TRANSITION MANAGEMENT IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

GUIDANCE MANUAL

TRANSITION MANAGEMENT IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

Five European cities pioneered with transition management, a governance approach aimed at creating space for new paradigms and practices, to address climate change at the local level. This guidance manual offers an introduction to transition management, illustrated by the experiences in five different urban contexts.

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FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDITION

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL has a vision for Aberdeen to be an ambitious, achieving, smart city. When Aberdeen City Council decided to use the transition management approach we aimed to engage city stakeholders in taking action towards CO_2 reduction in Aberdeen. The transition management process led to a better understanding of the possibilities for a sustainable future for Aberdeen, both in the council and in the group of local stakeholders involved in the process. With our magazine publication 'Aberdeen In Transition: Journey Towards 2050', a new vision was shared of an Aberdeen with diverse industries, beyond the era of fossil fuel dominance. The transition management process has also laid the foundation for new partnerships and new initiatives working on a sustainable future of our city. In particular, it led to the start of six project groups by the end of 2013, each of which developed one of the transition experiments defined in the magazine.

Using the transition management approach has been a learning experience for Aberdeen City Council. What we have learned on how best to engage with Aberdeen stakeholders will help us with other pieces of work on climate change including the development of a Sustainable Energy Action Plan and Adaptation Plan for Aberdeen. DRIFT challenged us to enter this process with an open mind and encouraged us in reflecting on our attitude and role in relation to citizens, businesses, institutions and other organizations in our city. Our experiences (together with those in four other cities) held lessons for DRIFT for systematically improving and fine-tuning the transition management approach for use in cities – as is currently elaborated in this guidance manual, the final output of the MUSIC project.

Gordon McIntosh
Transitional Director
Aberdeen City Council

FOREWORD

TRUST ME, this is no ordinary manual. The publication that you are about to read will provide you with a lot of inspiration and practical hints on how to guide the local sustainability process in your city but, more importantly, it will lead you to question the very nature of change and your role in this complex, often confusing process.

The guidance manual on transition management in the urban context, developed by the MUSIC project, is a great resource for anyone who feels that urban governance as we know it, instead of providing us with solutions, is often part of the problem. The experience of MUSIC cities shows us that taking a different, perhaps more challenging, route can lead to interesting results not only in terms of new initiatives for climate mitigation, but also in terms of social learning, empowerment and partnerships.

Based on ICLEI's over two decades of experience with local sustainability processes, I can strongly recommend this publication to all local policy officers, especially to those who are looking for a way to kick start or re-energize their local sustainability process. However, let me warn you – this is not always an easy read.

You will be forced to question what you think and what you do, what you define as a problem and what you perceive as a solution. You will be encouraged to get yourself into situations that may feel awkward and to talk to people you have never talked to before. Finally, you will need to relinquish control over certain processes and get ready for some surprises. Sounds good? Yes, I think so too.

Ania Rok
Project Coordinator
Governance & Social Innovation
ICLEI European Secretariat

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INTRODUCTION

AS AN URBAN POLICY OFFICER, you are probably aware of the sustainability objectives and policies of your city. As a resident, you probably know of innovative activities and maybe even the pioneers who initiated them. But how do these initiatives interrelate? How do they build on or feed into one another? What happens when we connect mainstream policy-making processes with the innovative practices and visionary ideas of pioneering entrepreneurs, activists, artists, citizens, and scientists?

This guidance manual details a theoretical framework and a practical process to support the *transition*[1] of your city towards sustainability: the *transition management* approach. We describe and reflect on how the approach was applied in five European cities, which shared the ambition of meeting or even going beyond the European 2020 climate targets: Aberdeen (UK), Montreuil (FR), Ghent (BE), Ludwigsburg (DE) and Rotterdam (NL). These cities aimed to realize their ambitions by finding fundamental new ways of thinking, working, planning and organizing. During the MUSIC project (Mitigation in Urban Context, Solutions for Innovative Cities, 2010-2015), teams of city officers together with local *change agents* in these cities addressed sustainability issues from the perspective of radical long-term change.

"IT'S REALLY INTERESTING THAT FIVE COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT CITIES HAVE THE SAME THEMES, IDEAS, PROPOSALS AND GOALS. THAT GIVES ME THE HOPE THAT WE'RE ON THE PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY."

City officer, Ludwigsburg

We hope that this guidance manual will inspire you too to co-create: to build on the innovative initiatives and inspiring visions in your city, and thus to play into and strengthen the dynamics towards a sustainable future.

In the following chapter, we introduce the transition perspective as a lens for understanding and describing sustainability challenges in the urban context. This perspective is tied to a governance approach – transition management – that is specifically designed to accelerate social innovation and influence transitions. In the next chapter, the core of this guidance manual, we describe the different phases of transition management step-by-step.

The format of a guidance manual has its limitations. As one of the policy officers involved in the MUSIC project stated, "you can understand the true value of the approach and the difference with business-as-usual only when you experience it yourself. Only then can you grasp the 'drive' of the process […]. A manual is actually too static for such dynamic and radical process." To address this limitation, we report the results and reflect on the experiences from the MUSIC project throughout the manual. Furthermore, we included a full overview of the processes in the five cities on our website, www.themusicproject.eu. The website also contains a short movie introducing the project and additional in-depth documentation on some of the methods introduced in this guidance manual.

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1   The glossary (appendix A) gives a further explanation of the terminology; throughout this publication the first appearance of specific terms is formatted as bold and italic.

The MUSIC project

The adaptation of transition management to the urban context and its transnational application constituted an important part of the European MUSIC project (Mitigation in Urban Context, Solutions for Innovative Cities). This Interreg-funded project is a co-operation between five cities (Aberdeen, UK; Montreuil, FR; Ghent, BE; Ludwigsburg, DE; and Rotterdam, NL) and two research institutes (DRIFT Erasmus University, NL; and CRP Henri Tudor, LU) in North-Western Europe.

The overall aim of the MUSIC project is to catalyse and mainstream carbon and energy reduction in urban policies, activities and the built environment. In this project, DRIFT assisted and coached city officers in mobilizing stakeholders to take action towards CO_2 reduction by using the transition management approach. In close collaboration with the five cities, Henri Tudor developed a Geospatial Urban Energy Information and Support System to integrate 'energy' in urban planning and to enable the monitoring of effects. Moreover, each city developed pilot projects to put energy reduction measures into practice.

ABERDEEN
Population: 210,400
Challenge: create a culture of
energy efficiency among public
and private actors

ROTTERDAM
Population: 612,000
Challenge: densify inner city in
a sustainable way

LUDWIGSBURG
Population: 86,000
Challenge: further develop energy
concept with other urban actors

MONTREUIL
Population: 103,000
Challenge: increase the involvement of
local actors in achieving sustainability

GHENT
Population: 240,000
Challenge: involve diverse actors in
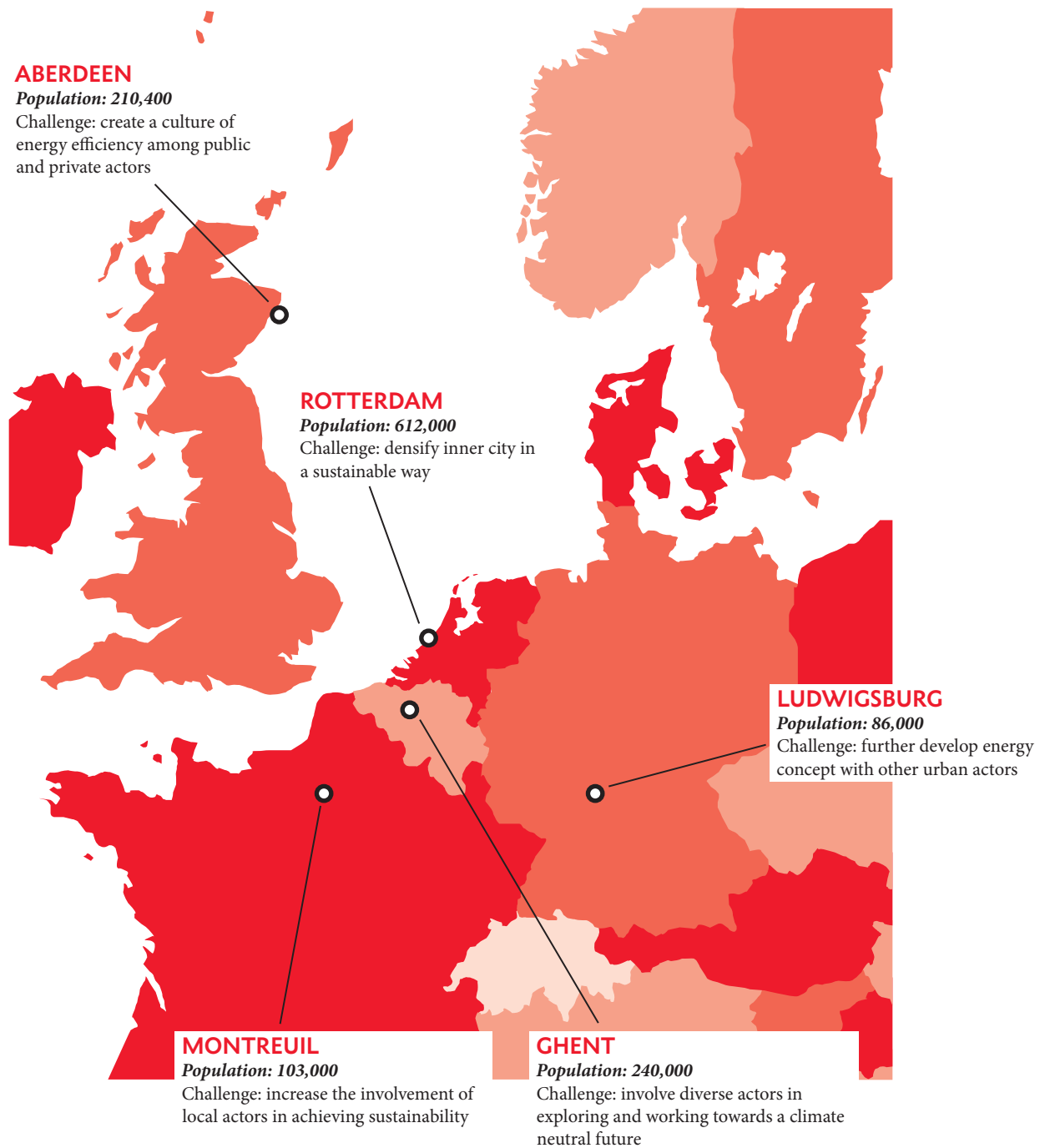exploring and working towards a climate
neutral future

Figure 1: The five cities in the MUSIC project and the challenges they face

TRANSITION MANAGEMENT

TRANSITIONS PERSPECTIVE ON URBAN SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

WITH MORE THAN half of the world's population living in cities, and in Europe even over 70%, it comes as no surprise that cities strongly contribute to unsustainability, such as the depletion of energy and material resources, decreasing food security, increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and environmental degradation. At the same time, cities offer a promising intervention level for decisive local action to address sustainability challenges, especially in terms of policy and societal action. Alternatives can emerge from local action and inspire projects elsewhere, or even be translated into more systematic programs at higher levels of governance. Actions at the urban level can thus have a truly global impact.

Many local governments recognize this and have adopted ambitious sustainability targets and agendas. They do not stand alone. Many citizens, companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have set up initiatives to contribute to a sustainable future. In spite of their best efforts, however, they are often confronted with the bewilderingly complex nature of sustainability issues. Far from clear-cut, these can best be regarded as persistent problems, deeply embedded in society, and therefore requiring fundamental changes.

"IF WE WAIT ANOTHER 10 YEARS THEN WE WILL START TO SEE NEGATIVE IMPACTS. THROUGH THE MUSIC PROJECT AND THROUGH THE TRANSITION MANAGEMENT PROCESS WHAT WE ARE REALLY TRYING TO INFUSE IS A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND A SENSE OF URGENCY AMONGST OUR POPULATION."

City officer, Aberdeen

It is, at best, questionable whether these fundamental societal changes can be planned or managed. This is nevertheless a key assumption made by many politicians, city administrations, NGOs and businesses. In a nutshell, they analyse and formulate clear challenges by isolating them from their societal context, defining corresponding targets for short-term incremental improvement, and implementing simplistic plans with visible milestones and 'SMART' goals. While dominant, such an approach frequently fails: it focuses only on the intervention, leaving out the context and underlying systemic challenges and problems. We often do not know what these (underlying) problems are – let alone how to solve them. Even if we do fully understand the more complex and intangible challenges inhibiting interventions, addressing them involves a myriad of interrelated actors, domains and scale-levels. Where do we begin?

