From theory to practice of transition management
The case of Sustainable Living and Housing in Flanders

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1.   Introduction

Our modern complex society and its problems of realizing long-term sustainable development necessitate new forms of governance. In recent years a number of publications have been made on transition management as a new mode of governance that explicitly deals with societal complexity (D. Loorbach, 2007; J. Rotmans, Grin, Schot, & Smits, 2004; J. Rotmans, Kemp, & Van Asselt, 2001). This approach towards dealing with governance and complexity explicitly links analysis of complexity to the governance hereof. Observed dynamics in society provide the basis for formulating governance strategies and instruments, while the implementation of transition management simultaneously leads to more precise or altered interpretations of observed reality. Transition management as formulated in (D. Loorbach, 2007) presents a framework for structuring governance processes directed towards societal innovation. This framework distinguishes between different types of activities (strategic, tactical and operational) and different phases (envisioning, agenda-building, experimentation and evaluation). The basic assumption is that this framework is generic and can be used to implement transition management within any specific context (being a specific policy domain or political culture). The proposed paper aims to illustrate how the framework can be used to implement transition management and under which conditions such an implementation of transition management can be successful. This will be done by analyzing the project 'Sustainable Living and Housing in Flanders', in which the two authors functioned as project leaders.

Between 2004 and 2006, a transition arena and network were developed in Flanders, Belgium. This was the first transition management process outside the Netherlands and had two main objectives: to apply the transition management approach to sustainable living and housing, and to be able to evaluate the possibilities for transition management in Belgium. In this two-year project, the transition arena methodology was implemented to develop a vision, transition agenda and experiments for Sustainable Living and Building in Flanders.

This paper evaluates the difficulties and possibilities for implementation of transition management in a specific context by use of the transition management framework. The evaluation will be based on the official evaluation of the project (Van Raak, 2006) and a retrospective comparison of this project with similar projects in the Netherlands and Flanders. The latter is done by the authors based on their own experience and knowledge and thus subjective. The combination of the formal evaluation of and the subjective reflection upon the project enables us to answer two questions: what are the possibilities for transition management in Belgium? And: how generic are the transition management approach and framework?

2.   Transition theory

In this section, transition theory will be outlined and how it is related with complex systems science. Transitions refer to large-scale transformations within society or important subsystems, during which the structure of the societal system fundamentally changes. Examples are the demographic transition, from an industrial to a service economy, from extensive to intensive agriculture or from horse-and-carriage to individual

car-mobility (F.W. Geels, 2002). A transition is the shift from a relative stable system (dynamic equilibrium) though a period of relatively rapid change during which the system reorganizes irreversibly into a new (stable) system again (J. Rotmans, 1994). Transitions have the following characteristics (J. Rotmans et al., 2001):
- They concern large scale technological, economical, ecological, socio-cultural and institutional developments that influence and reinforce each other;
- They are long term processes that takes at least one generation;
- There are interactions between different scale levels (niche, regime, landscape).

A transition is a complex process with a multitude of driving factors and impacts. It is a process of co-evolving markets, networks, institutions, technologies, policies, individual behavior and autonomous trends.

Historical analyses of societal transitions (F. W. Geels & Kemp, 2000; R. Van der Brugge, Rotmans, & Loorbach, 2005; Verbong, 2000; Verbong & Geels, 2006) suggests that transitions go through different subsequent stages. Rotmans et al. (2001) argue that the nature and speed of change differs in each of the transition phases (see also figure 1 for an illustrative representation):

In the predevelopment phase the regime remains stable, although the social landscape slowly changes and there is increasing bottom-up innovation
- In the take-off phase the process of change gets under way and the state of the system and its regime begins to shift.
- In the acceleration phase structural changes take place in a visible way through an accumulation of interacting socio-cultural, economic, ecological and institutional changes. During this phase there are collective learning processes, diffusion and institutionalization processes.
- In the stabilization phase the speed of societal change decreases and a new dynamic equilibrium is reached.

