a rising middle class and a declining influence of neo-liberalism. Different social and system innovations operating as networks throughout Africa provide less mainstream answers to such game-changers, like Shackdwellers International (SDI), African Food Security Network (AFSUN), Africa Clean Energy Corridor (ACEC) and Africa Organic Network (AfroNet). During the discussion, one of the emerging issues concerned the question of state-building and institutional context. When engaging in state-building in the African context, the question is whether to follow the new public management paradigm, or rather to take a more relational approach and engage in 'institutional bricolage'. It is also questioned to what extent social innovation is possible in a weak institutional context. Some would argue that social innovation is 'easier' in a weak institutional context, for "rules that are set in a relational context, those are the ones that survive" (paraphrasing Mark Swilling).

Paper 4. "How Game Changers Influence Transitions - A Framework for Analysis and an Application to the Australian Millennium Drought", by Fjalar J. de Haan* and Briony C. Rogers. The transitions-theoretical framework allows us to analyse the consequences of a game changer in terms of its impact on service provision systems that fulfil certain needs. As case study, the Australian Millenium Drought can be considered as a large game changer fostering the development of a green water management in **Australia**. A 'Liquoric All-sort' model was presented that distinguishes between 5 layers: (1) game-changers, (2) sense-making, (3) needs and constraints, (4) enactment and (5) transitional change. The discussion questioned the hierarchy between layers, the hierarchy between needs, and also the distinction between the 'game' and the 'game-changers'. Enactment is not so much a layer separated from the others, but rather it is about *how actors act* on all different layers.

Paper 5 "Innovating at the Margins: Sustainable Transitions and Game-changing Ideas from SRI in India" by Shambu Prasad. The System of Rice Intensification (SRI) is a socio-technical movement in **India** that can be seen as a game changing innovation in agro-food systems. It is pointed out how an innovation such as SRI could be scaled up in a sustainable way and that more efforts need to go into increasing the adaptive capacity of farmers, including the notion of 'creative dissent'. The decade of large amounts of farmer suicides, is also the decade that farmers have decided to do things differently. The **discussion** revolved around the 'unlevel playing field' between formal and informal, mainstream and grassroots approaches to sustainability. Creative dissent, manifested for instance in the silent dissent of scientists, can be seen as a particular form of participation. A challenge for governments is to learn to see such dissent as a source of innovation (rather than repression).

Paper 6 "The Anthropocene as a game changer for sustainability innovations and transformations", by Per Olsson. The Anthropocene – our current era with an unprecedented human impact – can be seen as a game changer. The human ability to be creative, trans-

formative and innovative, has also created the problems we currently face. New economic and development paradigms and large scale transformations are necessary that take into account planetary boundaries. A theory of transformative agency needs to be linked to an understanding of socio-ecological systems. The **discussion** questioned to what extent the Anthropocene works as a narrative for enabling transformative agency. Awareness of planetary boundaries does not necessarily make people act otherwise, and images of fear might lead to more paralysis. The Anthropocene can also be positively construed, in terms of the potential positive impact of humanity. The Anthropocene is not necessarily a game-changer but rather a characterization of 'the game' itself. The change lies in in the interaction between humanity and environment.

Paper 7 "Social Innovations as Drivers for (Transformative) Social Change", by Jürgen Howaldt and Michael Schwarz. The research project SI-DRIVE intends to extend knowledge about social innovation by integrating theory and research methodologies. The concept of social innovation here recurs to social practice theory, moving from the focus on 'invention' to the social practices underlying innovation. Tarde's social theory is invoked to emphasise that not only invention, but also the conscious and unconscious process of imitation make up the process of social change. The discussion revolved around the notion of imitation and unconscious behaviour. It is not only about conscious individual behaviour - when looking at interaction patterns from a system perspective, the emergent result may be innovation, even if the individual interactions might look like imitation. Others argue that transformation, by definition, requires moments of conscious creativity and disruption, and a conscious resistance to 'replicate'. Interesting linkages can be made between the notions of 'imitation' (SI-DRIVE) and 'social learning' (TRANSIT).

Paper 8 "An ART approach to Climate Adaptation Research: Action-Research; Reflexivity and Transformation", by Inês Campos*, André Vizinho, Filipe Moreira Alves and Gil Penha Lopes. Research can be seen as an innovation in itself, participatory action research can make a link between transformation and reflexivity. Such action research has been applied in several case-studies on climate-adaptions in Portugal. Within adaptation pathway scenarios, climate elements such as 'storms' can be seen as game-changers. Stakeholders can be involved in working out adaptation scenarios, being challenged to turn identified needs for climate 'adaption' into an opportunity for 'transformation'. The discussion revolved around the limits and potentials of action research. Some argued that in order for action research to become transformative, it needs to move beyond local case involvement, towards identifying systemic barriers in the context of local cases. Others claimed that action research underestimates power relations and that transdisciplinary research is more sensitive to issues of power. Furthermore, it was argued that transdisciplinary (action) research should aim to create knowledge beyond academics to make it accessible to people on the ground – this is not a matter of 'up-scaling' but actual of 'de-scaling' knowledge and skills.