Over the last decades, a new field of research has emerged, attempting to understand and explain the dynamics of fundamental, long-term societal change: transition studies. The transition perspective outlines that transitions, rather than being managed, can be influenced, supported, and accelerated. By embracing complexity and uncertainty as opportunities, instead of something to ignore or control, city officers (amongst others) can play into existing societal dynamics. The transition management approach provides a framework for this.

THE TRANSITION MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Transition management is based on the empirical and theoretical insights of transition studies, and offers ways to influence the direction and pace of societal change dynamics towards sustainability. The approach has been used to stimulate sustainability transitions in localities (e.g. regions, cities and neighbourhoods), and to initiate transformations in socio-technical systems, such as energy, water, and mobility. The MUSIC project applied it to five cities, as a means of supporting their climate ambitions.

The transition management approach proposes six principles for influencing transitions:

1. **Get an insight into the system:** The complexity of the challenges has to be fully acknowledged. It is essential to understand the dynamics and interlinkages of multiple domains, actors, and scales. This can be done by thoroughly examining the existing situation, as well as by questioning assumptions, problem perceptions, and dominant solutions.
2. **Aim for system innovation in small but radical steps:** Recognize the difference between system optimisation and system innovation. The latter requires taking small but radical steps, guided by a long-term perspective, which can be acquired by questioning mindsets and being open to unorthodox ideas and actions.
3. **Give room to diversity and flexibility.** The future can neither be predicted nor planned. Options should therefore be kept open by exploring multiple pathways when working on strategies and actions. Resistance and barriers should be anticipated, and diversity fostered. Involving a variety of perspectives will enable cross-fertilisation and prevent 'tunnel vision'.
4. **Co-create:** Neither local government, nor any other single actor can address sustainability challenges on its own. A variety of people and organizations make decisions that influence the future on a daily basis. As a local government, it is important to engage multiple stakeholders beyond simply providing input – everyone can be considered a decision maker, contributing their positions and perspectives.
5. **Give room to change agents:** Achieving ambitious targets is difficult when vested interests and positions are taken as a starting point. Therefore, actors who are already adopting new or alternative ways of thinking and doing (change agents) should be found, as they can be influential in mediating and triggering transitions. They should be actively engaged and supported with the resources and opportunities needed to realize innovations.
6. **Facilitate social and institutional learning:** Learning is essential for societal change. Opening up to actors with different backgrounds provides better insights into the challenges of and opportunities for change. The aim is short-term action aligned with a long-term vision to learn about new practices and current constraints. Learning processes should be supported by providing time for reflection and creating a setting that supports mutual trust and openness.

These principles are operationalized in four types of interventions: orienting, agenda-setting, activating and reflecting (see figure 2):

- ♦ **Orienting** includes analysing and positioning oneself (as a city officer) and the municipality vis-à-vis current societal developments and challenges – in the past, present and future – and other societal actors. This includes building analytical capacity for transitions.
- ♦ **Agenda-setting** includes broadening the discursive and actor network underpinning a common direction. It focuses on creating a shared sense of ownership and ambition for a sustainable future, thereby helping actors to integrate it with their own agendas and practices. This includes building networking capacity for transitions.
- ♦ **Activating** includes putting the shared direction into action through setting up projects and learning from them. Doing so sharpens the orientation and enhances action. This objective also includes building capacity for transitions.

- ◆ **Reflecting** includes fostering a culture of reflexivity and learning within the municipality and the city as a whole. It includes learning-by-doing and doing-by-learning, learning from others, and from one's own experiments. Each intervention includes monitoring & reflection.

Figure 2: The four types of interventions in transition management

The interventions are further elaborated in the next chapter.

These types of interventions are operationalized through a number of instruments. For example the *systems analysis* to explore the state of the city and its dynamics, and *transition experiments*, projects that take a societal challenge as a starting point to develop alternative practices at a feasible scale. Our main focus is on the *transition arena*, which includes all four types of interventions: orienting, agenda-setting, activating, and reflecting.

The transition arena is a temporary setting that provides an informal and well-structured space to a small group of change agents from diverse backgrounds (businesses, government, research institutes, NGOs, and citizens). The group engages in a series of meetings, jointly elaborates a transition challenge, drafts a long-term vision, and develops *transition pathways* to realize this vision. The transition arena gathers a group of ambassadors inspired to go beyond current interests and daily routines. Together, they develop a shared *transition agenda*, which provides a starting point for involving a wider group and instigating new activities, networks and collaborations.

Obviously, a transition management approach does not replace the need for other policy interventions. Any application of transition management is complementary to other governance activities. For example, the *system analysis* can be built on an existing CO_2 baseline study, and the transition agenda can inspire policy formulation.

"NOW THE CITY LOOKS TOTALLY DIFFERENT THAN IT DID 30 YEARS AGO. IN THE ENTIRE TRANSITION PROJECT THIS IS WHAT WE USE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT GHENT HAS BEEN THROUGH VARIOUS TRANSITIONS BUT IT NEEDS A NEW TRANSITION, WHICH WE ARE TRYING TO SPEED UP. WHETHER YOU ARE BIG OR SMALL, EVERYONE NEEDS TO FEEL PART OF THE LARGER WHOLE AND THAT THE LARGER WHOLE IS PROGRESSING."

City officer, Ghent

OUTCOMES OF A TRANSITION MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Implementing a transition management approach along the lines described in the core of this guidance manual, has the prospect of resulting in three key outcomes:

- A **sense of direction;** proposing a strategic future perspective which addresses the fundamental changes needed to reach a sustainable future;
- An **impulse for local change;** inspiring new and enhancing existing initiatives that contribute to the envisioned future;
- Collective **empowerment;** enabling actors in the city to tackle challenges and seize opportunities for a sustainable city.

While being subject to local ambitions and circumstances, these outcomes have been reached to a greater or lesser extent in all five MUSIC cities. As such, the implementation in the cities offers a glimpse on the potential of transition management when it comes to urban climate governance.

SENSE OF DIRECTION

A transition management process results in a sense of direction with regard to the fundamental changes needed to reach a sustainable future for a city. Throughout the process, a group of change agents questions and thereby challenges the status quo and proposes a strategic future perspective. Their insights and discussions are condensed in a transition narrative: (re-) structuring the problems and underlying challenges, the future vision, and possible pathways. Through thinking about transformative change, a sense of direction is built for the long term and opportunities are revealed for taking first steps on the short term.

"THE MOST STRIKING THING THAT I HAVE SEEN IN THE TRANSITION ARENAS IS THE RADICALISM OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ARENA. WHAT IS SAID IN THE ARENA IS GREAT BECAUSE IT REALLY QUESTIONS MANY THINGS."

Facilitator, Montreuil

In Ghent, for example, the transition narrative resonates with the city: a broader variety of actors relates their practices to the climate targets of the city, and takes a role in the transition (e.g. through spin-off activities). The narrative is not only instilling a sense of direction to actors in the city, but also within the city administration where it inspired policy plans from several departments, as well as the political agenda, contributing to the inclusion of extra climate budget and a new approach to participation.

The sense of direction is expressed in the transition narrative, but the process of creating this narrative is as important. It ideally constitutes a learning process for all involved, including the city officers. A transition team member in Montreuil, for example, expressed that "with the arena we worked on the agenda but at the same time we worked with the transition team to create space to reflect [...]". After the transition arena meetings, participants in the five MUSIC partner cities indicated that they had a better understanding of their city's complex societal context and of its ambition for a low-carbon future. Such an understanding is a pre-requisite, albeit not a sufficient one, for change.

IMPULSE FOR LOCAL CHANGE

The transition management process also instils an impulse for change on the short term. The strategic future perspective ideally encourages new initiatives and innovations, and serves as a lens to recognize and possibly re-orient existing initiatives to contribute to this future perspective. Infused by a sense of direction from the narrative, these activities are at the vanguard of a movement towards a low-carbon urban future.

Most city administrations are fully aware that they cannot achieve energy and emission reductions on their own. Ludwigsburg is one example. The administration is only responsible for 2% of the city's CO_2 emissions, and therefore seeks to mobilize other urban actors to achieve a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. As a city officer states: *"Our question is: how can we tackle the energy transition locally? Because one person or a government can never be as clever and creative and so incredibly involved as an entire population. If everyone contributes a little bit, the result is something truly amazing. To play a small part in that is what motivates me".*

The transition arena meetings resulted in spin-off activities in all cities, engaging a wider group of actors. These activities addressed themes ranging from education to transportation, from mobilization of consumers to valorisation of sewage water. They can be seen as 'seeds of change', in that they bear the potential to contribute to a desired future and allow a broader variety of actors to contribute to it. In addition to inspiring new activities, the cities put effort in celebrating and re-orienting existing initiatives and practices. The transition management process thus led to mobilizing and bundling the creative capacity in the cities.

"MOST VALUABLE WAS THE DYNAMIC ATMOSPHERE OF PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BE THE CHANGE"

City officer Ghent

EMPOWERMENT

The transition management process, as well as the resulting strategic future perspective, ideally enables all actors to more effectively foster a transition towards a sustainable future. The approach challenges what people think of as 'possible' or 'impossible', thereby empowering them to work on what they might have previous thought of as unattainable. The process also is a learning journey which creates room for city officers, citizens, businesses, institutions and other actors in the city to re-define and experiment with roles and learn new ways of relating to one another.

The current economic and political climate in European countries contributes to a re-orientation of local governments and their administrative bodies: what role should local government aspire to? One of the roles that city officers discover is enabling other actors to realize societal ambitions, such as the ambition for a low carbon future. As put by a ***transition team*** member in Aberdeen: *"[…] through the transition management process what we are really trying to infuse is a sense of responsibility and a sense of urgency amongst our population"*. Many of the ***arena participants*** in the five MUSIC partner cities indicated that the process strengthened their capacities and motivation to play a role in the transition to a low-carbon city. At the same time, the experience shows that city administrations need to play a continuing facilitation role.

Next to a changing relation between local government, administrative bodies and other actors in the city, a transition management process also leads to a rethinking of the ways of working within the city administration. The city officers who applied the approach recognized that they created space for new ways of working within their organizations. They succeeded, to different degrees, in opening up the administration for more co-creative and open-ended approaches.

APPLYING TRANSITION MANAGEMENT

THE PROCESS AT A GLANCE

THE PROCESS STRUCTURE and methods in this chapter provide guidance for implementing the transition management approach. It is not a universally applicable blueprint; it provides a structure, which needs to be adapted to the specific circumstances of and dynamics emerging throughout the process.
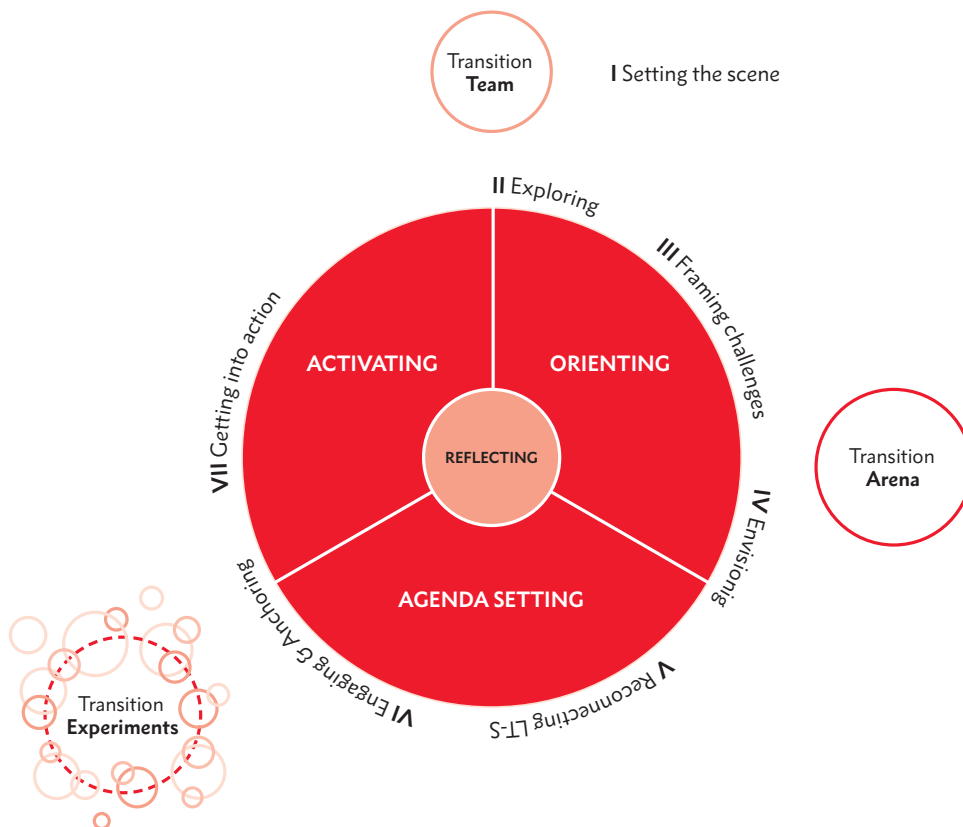
Figure 3: The transition management process structure, as introduced in the table on page 15

"WE SIMPLY BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER AND WE LET THEM TALK. WE OBVIOUSLY GUIDE THAT DISCUSSION BUT DON'T MAKE ANY ASSUMPTIONS FOR THEM. WE LET THEM COME FORWARD WITH THEIR OWN IDEAS. WE LET THEM ISOLATE THE PROBLEM FIRST, AND WE FIND THAT THAT MAKES THEM A LOT MORE PREDISPOSED TO COME UP WITH THE SCENARIOS AND SOLUTIONS TO THAT PROBLEM."