During transitions there is nonlinear change as a result of developments and events that reinforce each other. Each development within the whole set has different speed and magnitudes. It is therefore necessary to take into account different scale levels and their interference. The basic multi-level approach that is used here is: (a) focal regime at the meso level, (b) alternatives and innovations at the micro level and (c) long-term trends at the macro level. At the meso level companies, governments and NGO's are distinguished that together constitute a regime of practices, structure and culture. Geels and Kemp (2000), Geels (2002) and Rip (Rip & Kemp, 1998) distinguish between the landscape level of trends and autonomous developments (macro), the regime level of institutions and routines (meso), and the micro level at which individuals develop alternatives (innovation).
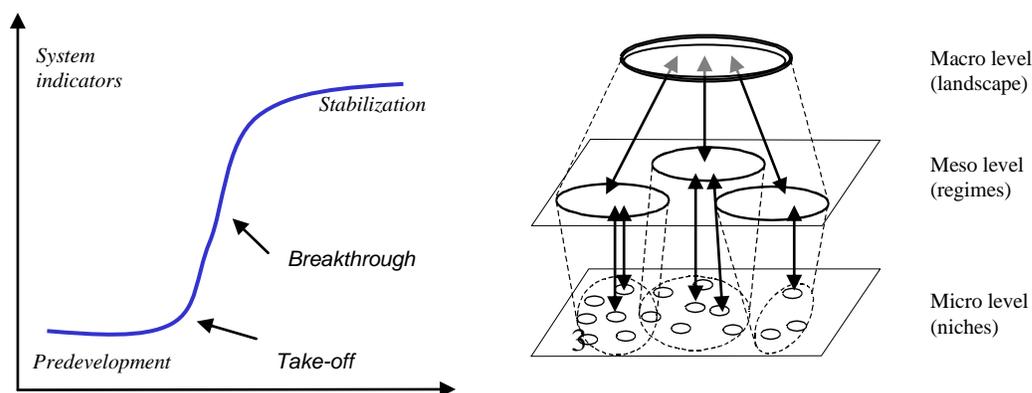
Figure 1 Multi-phase and multi-level concepts of transition

Transition theory is rooted in theories about the behaviour and dynamics of so-called complex adaptive systems. Complex adaptive systems are systems that consist of adaptive agents that interact. Through their interactions, patterns emerge on higher scale levels that change the conditions to which the individual actors will adapt which then changes the conditions again and so forth. This dualistic relationship between the individual and system is of key interest to transition theory. Table 1 (R. Van der Brugge, 2005) mentions some of the important properties of complex adaptive systems.

Properties of Complex Adaptive Systems

- Many and divers components and interactions
- Components are organized in a network configuration
- The system is open (exchange of matter, energy and information with external environment)
- Non-linearity
- Positive and negative feedback loops (reinforcing and dampening mechanisms)
- Nested organizational levels
- Multiple attractors (relative stable but dynamic equilibrium states) co-exist
- Attractors have stability domains, bounded by thresholds
- Components are able to learn and respond to the environment by changing behavior (interactions)
- Co-evolutionary interaction patterns may lead to irreversible pathways
- Higher level structures spring into being as result of lower level component interaction

Table 1. Properties of complex adaptive systems (CAS), based on (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984)(Holland, 1995; Holling, 1987; Kauffman, 1995). These properties apply to social systems, leading to the conclusions that social systems are complex adaptive systems and that the behavior of this category of systems may have general features.

Important insight from complex adaptive systems informing transition theory is the notion of multiple attractors, or multiple stability domains. The idea is that complex adaptive systems remain stable as long as they remain within a certain range, bounded by critical thresholds. After crossing such a threshold, complex adaptive systems transform into a new system. The dynamics underlying such structural shifts are processes such as co-evolution, emergence and self-organisation. On the one hand, there is tension building between a system and its environment (co-evolution), while at the same time this tension translates into innovations and adaptations within the system (self organization leading to emergent structures and patterns). The combination of forces can ultimately lead to transitions, which in case of transitions in complex *societal* systems poses extra challenges to both the analyst as well as the practitioner. Key assumption behind transition management is that by understanding the dynamics of a societal system as a complex adaptive system, new insights and levers for governance can be found.