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Paper 9 "(Im)mobility in Brazilian Cities: Macro Trends and Innovative Experiences" by Roberto Bartholo*, Carla Cipolla and Rita Afonso. A distinction is made between social and institutional innovation. Social innovation is contingent, fluid and rather unstable, valid for a certain group and specific situation. Institutional innovation has an intention to generalise – it is 'a rule for a game that aims to be played by an undetermined amount of players and wants to be valid in any place at any time'. Institutional innovations tend to be 'born' out of social innovations. Institutional frameworks should allow space for the birth and death of social innovation. In the discussion, it was argued that the dichotomy between institutional innovation and social innovations, between top-down and bottom-up, mainstream and grassroots, needs to be challenged. There is a risk of conforming this dichotomy by analysing case-studies in such way. The idea of 'institutionalising' social innovation is a problematic one: setting a rule is not the same as standardising a practice. The challenge for governance is to create hybrid rules, rules that can accommodate public, market and community dynamics (e.g. community land trusts, which combine rules of both commons with privates).

Paper 10 "Perspectives on Social Innovation from the South: power, asymmetries and the role of the State", by Ariel Gordon, Mariano Fressoli and Lucas Becerra. The relation between social innovation initiatives and the State can be difficult and contradictory. Social innovation discourse tends to include several problematic assumptions about the role of the state; particularly the notion of social innovation as 'replacing' public responsibilities is worrisome. Analysing interactions between public policies with social innovation in Argentina demonstrate that public policies are fundamental for scaling social innovation. It is important to be aware that 'the state' is a contradictory confluence. Public policies imply a balance between top-down and bottom-up dynamics, and have a potential to foster linkages and direct interventions for dealing with power asymmetries in social innovation processes. The discussion addressed the problem of top-down strategies that tend to be insensitive to the local context and disconnected from the grassroots level, due to lacking channels of communication. In organisation studies, some propagate an 'up-down' strategy in which 'up-down' agents are able to translate between public policies and local contexts and grassroots initiatives. This points to a need for 'translation spaces', intermediaries and brokers.

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Insights for the Practice of Transformative Social Innovation

During the workshop we took up the challenge of translating insights from the workshop for the practice of transformative social innovation. In a mapping exercise, academic participants were first invited to place themselves in the shoes of social innovators and reflect on their "TSI (Transformative Social Innovation) journey". The mapping exercise was followed by group work to discuss the following question: What are the main insights that we can translate into the practice of transformative social innovation? The working groups were organized around four cross-cutting themes: (1) governance, (2) social learning, (3) monitoring, and (4) resourcing.

(1) Governance – by Bonno Pel

How can governance facilitate Transformative Social Innovation (TSI) and how can TSI improve governance? Topics include regulating, decision-making, steering, by all types of actors. It proved difficult to arrive at a focused discussion; this in itself is telling. As the game-changers workshop did much to clarify how TSI could emerge from interacting and possibly mutually reinforcing 'shades of innovation and change', it mainly clarified system dynamics. Just before the discussion it was considered how 'social innovators' would navigate these complex dynamics. Still, that rather introduced a perspective of an individual's journey, rather than coordination between groups of actors and their different institutional logics and goals (=governance).

Focused discussion was probably difficult as participants approached the 'governance issue' from different positions – as civil society actors facing apparently inert government structures, or as governments seeking to facilitate, or regulate, or integrate, particular SI initiatives. This reasoning from different particular positions hampered our articulation of *governance* challenges – maybe we can conclude that we need to shed the assumption that SI originates from particular governance actors (or institutional logics or sectors) – and consider it is a collective process that happens at the interfaces between sectors, out of collaboration and negotiation between actors, through changing roles and redistribution of responsibilities between actors[1]. The collective process is not owned by a particular actor, there is no obvious set of goals or values that can be assumed for its evaluation (although process criteria are available), and it cannot silently be assumed that governance

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[1] A consideration also developed under the 'multi-actor perspective' by Wittmayer/Avelino, which basically amounts to a governance perspective on (T)SI.

should be instrumental to one actor in particular[2]. Instruments, tools and management repertoires can of course be considered also– but individual strategy is different from governance. Another conclusion: It's not only a matter of considering how 'governance' can support SI – it can also be considered how governance occurs *through* SI. Finally, these tough definitional issues surrounding 'SI governance' are arguably easier to untangle with regard to particular SI initiatives – both 'governance' as well as 'SI' are concepts that refer to a very wide diversity of empirical phenomena, and are problematic as universal concepts.

(2) Social Learning – by Adina Dumitru & Isabel Lema

Social learning is a process of co-evolution of understandings of existing social structures, rules, and patterns of distribution of resources. It is different from individual learning in that it entails a social component - both in the process of the construction of meanings and discourses, as well as in the sharing of the content of learning. It is a dynamic process through which groups of social actors construct and acquire the worldviews, definitions of problems and the best means to deal with them. It also includes constructing modes of how to relate to each other in order to carry out a common project – so interpersonal trust and relational frames come into play. Studying social learning in social innovation is made difficult by its dynamic nature and the fact that it is a constantly evolving co-construction. Mapping this evolution requires creative techniques.