City officer, Aberdeen

The table below broadly outlines the process structure, distinguishing between seven (partly overlapping) phases that can guide the implementation of the process:

I. Setting the scene for transition management	A **transition team** is formed to drive the process and embed it in the local context.
II. Exploring local dynamics	The transition team starts to explore the city's dynamics, conducting interviews and doing desk research, and working towards a **system analysis** and **actor analysis**. Based on the actor analysis, a diverse group of change agents is invited to engage in a series of meetings as a **transition arena** group.
III. Framing the transition challenge	The change agents first explore the transition challenges and create a shared **problem framing**.
IV. Envisioning a sustainable city	Subsequently, they exchange and elaborate perspectives on a possible future, thereby creating **visionary images** for the future of the city.
V. Reconnecting long term & short term	As a final step in the transition arena setting, the change agents elaborate **transition pathways**, indicating fundamental changes and corresponding actions needed to reach the envisioned future. The ideas brought forward by the transition arena are summarized and published in a **transition agenda**.
VI. Engaging & anchoring	Actions are undertaken to make the transition agenda public and give others a chance to adopt and adapt it, and relate it to their own agenda and practices.
VII. Getting into action	**Transition experiments**, radical short-term actions in line with the transition agenda, are initiated or adapted. Through these actions, more actors become engaged. Insights from these experiments can be taken to a more strategic level.

The suggested sequence of phases helps to get a grip on the process, but it is not set in stone. For example, a city could also start fostering transition experiments to widen the range of alternative practices, and subsequently derive visionary images and transition pathways by reflecting on the larger meaning of these experiments.

The following sections elaborate on each phase, illustrating the process with experiences from the five European cities in the MUSIC project and discussing the challenges that these experiences brought to the fore.

I. SETTING THE SCENE FOR TRANSITION MANAGEMENT

WHAT

As the previous chapters made clear, the application of transition management is not 'just another project' – it is a reflexive process that challenges the municipality's way of working. Good preparation is therefore the key, as in any other project. This comes down to tailoring the approach to local priorities and opportunities, and creating conditions for its success.

The transition management process does not take place in a vacuum; it needs to be designed in relation to policy priorities, societal dynamics and local opportunities. The first step in tailoring the approach is specifying the issue it should address. For example, the issues in the MUSIC project ranged from becoming a climate-neutral city (Ghent) to the greening and densification of the inner city (Rotterdam). Another step is thinking about potential outcomes. For example, Ghent focused on empowerment to make other actors contribute to its low-carbon ambitions, while Rotterdam prioritized the creation of a guiding perspective to gain a better understanding of specific challenges and opportunities.

An important condition for success is clear coordination. This is achieved by setting up a core team (transition team) within the municipality. The team drafts a process plan and searches for appropriate resources (budget and time). It is also responsible for building support and personal commitment within the municipal organization. In doing so, the team further tailors the approach, contextualizing it with respect to on-going policy efforts. Of course, the activities of the transition team are not limited to this phase: the team is responsible for the organization of the full process.

WHY

This initial scoping and preparation phase is about creating a solid foundation for the transition management approach. This is essential, as the approach is open-ended and therefore often at odds with more traditional policy logic. By design, transition management neither assumes full control nor predetermines outcomes, though the demand for controllable steps and predictable outputs can put the process under pressure. The creation of mental and organizational space is therefore crucial in any application of the approach. This includes fostering trust to go beyond business-as-usual, and openness for reflection and learning.

A thorough preparation can also help to ensure support for the outputs of the process (future vision and experimental projects). Their potential impact will be strongly influenced by the support or opposition of policy officers throughout the municipality. From the outset, the transition team should make a broad set of internal connections. The process results can then be recognized and appreciated in all the relevant policy domains, without being perceived as infringing. Moreover, the team should cultivate the personal commitment and curiosity of fellow policy officers. Not only would they be more likely to contribute expertise and resources if engaged, they could also be inspired by and learn from this mode of interaction, which aims at playing into societal dynamics.

How did they do this in Ludwigsburg?

The city of Ludwigsburg was already quite active in organizing participatory processes for their sustainability-related policies. The ´setting the scene´ phase therefore concentrated on unravelling the differences and synergies that the different processes could bring. To take this on, the transition team consisted of two policy officers and a trainee from the department of sustainable urban development, the head of the department of civic engagement, a transitions expert, and an external facilitator.

They discussed the best way of tailoring the transition management approach to different audiences, both inside and outside the local government. In the end, the approach was embedded into an ongoing initiative focusing on a 'city development concept', which is accompanied by a participatory meeting every 3 years. Transition management was the selected approach to address the energy theme. It was framed as a process in which citizens and professionals could dig deeper into this subject than in earlier participatory processes. The transition team took time to reflect after each of the meetings, as well as during the half-yearly MUSIC partner meetings, in order to be able to adapt the process to the group dynamics and arising opportunities.

HOW

Transition team formation

In accordance with the process' focus and desired outputs, the initiating agency forms a transition team – the core group adapting and driving the transition management process. Ideally, the transition team consists of 3 to 5 employees from the initiating organization with a mix of strategic and content foci. External experts on a specific topic (e.g. energy policy experts), transition management experts, and/or a process facilitator can support them.

The transition team manages and facilitates the process, organizes its internal and external communications, and relates it to on-going (policy) processes. The team is also responsible for logistics, process facilitation, substantive input to transition arena meetings, and adapting the ***transition narrative*** encompassed in the agenda. All of these are demanding and time-consuming tasks. It is therefore important to clarify roles, responsibilities, and time investments early on. Moreover, as the process tasks are challenging, team members must be motivated and possess a good mix of competences (e.g. analytical, communication, networking and lobbying skills).

Process design

First, the transition team decides on the focus (issue and intended outcomes) of the process. It also aligns the approach to other activities and ambitions and to local context dynamics - adopting or rephrasing dominant discourses, as well as taking into consideration on-going challenges and debates. The team seeks to secure funding and support for the whole process or selected aspects thereof (e.g. analysis and problem structuring, envisioning and backcasting, engaging and anchoring).

The elaboration of a process plan helps to get a better grip on the innovative approach and maintain support within the organization. However, such process plan should be considered as work in progress; it should be adapted over the course of the process to such elements as new opportunities and arena group dynamics.

In drafting a process plan, the team could consider the following aspects:

- Issues and intended outcomes of the transition management process;
- Division of tasks and responsibilities within the transition team;
- Resources available for the process (time commitment, financial resources, etc.);
- Involvement of external parties and supporting policy actors;
- Relation to relevant ongoing and planned activities and processes (within the department, other departments and the city in general)
- Estimated intensity of the phases and their scheduling over time;
- How reflection is organized during the process (e.g. planning of reflection meetings, involvement of external experts, interviews with arena participants).

The process plan is a snapshot of expectations that helps to get a grip on the process. As the process both shapes and is shaped by its context, the planning will have to be adjusted to the 'flow' of the process. Moreover, specific aspects can only be elaborated in the course of time,

such as facilitation methods of the meetings, modes and extent of communication and support for resulting transition experiments. The strong role of context makes every application of the approach unique.

Internal networking
Networking with other policy actors (i.e. public administrators and officials) is needed, not only to create a positive attitude towards and support for the process, but also to find links to other policy initiatives. The transition team can also seek to gain the commitment of relevant peers who can contribute expertise, time, communication channels, and/or contacts. These efforts can be organized, for example, by discussing intermediate results - such as the systems analysis - at inter-departmental meetings, by identifying contact persons in each department, and by inviting a (limited) group of policy officers from other departments to the later arena meetings, as well as to other occasions.

CHALLENGES

1. *Balancing between internal support and sufficient flexibility*
   Gaining support within a city administration is a balancing act. On the one hand, transition management processes should ideally stay out of the spotlight until the transition agenda is consolidated (see phase V). Staying in the 'shadows' helps to keep the process lean and flexible, enabling participants to challenge the status quo and explore possibilities beyond current interdependencies and stakes. One the other hand, a certain level of commitment from the city administration is necessary for the allocation of time and internal support – a clear (but not rigid) process plan helps in this regard. A degree of visibility is also necessary for ideas to be taken up, and for support to emerge for follow-up actions. Selected policy officers could be invited from various departments to early-stage arena meetings for strategic exposure. These meetings are generally highly appreciated for being inspiring and thought-provoking. Extra effort should be made to safeguard the collaborative setting and open-mindedness of the arena group.

2. *Keeping the transition management process a catalyst for change*
   Linking the transition management process to existing projects can be a powerful strategic move for gathering acceptance and support, as well as for enriching existing projects. All cities from the MUSIC project did this, albeit to varying degrees. Merging the approach with on-going processes could, however, lead to the transition management process being 'snowed under'; the original focus could become sidetracked or deprioritized, in order to fit within other agendas. This was to some extent the case in Rotterdam: the process was downscaled to three focus group meetings contributing to the vision of a dense and green inner city. Although the resulting vision succeeded in putting the issue on the municipal agenda, the specific potentials of transition management were not deployed (e.g. reframing the situation from a systems perspective, building new networks and constellations).

3. *Creating mental and organizational space*
   The creation of mental and organizational space is crucial in the application of the transition management approach. Time should be explicitly reserved for learning and reflection, including within the city administration. In all MUSIC cities, this space was under constant pressure due to time constraints and the demand for controllable process steps. It was also restricted by the demand for predictable and visible outcomes; the effects of a transition management process are generally indirect and thus hard to attribute. Especially in Aberdeen and Ghent, the transition team struggled with limited recognition from the city administration during and directly after the arena meetings. As the effects became clearer over time, attitudes towards the process grew more positive. A policy officer concluded that the expectation of both the arena participants and the municipality should shift – about five years would be an ideal timeframe for assessing the arena results. The immediate effect is both intangible and indirect: the spin-off

activities and the changes to actors, policies and agendas are what make a difference. Although difficult to measure, these effects need to be monitored to account for the efforts and investments put into the process. Indicators other than basic quantitative ones should be used, alongside a preferably reflexive monitoring approach.

"TRANSITION MANAGEMENT HELPS TO GET CLIMATE NEUTRALITY ON THE AGENDA IN EVERY DEPARTMENT"

City officer Ghent

II. EXPLORING THE LOCAL DYNAMICS

WHAT

In addressing climate change, it is not only important to understand the policy context, but also the broader context of city dynamics. The local government is undoubtedly not the only actor concerned about the environment; other actors, such as associations, citizen groups and businesses are also active in making their surroundings more sustainable. This second phase is focused on exploring, pointing out and understanding broader urban dynamics.

"I WAS CONFRONTED WITH HOW LITTLE I ACTUALLY KNEW OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN MY CITY"

City officer, Ghent

This understanding is gained through two analytical methods: system and actor analysis. They aim at unravelling complexity, and enabling a co-creation process with participants from varied backgrounds. The transition team performs the former to acquire an integrated overview and understanding of the issues at hand, and the latter to map the actors relevant to them. Both are related: the systems analysis provides a starting point for exploring which actors are relevant to a specific issue, whereas the actor analysis indicates which actors could be interviewed to explore various perspectives as part of the system analysis.

WHY

Transition management provides policy officers with a framework for playing into local dynamics, learning from and connecting to actors and initiatives that (could) contribute to a sustainable future. However, to play into these dynamics, one first has to recognize them. This necessitates an outward orientation often found lacking in municipal organizations. Also, transition management aims at system change, while policy making is mostly about incremental change. Devising new ways of looking at challenges and dynamics is important, and the system and actors analyses provide for this.