3.   The transition management framework

The challenge here is to translate the relatively abstract theoretical frame of transitions in complex societal systems into a practical management framework without losing too much of the complexity involved and without becoming too prescriptive. We have attempted this by designating transition management as a cyclical process of development phases in which different types of governance are interacting. The cycle of transition management consists of the following components (D Loorbach, 2002; D. Loorbach, 2007; D. Loorbach & Rotmans, 2006): (i) structure the problem in question and establish & organize the transition arena; (ii) develop a vision of sustainable development, a transition agenda and derive the necessary transition paths; (iii) establish and carry out transition experiments and mobilize the resulting transition networks; (iv) monitor, evaluate and learn lessons from the transition experiments and, based on these, make adjustments in the vision, agenda and coalitions. In reality there is no fixed sequence of the steps in transition management as **Figure 1** suggests and the steps can differ in weight per cycle. In practice the transition management activities are carried out partially and completely in sequence, in parallel and in a random sequence.

In the management framework we can distinguish three different types of governance that continually influence each other: strategic (problem structuring and envisioning), tactical (negotiating and network building) and operational (implementation) (D. Loorbach, 2004). There is no hierarchical relationship, but the different types of governance overlap and function simultaneously at different levels. Depending on the phase of the transition process, each type of governance can be linked to specific types of actors and instruments. This results in a portfolio of approaches and management instruments that can evolve together with the actual progress of the process. The transition management process starts from a strategic, long-term perspective, making a thorough analysis of both alternative routes. As time progresses, the various routes within transition management will cross and intertwine and will influence and strengthen each other.
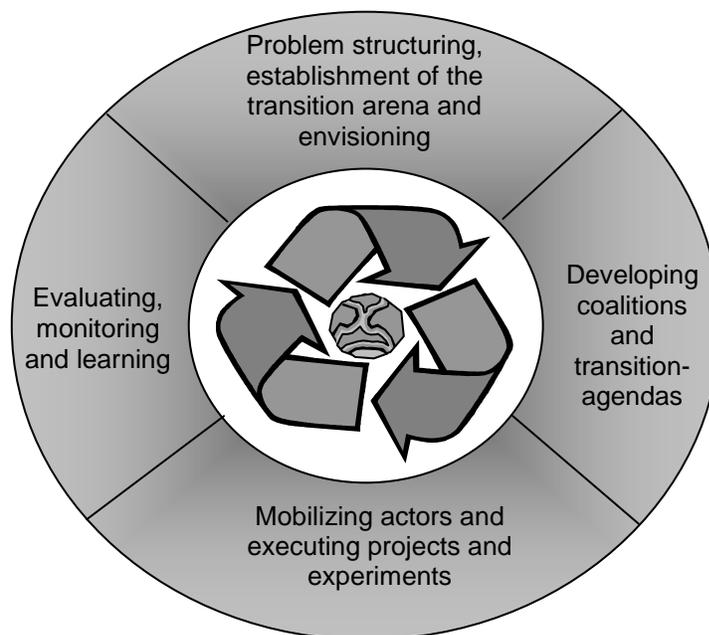
Figure 1:   The transition management cycle

4.   Instruments for transition management

Strategic: the transition arena

The transition arena is a multi-actor innovation network around a specific transition issue, within which various perceptions of the persistent problem and possible directions for solutions can be deliberately confronted with each other and subsequently integrated. The actors to be involved have their own perception of the transition issue in question from their specific background and perspective. A relatively small number of forerunners from various networks and institutions should be involved the transition arena at a strategic level. These people participate on a personal basis and not as a representative of their institution or based on their organizational background. Obviously, these forerunners cannot fully dissociate themselves from their institutional background, but within the arena context they need to function as autonomous as possible. They are identified and selected based on their competencies, interests and backgrounds. There should not be too many actors (10 – 15 is sufficient) and they should not all be the same kind of actor. The competencies expected of them are: (i) ability to consider complex problems at a high level of abstraction; (ii) ability to look beyond the limits of their own discipline and background; (iii) enjoy a certain level of authority within various networks; (iv) ability to establish and explain visions of sustainable development within their own networks; (v) they can think 'out of the box' and do that together with others; (vi) open to innovation and surprises rather than having already specific solutions in mind. These forerunners do not necessarily need to be experts; they can also be networkers or opinion leaders. They should further be prepared to invest time and energy in the process of innovation and to commit themselves to it. And finally, it is important that there is a reasonable distribution of forerunners over the societal pentagon: government, companies, non-governmental organizations, knowledge institutes and intermediaries (consulting organizations, project organizations and mediators). The aim is to have at least as many niche-players as regime-players, with a preference of about 60-70% niche-players and about 30-40% regime-players.