Social innovation initiatives promote active learning among their members, but also in society more widely. In times of instability or crisis, societal learning can become a game changing phenomenon in itself, opening up possibilities for social innovations to become more popular and to be scaled up. It can thus accelerate processes of innovation. There is a big need to understand the connection between social change and social learning, or to answer the question of the role of social learning in social change. Also, it is important to find answers to the question through which mechanisms social learning contributes to social change: Is it through an awareness of possibilities for action (which could be one element of empowerment)? Through feelings of self- and social efficacy? Through a shift in perceptions of legitimacy of existing social structures?

Another important question refers to the role of social learning in the process of scaling up. Some initiatives spread faster than others, so social learning seems to occur and be translated into action at a fast pace for some innovations, and not for others. Do social learning processes explain this difference? And in what way?

Finally, there is the question of how to shape social learning to bring it into the direction of transformation to sustainability. Social innovation might lead to unsustainable outcomes,

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[2] We do introduce the normative yardstick of 'transformative impact' – but that is not tied to particular actors' ambitions.

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strengthening the "old model" of development (e.g.: neo-liberalism). A lot of social learning might take place that perpetuates the old structures while attempting to change a certain paradigm. The question for a theory of transformative social innovation then is to differentiate between social learning that leads to transformation and social learning that leads to a perpetuation of old structures.

(3) Monitoring – by René Kemp & Veronica Olivotto

The goal of the session was to discuss monitoring of social innovation from the point of view of social innovation research and the needs of social innovation stakeholders (practitioners in social innovation projects, funders). For **practitioners** monitoring is a tool for internal management and important from the point of view of receiving funding (through grants from donors and social impact investors). Possible topics for monitoring are: customer satisfaction, the value they are producing. For **researchers** it is interesting to know if the social innovation seeks social system change. For this the scheme of the Waterloo Institute of Social innovation and Resilience may be interesting which investigates whether the innovation involves or gives rise to changes in 1) authority, 2) resource flows, 3) basic routines, 4) belief patterns and 5) law.

Information about the social innovation activities, publications and thought leaders can be obtained from "big data" platforms that harvest data on SI (research) initiatives. An example of is the knowledge hub http://sigknowledgehub.com/2012/01/02/dip-into-social-innovation. An overview of digital related social innovation initiatives is given at http://digitalsocial.eu/. Practitioners can use such platforms as a tool for self-monitoring (e.g. to position their initiatives among others in terms of purpose and scope). One of the worst things you can do is to invoke the use of quantitative metrics in the initial phases of the initiative, as this can stifle the innovation process. Pushing people/entrepreneurs to assess their impacts to soon may backfire as they may not be able to prove results. There is an interesting link with social learning. The closing message of this session was: Monitoring goes along with stages of innovation; and types of monitoring depend on who is doing the monitoring and to what end.

(4) Resourcing – led by Paul Weaver

Resource needs of (T)SI can include physical assets, materials, finance, information, scientific support, virtual 'spaces', evolving growth strategies and related business models, and the management skills to carry these through. Resource needs are likely to vary as the SI evolves and scales. Compared to conventional businesses, many SI rely more heavily on *immaterial resources*, *non-rival resources* and on *open-access* resources, such as knowledge, skills and capacities that are available on the internet and are part of a *new commons*. In-

ternet access is a key resource for SI in its own right. Also, what SI may use as a resource may be considered by others to be surplus assets, wastes or even problems. A business model for SI is often to create value from neglected or overlooked resources. An advantage of social innovations is that they are generally low in capital need. A disadvantage is that they may depend on recurrent grants because lesser emphasis is placed on achieving a sustainable income stream. In order to grow and become transformative, SI will need to secure recurrent income, especially because competition for grants is increasing. This implies the need for SI business models to evolve in order to support survival and scaling.

In addition there are some specific resourcing needs of SI that are different from and additional to those of more conformist activities. These arise because SI (being unconventional) may fall out of conventional modes and classes of regulation, governance, and resourcing implying a lack of appropriate regulations, sources of capital, forms of financial instrument, etc. This creates a need to 'negotiate' appropriate institutional arrangements in order to avoid confrontation with inappropriate modes and forms of governance, regulation and resourcing and to create enabling frameworks and supports for scaling. Management skills are particularly critical for this negotiation and framework/infrastructure creating process. The needed skills are not pure but 'hybrid' and transdisciplinary. They engage capacities in fields such as strategy, law, finance, negotiation, (social) media, networking, and lobbying. No individual is likely to hold all the needed skills. This implies that successful SI will increasingly be carried forward by teams and networks of innovators. Networking to find needed skills (and other resources) and bring these together is critical if a social innovation is to scale. One possible source of skills is conventional enterprise, which may make skills available to SI through CSR initiatives. Another is academia, in the form of an emerging cadre of action researchers.

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