The system analysis is performed to account for the complexity of the world we live in – insofar as possible. Gaining an understanding of the current situation supports work towards a more sustainable future: how do things influence another? How has the status quo evolved? The system analysis enables a systemic and systematic understanding of the present; it provides insight into long-term change dynamics and interactions between domains. The analysis distinguishes between symptoms and deeply rooted problems, shifting the focus from superficial solutions to systemic challenges and opportunities.

The system analysis is an important stepping-stone for the participatory framing of the transition challenge and the collective envisioning process in the later arena discussions. As it encourages a holistic and long-term perspective, it supports the transition team members and the change agents involved in looking beyond their own expertise, questioning their beliefs and values, making different perceptions explicit. Furthermore, the system analysis provides participants with a shared information base and understanding of their city.

Working on the actor analysis enables the transition team members to engage with change agents in their city, provides a structured overview of the actors related to the selected issue and to the selected objective. As such, it forms the basis for selecting participants for the arena group and for wider engagement in the later phases of the transition management approach. Group composition strongly determines the quality of the meetings' discussions and outcomes.

HOW

Systems analysis

The level of detail of the systems analysis depends on how it will be used by the transition team. At one extreme, it could be solely aimed at preparing a presentation for an informed kick-off arena meeting. At the other, it could be an elaborate baseline study taking into account in-depth knowledge and a wide range of perspectives. The specific objectives and context of the process determine the extent of the analysis, the choice of analytical techniques, and the type of reporting (ranging from a presentation to a formal policy document). Independent of the depth and breadth of the analysis, we recommend the following steps:

- Delineate the system boundaries in space, time and themes (e.g. CO_2 emissions from energy use and mobility in the wider city region, looking at the past 40 years).
- Structure the system by defining the relevant stocks covering the social, environmental and economic domains (e.g. labour force, air quality, housing). Define their characteristics and indicators, as well as their relationships.
- Collect data required to evaluate the state of the system. This involves qualitative and quantitative data from studies, policy documents and statistical databases. Personal interviews with potential candidates for the transition arena, experts and stakeholders bring diverse perspectives into the analysis. This step can be performed in conjunction with an actor analysis.
- Analyse the data. The transition team does this and, where appropriate, external advisors or colleagues from other departments can be involved through stakeholder meetings or expert sessions.

This analysis should lead to:

- An overview of the system and a detailed analysis of its state and characteristics, identifying the properties and elements of the system, as well as the links and interdependencies between them;
- An analysis of the history of the system, including historical evolution pathways and significant events. The past can help explain path dependencies and enable people to draw parallels with the present;
- The identification of problems from a system perspective. The understanding of the interdependencies between system elements or properties is particularly illuminating in this regard, since they often provide insight into causes and symptoms.

Actor analysis

There are a variety of methods and techniques available for performing the actor analysis. What is specific to the transition management approach is that actors are approached as individuals and not as representatives of their employer or association. The analysis also takes into account personal competencies and access to different forms of power. Methods may include desk research, interviews and (participative) analysis workshops.

The actor analysis includes three steps:

- First of all, an initial long list of actors is generated and a set of basic criteria is developed to assess their relevance. Persons are identified using suggestions from the transition team, input from the systems analysis, and the 'snowball-method': already-identified persons are asked to suggest others fitting the issue and objectives of the process.
- Second, after creating a list of candidates, those included are categorized and mapped. Mapping helps to determine different backgrounds, competencies, and interests. This step can also help to distinguish between different types of power: innovative power (the power of new ideas), transformative power (capacity to mobilize others for change), and reinforcive power (position within the dominant hierarchy). It is also important at this stage to (re-) consider who and what perspectives might be missing.

- Based on this categorization and mapping, the third step is to select persons either for the arena group or for later engagement.

The main result of this analysis is a short list of appropriate actors for the transition arena, which the transition team takes as a basis for inviting arena participants (see 'Intermezzo: the transition arena'). Additional participants can still be invited to the arena group later on, though this should not disrupt the group's dynamics.

How did they do this in Ghent?

The first four months of the transition management process in Ghent were dedicated to data gathering, interviews, system definition and data structuring. A systems analysis was conducted in considerable detail, taking into account a broad range of sources and making use of several techniques, such as an assessment of social, ecological and economic aspects, a historical sketch and a trend analysis. The analysis identified problem areas and city trumps that could be used for future scenarios, and highlighted interlinkages between environmental, economic and social themes.

Preliminary findings from the interviews and desk research were consolidated in the form of a slideshow and presented at an expert meeting and at the first arena meeting. The discussions were incorporated in an updated version of the analysis. The systems analysis and subsequent discussions contributed to a broadening of the problem perception from a focus on climate and energy towards a more holistic view. Additionally, the sketch of the city's historical developments created the feeling that change is possible.

In parallel, an actor analysis was performed to identify interviewees for the systems analysis and potential participants for the climate arena. From the interviewees, a core arena group of seventeen members was selected. People concerned with the future of their city, who either held innovative ideas or were open to innovative ideas and could reinforce these, were selected, with a wide variety in terms of age, gender and backgrounds. The selection included for example a social youth worker, an environmental scientist, a nature conservation NGO member, actors from the cultural sector, students and staff members from Ghent University, local entrepreneurs, and a harbour administrator.

CHALLENGES

1. *Looking beyond institutional perspectives*
   The success of a transition management process is largely determined by the quality of its feel for system dynamics and the actors in the city. Transition team members must therefore let go of their often-unconscious institutional perspectives. They must also question their assumptions and practices, by no means a simple task. In the partner cities of the MUSIC project, the transition teams were often positively surprised by insights from the interviews with diverse actors in their city; it nevertheless took them courage to embrace a learning mind-set and open to other perspectives.

2. *Selective involvement of change agents*
   Most policy officers are used to work with stakeholders in decision-making processes. Transition management does not seek to involve stakeholders or to represent a given population; it focuses on selecting change agents. However, any concept of selective involvement comes with tensions. For example, doubts can surface regarding democratic legitimacy. Making clear that transition management is not a decision-making process can assuage these: it creates a setting for mutual inspiration among societal actors, in which new ideas, connections, and actions can emerge.

There might also be pressure from municipal colleagues or politicians to include or exclude certain individuals. Criteria should therefore be defined upfront, so that the final selection of participants can be explained. Assembling a diversity of backgrounds is the key here (sector, domain, age, gender, etc.). Finally, there might be a call to involve 'powerful' actors (particularly with financial resources and decision-making authority) instead of change agents, as they are assumed to have a greater overall impact. However, the transition management process aims at pushing the limits of what is considered 'possible' or 'impossible', and the inclusion of 'powerful' actors could easily imperil the quality of the arena output by preventing it from overcoming business-as-usual.

Intermezzo: the transition arena

A key instrument of the transition management approach is the transition arena: a setting in which different perspectives, expectations and agendas are confronted and discussed, and synergies are identified. The arena is of a temporary character and consists of a series of meetings, in which a small but diverse group of change agents engage in critical reflection and envisioning. These meetings provide an informal yet well-structured 'safe' space, sheltered from vested interests and daily routines. The transition arena is as such a multi-actor governance instrument, which is intended to tap into the transformative capacity of change agents and create future-oriented networks.

Thus, after the first two phases of a transition management process, a group of change agents is selected to take part in the arena meetings. Over the subsequent phases, the arena group structures the transition challenge (phase III), drafts visionary images (phase IV), and develops transition pathways and a transition agenda (phase V). This process is intended to give rise to a group of ambassadors capable of linking emerging ideas to their everyday practice, and of drawing on and engaging their social networks. These meetings should provide concrete guidance for the development of strategies to transform existing structures, cultures, and practices, while also leading to new projects, collaborations, and experiments.

But who are the arena participants? The group consists of about 10-15 change agents who are selected and invited by the transition team on the basis of the systems and actor analyses. They are not approached as stakeholders, but as individuals willing to go beyond business-as-usual and envision or practice alternatives to the status quo. A further requirement is that individuals should be both intrinsically connected to the issue at hand and be open to other perspectives. Moreover, the key for a fruitful arena is diversity. The group should therefore consist of people from varied backgrounds (e.g. businesses, government, research institutes, citizens), domains (e.g. energy, culture, education, mobility, youth work, industry), and with various competencies (e.g. leadership, creativity, analytical skills, coalition-building skills).

III. FRAMING THE TRANSITION CHALLENGE

WHAT

How climate change and other environmental challenges are addressed is strongly connected to how they are perceived and framed. This phase is about creating a shared understanding of the underlying problems and the transition challenges. The first transition arena meetings take the system analysis as a starting point for discussing the issues at hand.

Based on the discussions, the analysis can be further enriched and improved. More importantly, the discussions lead to a shared understanding of the issue and a collective framing of the transition challenge. This is the starting point for the subsequent envisioning exercise by the arena group.

"THE SYSTEMS ANALYSIS WAS IMPORTANT TO LIFT THE LEVEL OF THE ARENA DISCUSSIONS"

City officer, Ghent

WHY

In the first transition arena meetings, participants become acquainted with each other's perspectives and values. This enables them to exchange and expand their knowledge and experience. They learn to think in terms of long-term change dynamics and interaction between multiple domains. This helps to leave institutional perspectives behind. A shared problem perception can create a sense of urgency and commitment, both individually and as a group.

The resulting framing of the transition challenges is equally relevant outside the arena group: a clear framing allows for a better positioning of the process and more precise choices in the subsequent steps. Moreover, it can already be used to shape the debate in the city.

"FRAMING THE CHALLENGES ALLOWED US TO REMOVE THE INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF LOOKING AT THINGS"

City officer, Montreuil

HOW

One or more meetings are dedicated to the framing of the transition challenge. The transition team starts with a short and inspiring presentation of the systems analysis. Framing the selected issue and related problems in a thought-provoking way, this presentation triggers in-depth discussions evolving around questions like: What are the most significant barriers to CO_2-reduction and why do they persist? How is lifestyle related to mobility use? What are the trends in attitude towards energy within the building sector? What are strengths of the city that should be sustained? At the start the discussion is exploratory, divergent and open. Later, ideas need to converge again in order to draw conclusions for the systems analysis and to formulate the core challenges: what should fundamentally change in order to address the issue (in the case of MUSIC: to become a low-carbon city)?

The discussion can be supported by a number of techniques. These can, for example, include the introduction of radical perspectives from external actors, excursions to support a reframing

of the challenges, visual representation of data using GIS tools, or interactive exercises using participative modelling techniques. If the discussion is spread over multiple meetings, the transition team can use the insights from each one to further elaborate the system analysis, presenting it again at the next gathering. The work of the transition team should reflect the arena's discussions and lead to the proposal of a shared transition challenge, which is validated by the participants.

"IN ORDER TO SOLVE A PROBLEM YOU HAVE TO BE PART OF THE PROBLEM DEFINITION, AND I THINK THAT WAS DONE QUITE WELL"

Arena participant, Aberdeen

Many ideas for solutions are likely to come up during these discussions (for example, what actions are or should be possible?). These can be collected in an 'idea book' to maintain the focus of this phase on challenges and problem definitions.

CHALLENGES

1. *Facing problems*
   Whether it is in Germany, Belgium or the UK, people do not like to talk about problems. They would rather start taking action. Furthermore, when talking about problems, people tend to easily get offended or defensive or even apologetic, often feeling that by revealing the true dimension of problems they 'lose face' in front of their peers or community. It is also an institutional reflex to start processes from clearly demarcated and defined problems. Transition management, on the other hand, starts by questioning the assumptions and problem perceptions of the actors involved. The challenge is to make the participants accept that time and effort are required, and to guide the process in a fruitful way through appropriate facilitation techniques. The transition team should not hesitate to clearly depict the fundamental problems, and make the arena group confront them.

2. *Balancing between following group process and maintaining initial focus*
   The transition team can introduce the framing of challenges via their findings from the system analysis (see phase II). However, there is a risk of overdoing this preparatory work. While focused input is important, it is essential to remain open to the ideas emerging from the discussions. Sometimes, this will even allow the participants to reframe the focus of the process.

How did they do this in Montreuil?

In the previous phase, the transition team had formulated a systems analysis, fuelled by a few intensive brainstorming sessions and some 40 interviews with change agents. This analysis resulted in the broadening of the original focus on climate mitigation and covered the following topics: local economy, 'green city', conviviality and participation, soft and peaceful mobility, mixed use development, diversity and social cohesion.