The fundamental issue here is not that only the existing establishment and interests (incumbent regime) come together within the transition arena, but that niche actors who can operate more or less autonomously are also involved. Evidently, a certain representation from the existing regime is necessary, also with an eye to the legitimacy, support and financing of the process of innovation. A transition arena, however, is not an administrative platform or a consultative body, but a societal network of innovation. This demands a critical selection of forerunners, not by a 'gatekeeper' who selects who may or may not participate, but by a small core group in which initiators of the transition process and some transition experts are involved, that considers matters carefully. The arena process is an open, evolving process of innovation that implies variation and selection: after a certain period of time some people drop out and others join in. Management therefore means creating sufficient space and favourable conditions for the forerunners, such that the envisaged process of innovation begins to take shape. It does not mean gathering together a wide range of bodies around the arena, such as a steering group, a

consultation group or advisory board, because this is exactly a recipe for limiting the space for innovation and management that has just been created.

When such a group of forerunners has been brought together to focus on a certain transition issue, an attempt is made to reach a joint perception of the problem by means of a strongly interactive process. By deploying a participative integrated systems approach, the complex problem(s) can be structured and made easier to understand (Hisschemöller, 1993). The convergence of the various problem perceptions is facilitated by the articulation of diverging perspectives of the actors involved, which in turn will lead to new insights into the nature of the problem(s) and the underlying causal mechanisms. These insights form the prelude to a change in perspective, which is a necessary but insufficient pre-condition to realizing a transition. Based on this new perspective and through discussion and interaction sustainability visions are generated. These visions are particularly qualitative, inspiring, challenging and imaginative pictures of the future.

Visions are an important management instrument for achieving new insights and starting points and therefore a change of 'attractor'. The visions created evolve and are instrumental: the process of envisioning is just as important as the ultimate visions themselves. Envisioning processes are very labour-intensive and time-consuming, but are crucial to achieving development in the desired direction. This direction, as long as a sufficiently large group of forerunners supports it, provides a focus and creates the constraints, which determine the room for manoeuvre within which the future transition activities can take place. Based on the sustainability vision developed, a process can be initiated in which transition paths are developed and a common transition agenda is drawn up. A common transition agenda contains a number of joint objectives, actions points, projects and instruments to realize these objectives. It should be clear which party is responsible for which type of activity, project or instrument that is being developed or applied. Where the sustainability visions and the accompanying final transition-images and transition objectives form the guidelines for the transition agenda, which is to be developed, the transition agenda itself forms the compass for the forerunners which they can refer to during their search and learning process.

Tactical level: the transition agenda
The change in perspective, described by the visions and the accompanying transition-images of the future, should be further translated to and find root within various networks, organizations and institutions. The focus at this tactical level is therefore the structural (regime) barriers to development in the desired direction. Such barriers include regulatory, institutional and economic conditions but could also involve consumer routines, physical infrastructures or specific technologies. In an expanding transition network stemming from the transition arena this vision is further translated by self-formed coalitions into so-called transition paths: routes to a transition-image via intermediate objectives, which, as they come closer, can be formulated more quantitatively. Different transition paths can lead to a single transition-image and conversely a single transition path can lead to several transition images. In this phase the interests, motives and policy of the various actors involved (non-governmental

organizations, companies, governments, knowledge institutes and intermediaries) come out into the open and there will be negotiations about investments, and individual plans and strategies will be fine-tuned. The actors who should be involved at this stage are those who represent one of the organizations involved and who are willing and able to operate for more than just a short period of time. Within this tactical layer actors should be recruited who, in particular, have sufficient authority and room for manoeuvre within their own organization and who also have insight into the opportunities for their organization to contribute to the envisaged transition process. An important condition for this is that the actors involved have the capacity to 'translate' the transition vision and the consequences of this to the transition agenda of their own organization. When the organizations and networks involved start to adjust their own policy and actions in this way, tensions will arise between the transition arena and the everyday policy agendas. Then the direction will have to be reviewed at a strategic level and if necessary a new arena will have to be established with some of the existing actors, but also with new ones.