During the first transition arena meeting, the extensive analysis by the Montreuil transition team was supported and well received by the 25 participating change agents – the meeting paved the way for continuing the transition management process in Montreuil. In the second arena meeting, a dedicated workshop method allowed the participants to be more intensively involved as analysts and redefine parts of the analysis. This resulted in a reformulation of the challenges. For instance, with respect to the "local economy", the transition team had proposed the challenge "how can we develop 'green' economic activities?", this became "how can we relocate the economy and reinforce food self-sufficiency?" and "is the city the appropriate scale–level to talk about the local economy?". Outcomes from this and the next meeting were collected and fed back to the arena participants in an elaborately designed overview of the transition analysis, and formed a common reference for the arena participants in the further process.
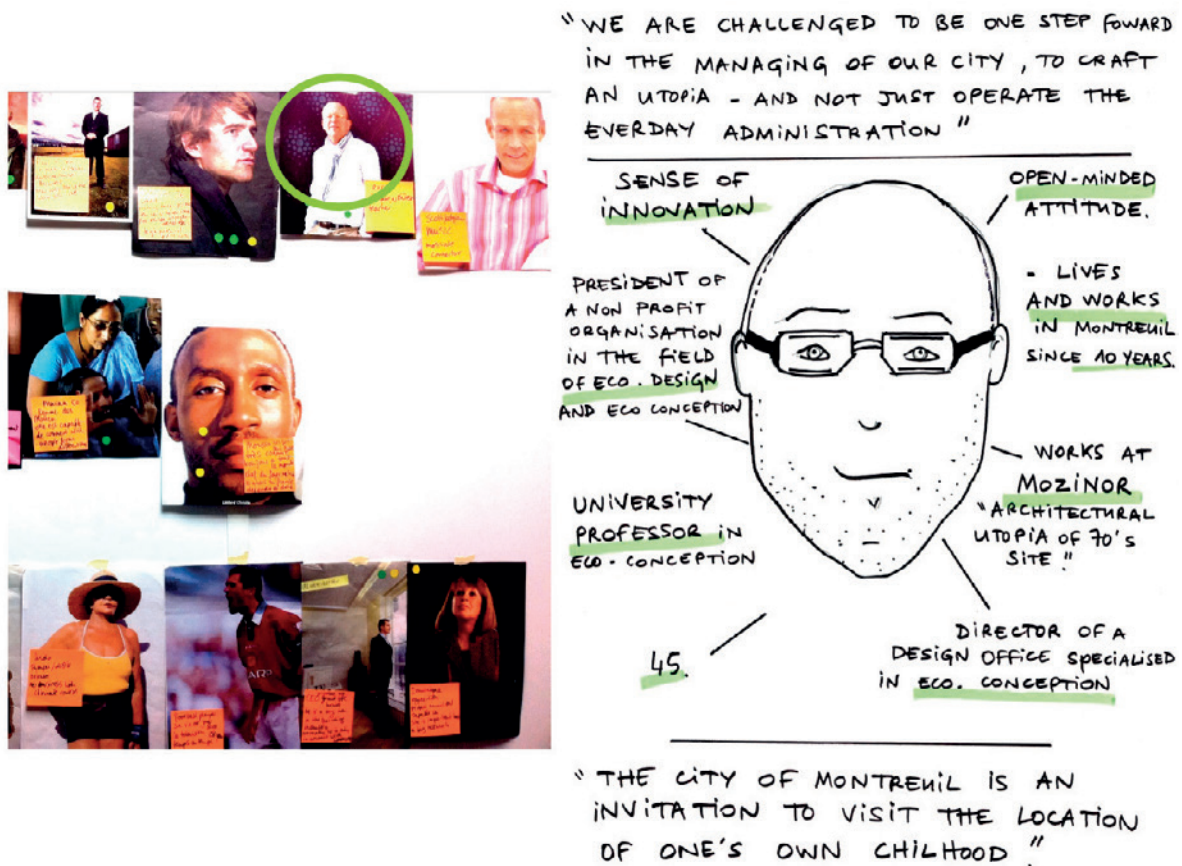

Figure 4: An illustration used in a creative exercise as part of the actor analysis

IV. ENVISIONING A SUSTAINABLE CITY

WHAT

Although it is easy to talk about a sustainable or low-carbon city, it is hard to imagine what this actually *means*. This phase focuses on the exchange of perspectives on possible futures, and the creation of a shared future perspective. Through a series of transition arena meetings, participants are encouraged to think in new and creative ways in order to envision a sustainable future for their city. Visionary images emerge from the arena discussions: these are guiding ideas for the future, which can be combined in a vision – a coherent storyline that sketches a future perspective.

WHY

The long-term vision is an anchor point for strategies and short-term actions, which are formulated in later phases. It creates insight into what a sustainable future can entail. As such, the vision can be used to guide actions and communicate with a broader audience.

However, the envisioning process is as important as the vision itself. It allows the participants to get out of the 'dictatorship of the present', encouraging them to develop and exchange perspectives on the future. Following this process, the arena group can establish a common language and sense of direction. At the individual level, the actors gain a sense of opportunity, as they imagine themselves playing an active role in the envisioned future.

"NOT EVERYONE IS HOT FOR SUSTAINABILITY. WHAT DOES INSPIRE PEOPLE IS WORK, INCOME, ECO-FRIENDLINESS, OR THAT THEIR KIDS CAN GO TO SCHOOL SAFELY"

City officer, Rotterdam

HOW

Envisioning follows four participatory steps, which, while not necessarily sequential, take place over two or more arena meetings:

- **Exchanging perspectives on the future:** The goal of this step is divergence through the collection of multiple ideas for the future of the city. On the basis of this, more specific images can emerge. A range of inputs can be used for this step, including presentations by participants and external guests, (internet) movies, collages or posters, reflection on existing visions, and insights from the systems analysis.
- **Formulating guiding sustainability principles:** Key guiding sustainability principles are formulated by reflecting, in plenum or smaller groups, on selected challenges (phase III) and ideas for the future. These are the underlying principles of the future vision, for example "local companies delivering societal return to the city and its citizens" or "complete independency from fossil fuels".
- **Creating visionary images:** In this step, the guiding sustainability principles are enriched and animated by visionary images. These are created through a discussion guided by open and reflective questions – for example: what does closing material loops mean for Ghent? What does an Aberdeen optimized for walking and cycling look like? Which surfaces (roofs, roads, etc.) can be utilized for an energy-autonomous Rotterdam? How do people live in an energy-neutral neighbourhood?
- **Elaborating the vision:** This step seeks to bring together the divergent ideas that have emerged from the discussions. The arena group critically assesses the visionary images

('Is this a future we want to attain?', 'Who would (not) profit from this development?') and discusses synergy between the ideas. The future vision is compiled by combining visionary images into a coherent storyline, which is based on the guiding sustainability principles.

Facilitation as well as the process setting is important to enable an open atmosphere and positive group energy. An inspiring process setting can be achieved by holding the meetings in different places, thereby physically exploring the challenges and opportunities of the city.

Between arena meetings the transition team processes ideas and inputs. Each meeting could start with a presentation that builds on the work of earlier meetings by structuring, recapitulating and enriching it. In parallel to the discussions, the transition team records the ideas in a vision document, possibly supported by a motivated arena subgroup or an external party that can contribute a visualization. The transition team, together with the arena group, can decide to publish this vision in an attractive manner as an output of this phase; they can also wait until the end of next phase when it will become part of the broader transition agenda (see phase V).

CHALLENGES

1. *Daring to dive into the future*
   How to think beyond the thinkable? Our thinking always starts from our current frames of thought, so an envisioned future inevitably seems based on them. People are also often averse to future-thinking: "but... that's impossible!" and "it has to be realistic!" are common exclamations. In the arena groups of the MUSIC partner cities, it was both challenging and inspiring to get the arena group in a future-oriented mode. To enable thinking beyond what is possible nowadays, it was useful to make the group think back 30 years and realize how much had changed fundamentally. Moreover, it was helpful to have an illustrator support the discussions with sketches of a high imaginative appeal.

2. *Creating a meaningful vision*
   Envisioning discussions are a great opportunity to get different and possibly conflicting perspectives on the future out in the open. Just as with problem structuring, it is a challenge to let go of institutional perspectives. It would be an escape to search for consensus without going into conflicting ideas: the resulting vision would be little more than an amalgamation of hollow and popular phrases, hardly something visionary. The discussions should therefore lead to visionary images that are conceptually rich enough to be meaningful. They do not, however, need to be fully elaborated; they are not intended to predict the future. Rather, they should provide a sense of direction, as well as the aspiration to get there.

3. *Dealing with multiple paces*
   This phase requires finding a balance between 'determining a direction' and 'moving forward': while some participants request more time for the elaboration of the vision and transition pathways, others want to get to concrete results more quickly. Rushing does not allow time for explicitly elaborating the problem framing and visionary images. This is indispensable to give initiatives a direction and instigate debate. Moreover, an overly rushed process can make participants lose their sense of ownership. By contrast, the process needs to remain up to speed to maintain enthusiasm, create momentum and seize opportunities. Working with subgroups and/or being more flexible in the phases is a way to balance the two.

How did they do this in Aberdeen?

In the city of Aberdeen, the arena group identified two time horizons that related to the vision and possible transition pathways: 2030 as a target to have an urgency of doing things that can be done (feasible options); 2050 as a target to think in this process so as to be prepared for the era when the oil industry will have left Aberdeen. The group agreed on five guiding principles: Aberdeen as an opportunity city; Aberdeen as an attractive city to visit and live in; Aberdeen as a learning city; Aberdeen as an accessible city; Aberdeen as an energy efficient and resilient city. For each guiding principle, a vision image was created from a synthesis of statements, ideas and arguments from the arena group, which together embody a vision that describes the practices, lifestyle and features of a sustainable Aberdeen in 2050.
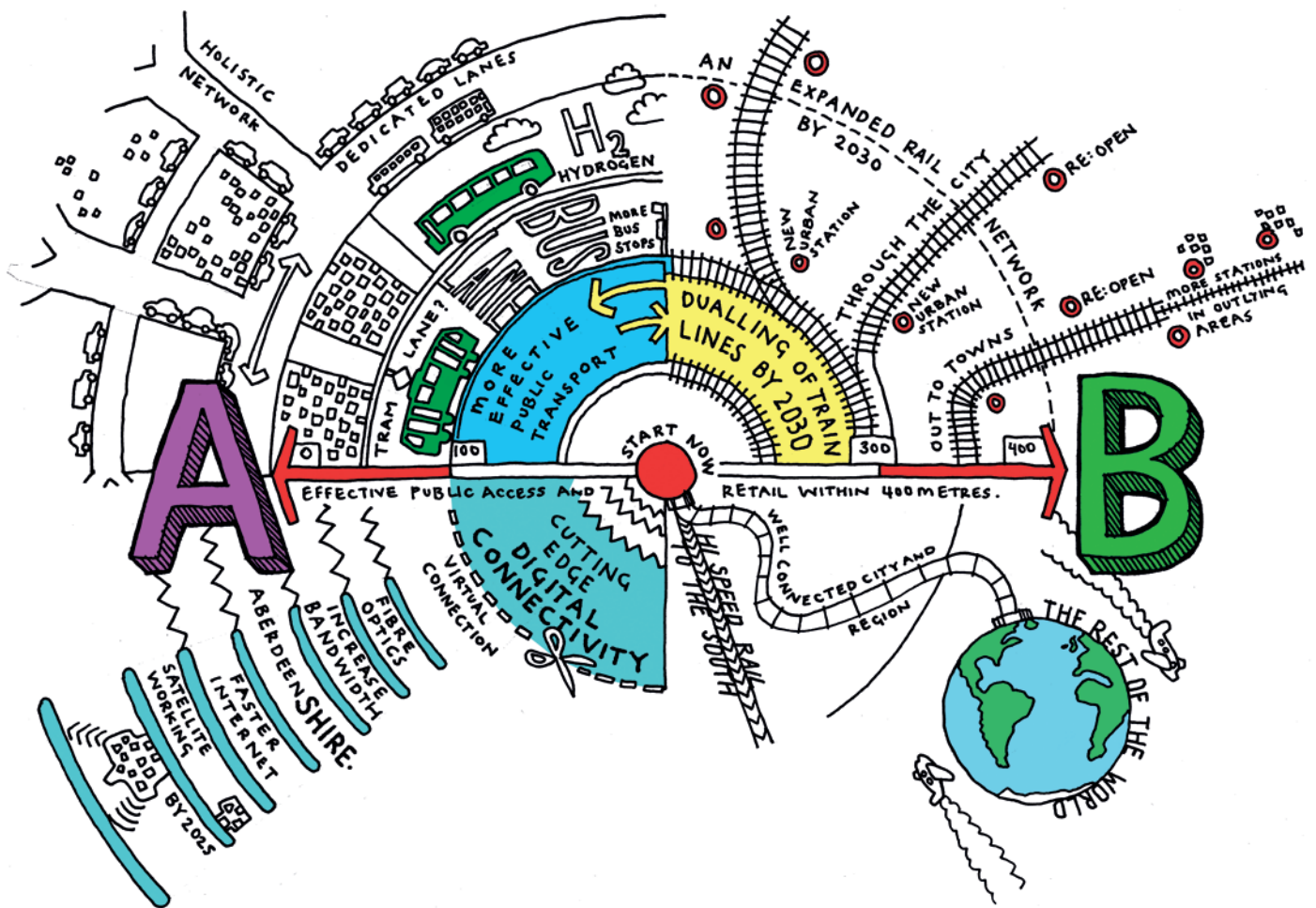

Figure 5: Visualization created during the envisioning and backcasting sessions in Aberdeen

V. RECONNECTING LONG TERM & SHORT TERM

WHAT

This phase is about bridging the vision of the future (drafted in the previous phase) with the present. In the MUSIC cities, this was a crucial step to come down from being 'in the clouds' – thinking about a low-carbon future – and connect to more tangible and concrete ideas of how to reach this future.

Several transition pathways are developed, each describing a possible route from the present towards the envisioned future, for example: "from an oil-dependent economy to a diverse economy with a diversity of employment" (Aberdeen) and "consumer pushes the market" (Ghent). These are neither fixed plans nor detailed scenarios, but inspiring storylines that include goals and action ideas for the short, mid and long term. The transition pathways provide insight into what is needed to reach the envisioned future. After the arena group has defined, prioritized and elaborated a set of transition pathways, working groups can be set up to further operationalize some of the action-ideas defined for the short term.

At the end of this phase, a transition agenda can be consolidated. This is a document summarizing the pathways and action ideas, as well as the change topics and visionary images developed in the transition arena meetings.

WHY

While the envisioning exercise enables the imagining of a sustainable future, the **backcasting** exercise helps the arena participants to imagine the achievability of such a future, and how. The individual participants can discern opportunities for themselves and their networks to contribute to reaching the desired future. The transition agenda thus serves as a compass for future strategies and actions. If clearly consolidated, it can also become an instrument for further engagement, as it allows actors to relate their own strategies and initiatives to this agenda.

Through the development of pathways and action ideas, interests, motives, resources and strategies come out into the open, enabling the alignment of individual plans and strategies. The participants also become aware of possible drivers and barriers, and start looking differently at existing initiatives and developments, giving them new meanings in the context of the pathways.

Finally, this phase is important for increasing both group and personal commitment, as the participants are asked to endorse the transition agenda.

"YOU SEE ALL THESE NICE PEOPLE WHO DO THAT AS WELL, SO IT STIMULATES YOU TO ALSO GO A STEP FURTHER."

Participant, Ghent

HOW

Backcasting
In order to develop the transition pathways, one or more transition arena meetings are devoted to backcasting. This is a method to collectively create pathways to an envisioned future, taking the future as starting point and going step-by-step back in time. Starting from the envisioned future is essential to formulate future-oriented strategies that go beyond business-as-usual-solutions and are not constrained by vested interests.

The first step in the backcasting meetings is to identify a range of transition pathways, for example, by asking the participants to formulate fundamental changes in a "from – to" format (e.g. "from possessing to using" or "from centralized to decentralized energy production") and clustering these in a group discussion.

After the pathways have been identified, the arena group prioritizes the transition pathways, for example, by discussing the ones they consider as most important and personally motivating. The pathways (or a selection thereof) can be further elaborated within the arena group or its subgroups, as long as the full group verifies the results. Typical questions for the elaboration of pathways are:

- What changes were needed to bring about the vision? (*e.g. What has become normal in 2050 that was exceptional in 2010, and vice versa? What changed fundamentally in institutions, habits, techniques, infrastructures…?*)
- What were milestones (ca. 3) starting from 2050 (e.g. in 2030, 2018, …)?
- What corresponding interventions and actions were needed?
- What drivers and stepping-stones have been supportive for realizing these changes, and what barriers have been encountered?
- Which actors were important for reaching these milestones?

Identifying short-term actions

As a next step, the arena group identifies short-term actions in line with these transition pathways. Generally speaking, we distinguish between transition experiments and other spin-off activities. Transition management specifically aims at transition experiments, i.e. initiatives to explore and learn about the shifts in structures, cultures and practices as depicted in the transition pathways (also see boxed text). Next to these, other spin-off activities can be defined. These might be of a less radical or explorative nature but are equally helpful in pushing the transition agenda forward. The ideas for initiatives that have come up in previous phases also serve as input here.

Developing transition experiments is a balancing act between radicality and feasibility. The projects should be 'business as *un*usual' and challenging the status quo, and at the same time viable and visible. A creative setting is needed to define and develop a first broad set of transition experiments – possibly involving a wider group of actors. Afterwards, these are prioritized by the arena group on the basis of criteria such as:

- Radicality (Is this fundamentally different from dominant practices?)
- Content (Does it indeed address a societal challenge depicted in the transition pathways?)
- Feasibility (Is it possible to realize this project on the short term; by ourselves or by engaging others)
- Strategic value (Can we learn from this project about reaching the envisioned fundamental changes?)
- Communication / mobilization value (Does it have a WOW-effect; will people relate to this?)

Additional arena meetings or subgroup meetings, possibly involving a broader group of people, can be dedicated to a further operationalization of the portfolio of short-term actions (as is further taken up in phase VII, getting into action). At this time, the arena group can also specify which individuals and organizations should further become engaged, as well as identify potential links to relevant ongoing initiatives and developments (in preparation of phase VI, engaging and anchoring).

Intermezzo: transition experiments

Transition experiments, sometimes also dubbed iconic projects or breakthrough actions, are short-term actions through which alternative structures, cultures, and practices are explored. A transition experiment is therefore both a goal in itself and an instrument to explore and learn about radically different ways of meeting societal needs – now and in the future. What differentiates these from other innovation projects is that they take societal challenges rather than specific innovation (i.e. a solution) as a starting point.

A good example is the 'living street' (leefstraat) project that emerged from the mobility arena in Ghent (see also page 32). Similar to other cities, the issue of mobility evokes an extremely polarized social debate, especially regarding limiting the use of cars in the city. The change agents in Ghent took a different perspective and saw sustainable mobility as a driver for future developments towards a sustainable city. Their strategy calls for a few years of experimentation, through which support can be created for the tough decisions needed to foster sustainable mobility in Ghent.

The temporary 'living street' is one of these experiments. The transition agenda included the visionary image of streets for people instead of cars. The working group translated their future vision into a feasible project by making it an event. They invited local residents to temporary (a month or more) use their streets to live, meet and play in (and close them off for cars), in order to see how that feels and how it can be organized. In the same month, residents were also provided with access to other mobility options.

During the first year, two streets participated in the project and became car-free for a month. This opened the discussion about the future of mobility in Ghent, both among residents and in the media, and about the possibility of this 'impossible' choice. Many lessons could also be drawn from the experiment: ranging from institutional aspects such as limits of the current safety legislation to cultural aspects such as the motivations behind (not) choosing to become a car-free street. The project continues: the number of participating streets is increasing (this year 10 streets are partaking) and at the same time the project team propagates the concept to influence the thinking of policy makers and mobility experts.

Consolidating the transition agenda

The results of the process up to now are consolidated in a transition agenda, which summarizes the transition challenge, visionary images, pathways and short-term actions. The transition agenda can take many forms: a booklet, magazine, website, movie, set of postcards, etc. The arena participants explicitly commit by listing their names as co-authors. The transition agenda – however elaborated and full of good ideas – remains a temporary snapshot; it can always be rewritten, revised and improved. It encompasses a strategic perspective – a transition narrative – that can be used as an anchor point for new initiatives and policy and as a means of attracting the engagement of others, as described in the following chapters.

CHALLENGES

1. ***Continuing to challenge business-as-usual***
   In shifting the focus to the present, the arena group painfully experiences the discrepancy between the desired future and the current reality. This can be disempowering: "is what we discuss here really possible?". There might be the tendency to decrease the level of ambitions and radicality of the transition agenda and the proposed experiments. This would make them lose their (potentially) symbolic meaning. Discussing the meaning and lessons from the experiments in the context of the transition agenda keeps the vision behind the experiments sharp and is a reminder to not fall back into

business-as-usual. Another precondition for overcoming this issue lies already in the earlier phases: the process should leave sufficient time to allow the arena participants to explicitly consolidate the problem framing, vision, pathways and action ideas, which after publication serve as a common ground.

2. *Avoiding the pitfall of blueprint thinking*
   The agenda is not a blueprint, however it is often perceived as such. Thinking about the future is not an end (to predict the future), but a means (to influence the future). It is about sketching the contours of possible futures and getting a grip on change through the transition pathways. Examples from other cities can demonstrate to the arena group that backcasting opens up opportunities and agendas for the short term, along with concrete strategies, interventions, and the conditions (social, legal, financial, institutional) that are required to realize them.

3. *Whose agenda is it?*
   Due to the informal nature of the transition arena setting, questions that surely arise are: "whose agenda is this?" and "who are we to draft an agenda for the city?" The city administration can be hesitant to publish an agenda with ideas that go beyond what is deemed possible (instead of seeing it as the agenda by the arena group). The arena group can doubt whether they can realize the agenda (instead of seeing it as a means to influence the agenda of others). Or, on the other hand, the group can make it a wishlist directed at other actors, such as the local government (instead of seeing their own role as well). All in all, it is an agenda for the city, drafted by this temporary group of change agents. A clear framing resolves misconceptions: the transition agenda is not mandatory; it has to deserve its influence by the strength of the ideas included. This also means that the arena group should accept that the agenda will not be 'implemented', but reshaped and adopted in bits and pieces.

How did they do this in Ludwigsburg?

The arena group in Ludwigsburg had developed an inspiring vision of "One day in the life of Ludwig and Ludwiga in 2050", which was accompanied by a more descriptive vision along visionary images, such as mobility and green spaces. Through an extensive backcasting exercise the arena group translated their vision back to the current situation. In three plenary meetings plus two extra meetings in small groups, they elaborated 21 action fields (their term for pathways) in terms of milestones (in 2035, 2025 and 2015) and identified key actors.

Three broadening events took place where the vision and the resulting agenda were presented to other city actors. During these meetings, the transition pathways were further discussed and operationalized. The aim was to reach out and involve new actors, making them link this transition agenda to their own agendas.

Figure 6: The output from a backcasting session in Ludwigsburg

Figure 7: One of the streets taking part in the "living street" experiment in Ghent

VI. ENGAGING & ANCHORING

WHAT

Once the transition agenda is consolidated, it is time to leave behind the protected setting of the transition arena and engage with the wider world. The transition agenda provides a starting point for a wider group of people, organizations, and initiatives to adopt ambitions for a sustainable future, and relate this to their own agendas and practices. A first step in this direction could be a kick-off event, where the arena participants present the transition agenda to the members of their networks.

The goal is to have a lasting impact, though this does not automatically imply that the transition arena group has to stay intact or that its meetings need to continue. Activities are undertaken to strengthen initiatives that contribute to the sketched guiding perspective and to challenge actors to play their part in the transition dynamics. Arena participants and others may put the agenda into practice or adopt and adapt it, for example, in the form of spin-offs. These can emerge spontaneously from the ideas, networks, and energy that the arena has cultivated.

We distinguish between four clusters of activities: organizing networking events, seeking publicity, plugging the transition agenda into other processes, and further 'transitioning' the municipal organization. In parallel, the identified transition experiments can be taken up (see phase VII). The exact nature of these activities very much depends on the local context and the dynamics of the process: they often already start during the arena trajectory.

WHY

The transition management approach seeks to influence and accelerate societal change towards more sustainable pathways. Having a limited number of participants in a transition arena is necessary for building upon each other's perspectives and going beyond business-as-usual. The engagement of a growing network is needed to increase the impact of the arena results and unleash the potential of others to contribute to the city's sustainable future. The transition arena provides a temporary innovation impulse. The aim is now to keep up the momentum, by continuing to make space for emerging paradigms and practices, while exploring new roles and relationships.

Engaging more and more actors can lead to a critical mass for 'mainstreaming' sustainability. Another approach is to change framework conditions. A transition agenda reveals the need for transforming specific aspects of existing structures, cultures, and practices. These can be put into action by making insights explicit and placing them on the agenda of organizations capable of influence. For example, banks can alter financing routines, or previously uninvolved policy officers can adjust existing regulations.

Finally, the transition agenda will not be relevant if the ones involved keep it on their own turf. It comes alive through links to ongoing developments. When pursuing this agenda, it is essential to engage with different actors in other fields, and networks for its adoption, adaptation, and further development.

HOW

Establishing a coordinating role
Ideally, a coordinator or a (new) coordinating team emerges as a driving force, pursuing the transition agenda, facilitating and expanding the network of engaged actors, and organizing space for reflection and inspiration. The municipality, arena participants, or other actors can take up this supporting role. They will work together with the arena participants, additional actors that become involved, and a wider network of policy officers.

Organizing networking events

Networking events can mobilize actors to contribute to the transition agenda and "keep the fire burning", e.g.:

- Organizing networking events to **celebrate successes**. For example, the organization of a networking event (or 'headhunting' event) directly after the formulation of the agenda, as a means of launching the arena results. Attendees are encouraged to join the working groups and adopt specific parts of the transition agenda. Events related to the transition experiments (phase VII) are another great opportunity to engage more actors by communicating about future sustainability.
- Organizing events to **reveal and support promising ideas and initiatives**. For example, low-profile meetings in the form of climate cafés or mobility cafés can provide an impulse for new connections and ideas. Crowdsourcing events offer a more structured format. Here, initiatives or project ideas are showcased, and the audience is given the opportunity to contribute inspiration, expertise, resources, and networks. Next to events, other ways to reveal and support promising ideas include organizing a competition, hiring idea scouts or setting up a project development agency.
- Taking the stage at **existing events** to present, discuss, and further develop the transition agenda with different audiences.

Seeking publicity

Seeking publicity can also help to reach and involve a larger audience, for example by:

- Organizing media attention to promote the transition agenda and the working groups;
- Providing the arena and the working group participants with promotional materials – such as magazines or digital postcards – to support them in spreading the ideas from the transition agenda in their networks;
- Connecting to people, organizations, venues, or events that have a high impact factor, but do not (yet) have anything to do with sustainability, thereby making them ambassadors.

Plugging the agenda

Businesses, organizations, and individuals can be encouraged to identify and develop their role in the transition agenda and/or broader sustainability ambitions for the city, making them adapt their own initiatives and strategies. They can be specifically targeted by, for instance:

- Setting up an ambitious **convention** that can be signed by companies and other organizations, promising to contribute to the sustainable future of the city (a 'memorandum of action');
- Forming a **climate network**, providing an online or offline platform for the actions of all kinds of organizations;
- Organizing **backcasting sessions** with key stakeholders, exploring how they can link their strategies to the envisioned future, and inviting them to take part in furthering the transition agenda.
- Start issue-specific **working groups** to further elaborate transition pathways and initiatives, as a means of involving actors who would otherwise not be compelled by the broader issue of climate neutrality.

Likewise, the municipality can also be challenged to further adapt its policy making and initiatives in response to the transition agenda:

- **Involving** policy officers from relevant departments **in the working groups**;
- **Creating forums for policy officers** to present and discuss the transition agenda and the working groups. These events can range from 'lunch & learn' style meetings to internal working groups.

ROTTERDAM – PEOPLE MAKE THE INNER CITY

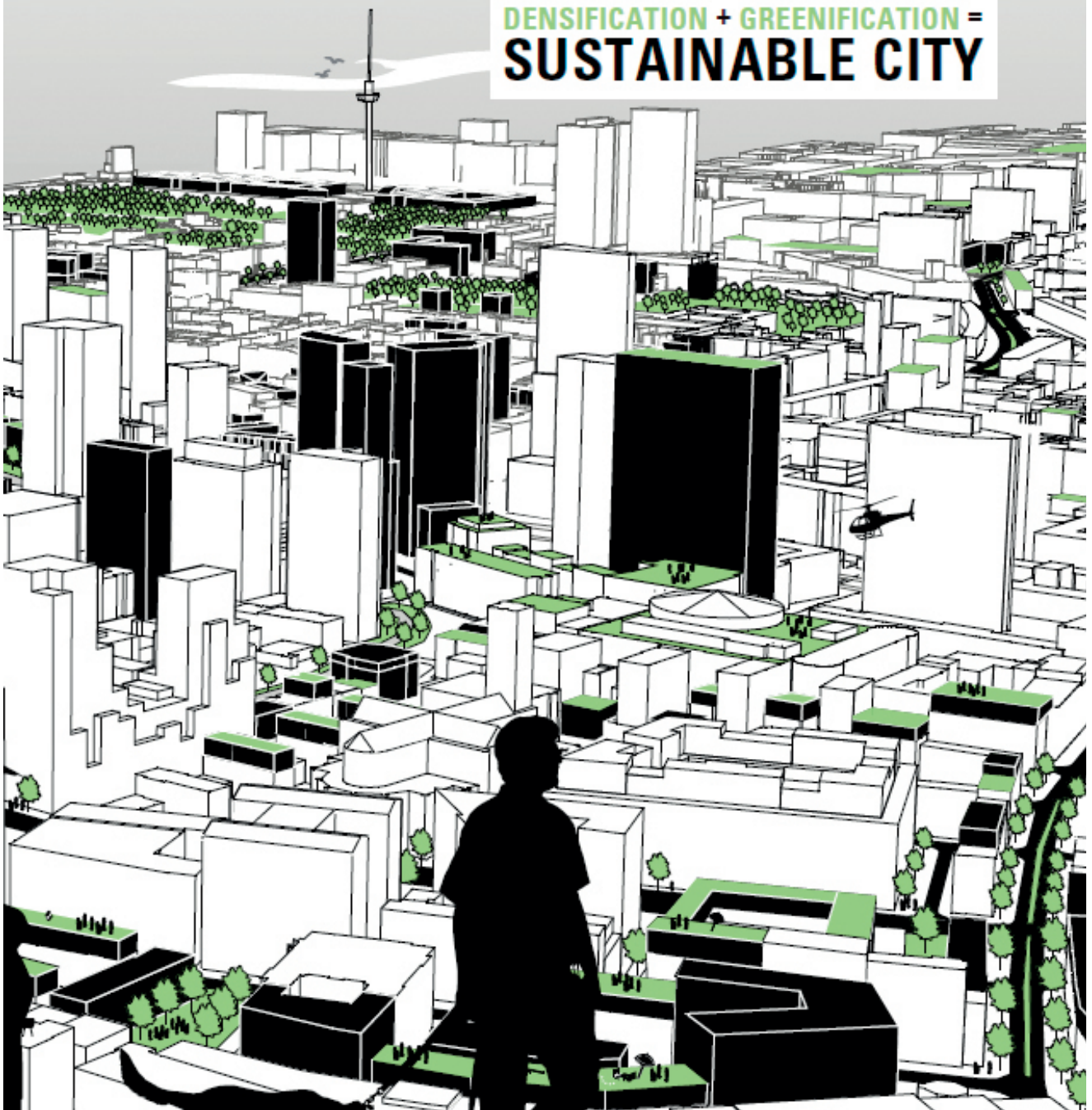DENSIFICATION + GREENIFICATION = **SUSTAINABLE CITY**

Figure 8: The publication from Rotterdam that includes the insights from the transition arena

- ◆ **Creating forums for politicians** to present and discuss the transition agenda and create support for follow-up activities;
- ◆ **Lobbying:** Making explicit which policy agendas and instruments should be adjusted according to the transition agenda, and entering into dialogue with the relevant departments to address this (with fellow policy officers, management and /or politicians);
- ◆ Organizing **internal backcasting sessions** within or across several departments of the city administration.

Further transforming the municipal organization

The organization of the transition arena provides a concrete starting point for playing into societal dynamics. Focusing on social and institutional learning and creating opportunities for change agents can be further translated into the daily work of the city administration. A city can, for example, initiate another transition arena trajectory with another, more specific focus. This happened in Ghent with the mobility and university arenas. This new mode of working can also translate into 'regular' projects: as a result of the MUSIC project, participating cities saw an increase in collaborative work, and became more adept at recognizing what was already happening. In Aberdeen, it influenced the city's approach to drafting a Strategic Energy Action Plan by encouraging the administration "to enter into this process with a genuine open mind", such that "people are involved from the beginning and feel that they can really contribute" – as a policy officer explains.

"TRANSITION MANAGEMENT IS NOT JUST ANOTHER PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, IT IS ABOUT TRANSFORMING FROM INSIDE".

Facilitator, Montreuil

How did they do this in Montreuil?

The transition arena in Montreuil drafted a transition agenda in order to engage and motivate others. It included a short outline of the arena process plus seven 'solution cards'. These solution cards each focused on a specific challenge, and included: a historical perspective, a general pathway, ideas to tackle the challenge and linkages to ongoing municipal and civil processes and initiatives. The agenda was illustrated by photos, quotations and slogans.

An event was organized to launch the transition agenda and to launch one of the transition experiments, FabLab[2]. At this festive evening with over 100 guests, the transition agenda was presented to the mayor of Montreuil. She signed the document along with the arena members – which was symbolic for their commitment to this agenda. The following months, the transition experiments were further operationalized by the transition team and the arena group, who also sought to involve more actors. Half a year later, a two-day MUSIC & FabLab Festival was organized, gathering about 200 people to give an extra impulse to the transition agenda. The festival saw the elaboration of seven key projects, which were subsequently taken up by the participating citizens and organizations with the assistance of the municipality. Earlier, the arena meetings had already established synergies between existing projects in two cases.

It is not possible to precisely assess the influence of the transition management process beyond the emerging initiatives. We can depict some instances. For example, the ideas

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2 A FabLab, short for Fabrication Laboratory, is an open workshop for digital fabrication (see www.fablabinternational.org)
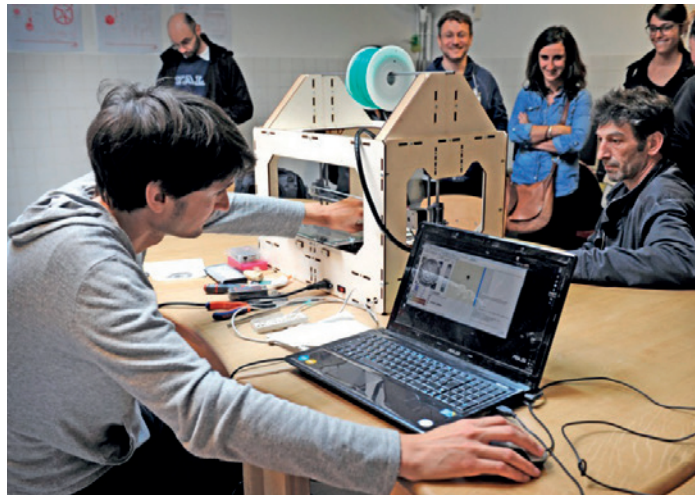
Figure 9: The FabLab Montreuil, a transition experiment in Montreuil

from the agenda were promoted by a local political party, which was founded by one of the arena participants. Moreover, the agenda inspired policy development in several departments. A policy officer involved explains: "[transition management] allowed [...] to remove the institutional perspective of looking at things". Finally, the process led to a reflection on the relation between the municipality and its citizens. A transition team member expressed that "for [the policy officers] there is something like a before and after the arena, it really modified their way of working".

CHALLENGES

1. *Continuing the transition effort*
   The transition arena provided a structured setting for rethinking paradigms and practices. In this phase, the scope is significantly broader. Facing the diversity of possible interventions one is confronted with the questions of where to start and how to set priorities? It is clear from the experience in the MUSIC project that cities should not underestimate the importance of, and time investment for, a facilitation role in this phase. The municipal reality shows that to get support and budget for such role, the efforts should be casted in the form of a project (e.g. formulating deadlines and events). This acknowledges the relevancy and urgency of such a facilitation effort, which otherwise might fall victim to other priorities.

2. *Overcoming engrained role patterns*
   It is difficult for both citizens and administration to overcome engrained role patterns. A city officer in Ghent noted that, in spite of the acknowledgement that a strong outward orientation is needed, "it will take a while before the governments feels comfortable with that and discovers its new role". At the same time, participants of the arena groups in all cities were often used to participation trajectories in which they would give input to policy formulation, and therefore felt less compelled to challenge their own way of working and thinking.

3. *Dealing with the 'black box' characteristics of the municipality*
   On the one hand, the municipality aims to work with change agents in the city, who question business-as-usual. On the other hand, the municipality can be seen as embodying just that, i.e. 'business-as-usual'. Moreover, while often treated as one actor, 'the' municipality actually consists of numerous departments and people with their own stakes and priorities. These can be conflicting, but also reinforcing, and even ignorant of one another. The policy officers driving the transition management process need

to have a good feel for the internal dynamics of the municipality. They play a key role in linking the developments emerging from the transition management process with the 'regular' administrative as well as policy-making processes. At best their colleagues take the process and its outcomes as an interesting challenge or source of inspiration, at worst as critique on their own work. Also from the perspective of the change agents the black box of the municipality can be a frustrating experience: on the one hand they are empowered, on the other limited by the same organization.

"ONE OUTPUT FROM MUSIC WAS AN INCREASE IN PARTNERSHIP WORKING [...] [AND] AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECOGNIZE WHAT WAS ALREADY HAPPENING AND SEE HOW PARTNERS COULD WORK TOGETHER"

City officer Aberdeen

VII. GETTING INTO ACTION

WHAT

The transition agenda provides direction for the long term and inspires actions for the short term. As a follow-up to the work of the arena group, some of the proposed transition experiments (see intermezzo at page 31) can be elaborated and realized by the arena participants and newly involved actors. Also, other ongoing, planned and newly emerging activities can be linked to the agenda, thus reinforcing them by making them part of an overarching perspective.

Transition experiments are not only about achieving direct project goals. It also concerns learning about new practices, which could contribute to the envisioned future. Monitoring, reflection, and learning primarily takes place with the working group participants – external actors can also be involved.

WHY

Transition experiments aim to pilot alternatives or innovative structures, cultures and practices. Those involved "learn by doing" about challenges and solutions; the activities, when successful, serve to demonstrate that the envisioned future is attainable.

An action perspective is also needed for taking on board more and other types of actors. For some, the transition narrative might be too abstract or vague. By linking the narrative to actions, it becomes vivid and apparent for a broader audience. Moreover, the experiments can act as symbols for a new way of thinking, as well as anchor points for peoples' interests, needs, and strategies. This helps to attract further interest, expertise and resources.

Monitoring can safeguard the relation between the transition agenda and the transition experiments. These efforts also enable to play into changing dynamics and upcoming opportunities. Finally, monitoring enables learning, including for actors who are not engaged in the experiments.

HOW

Setting up initiatives
In parallel or as follow-up to the transition arena, specific actions of the transition agenda can be taken up. This take up is dependent on the motivation and ambition of arena participants, but also on the involvement of actors who are able to operationalize the ideas and find the appropriate resources. These can be individual persons or organizations, or (new) collaborations.

In case of the latter, working groups will be formed, to provide a structure for working on initiatives or experiments and for gathering the competences and resources. These working groups will include arena participants, as well as others invited to achieve the intended actions. Furthermore, new actors can be invited to adopt and elaborate on themes and activities not yet covered by the emerging working groups.

Supporting initiatives
A coordinating team can take a supporting or facilitating role (see phase VI). They can ease the work of the working groups, and possibly also of other sustainability initiatives, by:

- Mapping relevant actors, and engaging them to take an active role in the initiatives;
- Creating a network of supportive actors (such as policy officers, company representatives, and others) for the initiatives;
- Searching for relevant financiers and funds;
- Taking up administrative tasks and providing skill development;
- Playing an active role in the project themselves.

Monitoring and reflecting

Reflecting on activities and their coherence with the transition agenda can help to draw lessons and safeguard the process' internal coherence. Participants can inspire and learn from each other by, for example, elaborating aspects of the transition agenda, exchanging experiences, or identifying challenges and opportunities from upcoming trends.

At the same time, they reflect on their own routines and viewpoints, as well as on the boundary conditions of institutions, policies, and values. Learning networks can enhance learning from experiments; people in strategic positions discuss the practices started by the transition experiments and the current barriers that they reveal.

How did they do this in Ghent?

The starting point for this phase was the launch event, which was attended by more than a hundred highly motivated people ('headhunted' by the arena participants). They were informed about the arena results thus far and invited contribute to the emerging spin-off activities. Most activities were further elaborated in Climate Working Groups. These groups started at – or shortly after – the launch event and consisted of both arena participants and gradually newly involved actors.

- *Consumers push the market: organized a 'carrot mob' to mobilize consumers to buy goods from one shop to reward its commitments to sustainability. This one-day campaign attracted 938 mobbers and made the targeted supermarket invest €10,000 in sustainability measures.*
- *Energy efficiency for businesses: established a project to stimulate and guide small/ medium enterprises to prompt them to structurally work on energy efficiency.*
- *Green Track: over 30 cultural organizations joined this network to monitor their CO_2 emissions, to develop an energy action plan and to sensitize visitors.*
- *Valorization of sewage water: developed a business case on the transport of organic waste through the sewage system and the use of sewage water to produce heat, biogas, nutrients and water; will now be applied in the city's district the Old Docs (350 dwellings).*
- *Urban Farming: was confronted with diverging ideas: one participant left the group and started an urban farming project involving children, the others worked on a city-wide plan for urban farming.*
- *Blue economy: aimed to set up an iconic project based on the blue-economy principles, but was unable to involve business partners.*

Two more initiatives were inspired by the transition management methodology and started up a similar arena process in a different context.

- *The university's environmental coordinator, a former arena member, initiated a transition arena with over 120 students and staff members to explore how the university could become sustainable. The resulting transition agenda was formally adopted by the board of the university; spin-off activities are now starting up and sustainability platform is established;*
- *The municipal mobility and environmental departments jointly organized an arena process to explore the future of mobility in Ghent, involving 25 participants and several city departments (mobility, environment, spatial planning). This resulted in the enthusiastically received transition agenda 'The bike of Troy', regular follow-up meetings in the form of mobility cafes, and 3 iconic projects to create support for the envisioned developments.*

Most initiatives needed time to mature; one did not succeed the attempt. The city administration took a supportive, but limited role by thinking along, creating connections and offering logistic support. The one-to-one contacts between participants and the city administration crucially contributed to the success of the spin-off initiatives. They were on the other hand hampered by the little pre-defined focal themes and the challenges of setting up an initiative that goes beyond business-as-usual. Further meetings for showcasing the initiatives and mutual learning were planned but not realized. Even on their own, all initiatives clearly related to the vision of the arena and succeeded in involving a broader group.

CHALLENGES

1. ***Following the energy***
   The transition arena has most likely included a portfolio of short-term actions in the transition agenda. It should not be expected that these ideas will be realized: the transition agenda is rather a starting point for evoking new initiatives. Some, but not all, arena participants will pursue the developed ideas, especially those who can link these activities to their professional networks, their work, or a strong intrinsic motivation. Many of the participants are selected principally for their ability to introduce new ways of thinking; in this operational phase, actors with other capacities will take the lead. The ideas will further evolve when new actors become involved, as they will bring in their personal agendas and ambitions. Adaptivity is thus needed, to play into their energy and motivation, and moreover to play into newly emerging opportunities.

2. ***Sharing responsibility, sharing success***
   Visible and concrete actions will be more appreciated by colleagues among the city administration than intangible outcomes such as a new way of thinking or new networks. Therefore, the policy officers involved might try to push the short-term actions forward, or even take over control. However, as we saw in all cities, the project ideas needed time to evolve and materialize. Taking over can diminish the ownership and the lasting effect of the projects, a balance has to be found between supporting and letting go. At the same time, a thoughtful approach to claiming the success is needed: this should not be seized by the municipality, for example by an alderman, but neither just by one of the project partners. A way should be found to celebrate the success and share it among the project partners, while also linking it to the broader effort of the arena.

3. ***Putting the short-term projects in perspective***
   When involved in pursuing short-term initiatives, it is easy to forget about the broader perspective of the transition agenda. However, the strength of the initiatives is not only in achieving the direct results, but also in provoking thoughts on developing beyond the status quo. Therefore, it is crucial to zoom out, to tell the vision behind the initiatives. And to reflect on what the initiatives teach about alternative practices as well as barriers to change. Reflection also needs to be organized to assess whether the initiatives do indeed contribute to the envisioned future, and whether the portfolio of initiatives does right to the diversity of transition paths.

Figure 10: An example of a spin-off activity: Carrotmob, Ghent

EPILOGUE

WITH THIS GUIDANCE MANUAL we aimed at providing you with a clear insight into the transition management approach and how it can be applied to sustainability issues in the urban context. The MUSIC cities have enjoyed a window of opportunity created by this European project, which generated a 'space to get out of the comfort zone'. By using this window, they have created a sense of direction in their cities and provided an impulse for local change through a empowerment of city actors. We do believe that the time is ripe for more cities to follow in these footsteps. The last years have seen a growing debate around 'Big Society' and the need for new forms of governance. One of these forms could be transition management.

As already quoted in the introduction, we would to reiterate again that "a manual is actually too static for such dynamic and radical process." To make it, at the least, more tangible we would like to equip you with some more resources. Have a look at our website, www.themusicproject. eu, which includes a full overview of the processes in the five cities. The website also contains additional in-depth documentation on some of the methods introduced in this guidance manual. Moreover, we offer training programmes and workshops, of which the website www.transitionacademy.eu provides an overview. This work builds upon a great body of work on transition studies and transition management. Appendix B gives an overview of literature suggestions, allowing you to further dive into the foundations and experiences of this approach.

We hope we have inspired you to also take the transition management approach forward in your city. We would encourage you to share your comments, questions and experiences with us.

We wish you the best of luck in contributing to a sustainable future of your city!

Chris Roorda
Julia Wittmayer
Pepik Henneman
Frank van Steenbergen
Niki Frantzeskaki
Derk Loorbach

APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY

Actor analysis provides a structured overview of the actors related to the selected issue and to the selected objective for all phases of the transition management process.

Arena participants are change agents who are selected and invited by the transition team on the basis of the system and actor analyses.

Backcasting is a method to collectively create pathways to an envisioned future, taking the future as the starting point and going step-by-step back in time.

Change agents are individuals willing to go beyond 'business-as-usual', who are intrinsically connected to the issue at hand and are open to other perspectives.

Systems analysis is an integrative mapping of (the environment of) the selected issue. This enables a systemic understanding of the current situation, provides insight into long-term change dynamics and into the interactions between multiple domains.

Transitions are fundamental shifts in structures, cultures and practices in a societal (sub)system.

Transition agenda is a publication that summarizes the systems analysis, visionary images, pathways and short-term actions that were developed in the transition arena meetings. This can take many forms: a booklet, magazine, website, movie, set of postcards, etc.

Transition arena is a setting that provides an informal but well-structured space for a group of change agents to critically reflect on the status quo and develop alternative ideas, practices and relations. Participants from diverse backgrounds (businesses, government, research institutes, citizens) engage in a series of meetings to jointly develop a shared visionary story, which they can link to their everyday practice. The arena outputs guide the search for strategies to transform existing structures, cultures, and practices, as well as to realize new projects, collaborations, and experiments.

Transition experiments are innovation projects with a societal challenge as a starting point for learning aimed at contributing to a transition. A transition experiment, sometimes also dubbed iconic projects or breakthrough actions, are activities through which alternative structures, cultures, and practices are explored. A transition experiment is therefore both a goal in itself and an instrument to explore and learn about radically different ways of meeting societal needs – now and in the future.

Transition management is an approach that aims at influencing the direction and pace of societal change dynamics. It seeks to foster sustainability by creating space for new ways of organizing, doing, and thinking. Based on empirical and theoretical insights from the field of sustainability transition studies, it is operationalized by a process structure and a selection of methods, one of which is the transition arena.

Transition narrative is the 'story line' that emerged from the arena meetings, and comprises the ideas from system analysis, the visionary images, the pathways, and the short-term actions. The narrative is consolidated in a publication, the transition agenda.

Transition pathways describe possible routes from now to the envisioned future. Each pathway revolves around a subtheme. It describes intermediate goals, barriers to overcome, important actors, and essential actions. The transition pathways are neither fixed plans nor detailed scenarios; they are inspiring storylines that include goals and interventions on the short, mid and long

term. They provide insight into what is needed to reach the envisioned future and give direction to the subsequent development of the transition agenda.

Transition team is the core team that adapts and drives the transition management process. Ideally, the transition team consists of three to five people, and includes employees from the initiating organization with a mix of strategic and content foci. External experts can also be included.

APPENDIX B – FURTHER READING

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Online at: www.montreuil.fr/agenda-de-transition.pdf

ON ROTTERDAM

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