Operational level: implementation
At the operational level of transition management transition experiments and transition actions are carried out. The practical implementation of a broad new body of thought is quite demanding, because there are very many actors involved who all act from their own perspective, have conflicting interests, and at the same time are embedded in and are dependent on a broader societal web. There is also a diverse application for transition experiments from the vision and transition paths developed. These may compete, complement each other or investigate various options. Diversity is an important aspect, as long as these experiments at the systems level contribute to the envisaged transition.

Transition experiments are practical experiments with a high level of risk (in terms of failure) that can make a potentially large contribution to a transition process. New transition experiments are derived directly from the developed sustainability vision and transition objectives and they fit within the identified transition paths. On the other hand, experiments can be linked to innovation experiments that are already taking place as long as they fit into the context of the transition. Often, many experiments are running concurrently, but these have not been set up or carried out systematically, whereby coherence is missing.

Transition experiments in the form of projects also have a higher than average risk to fail, because they are searching and learning processes in which the results might be disappointing. When an experiment has been successful (in terms of evaluating its learning experiences and contributions to the transition challenge) it can be repeated in different contexts (broadening) and scaled up from the micro- to the meso-level (scaling up). This requires a considerable amount of time, approximately 5 to 10 years, depending on the size, scale and complexity of the experiment. For instance, for the experiment of the energy-supplying greenhouse it took more than ten years to evolve into a demonstration project (J. Rotmans, 2005). Transition experiments are often costly and time consuming, so it is important that, wherever possible, existing infrastructure is used for experiments and that their feasibility is continuously monitored. Efforts here focus on creating a portfolio of related transition experiments that complement and strengthen

each other as much as possible, which have a contribution to the sustainability objective that can be scaled up and which are significant and measurable.

5.   Transition arena Sustainable Living and Housing Flanders

Between 2004 and 2006, a transition arena and network were developed in Flanders, Belgium. This was the first transition management process outside the Netherlands and had two main objectives: to apply the transition management approach to sustainable living and housing, and to be able to evaluate the possibilities for transition management in Belgium. The Flemish government had realized that, in order to deal with long-term persistent societal problems, new approaches needed to be developed. In their first environmental policy plan (Flemish-Government, 2003), they created the possibility for an experiment with transition management. This project ('Project 1') was to be managed by the department for the environment and infrastructure (www.lin.vlaanderen.be), administration for environment, nature, land and water policies Aminal (www.mina.be). Living and Housing was selected over the energy as domain of application. Martin van de Lindt (TNO) and Derk Loorbach (Drift) were leading the project in which the Flemish Centre for Sustainable Development (www.cdo.be) and Pantopicon (www.pantopicon.be), an agency specialized in envisioning processes, were the other partners. In this two-year project, the transition arena methodology as presented in Chapter 6 was implemented to develop a vision, transition agenda and experiments for Sustainable Living and Building in Flanders.

Based on the experiences in Parkstad Limburg and the lessons learned in other projects, more attention was directed beforehand towards structuring the process, providing structured input for discussion and developing a transition network based on the transition arena. The whole project was structured in terms of number of meetings, intermediary products delivered and final outcomes. The process plan included much detail regarding the goals of different meetings, specific outcomes and a general timeline. This was partly on demand of the Flemish government, who were concerned for the project to produce results and who also wanted to understand how and why certain steps were made during the project. In the transition team the researchers therefore cooperated closely with government officials (from 4 different departments and institutions), and an advisory group of government officials from a large number of relevant government institutions was instituted. This provided the context within which the process itself, methodologies, the roles of the different individuals involved and the general focus of the project were discussed.

The project itself was structured in three phases: a preparatory phase, an envisioning phase and an agenda-setting phase. In the preparatory phase, the first steps involved internal discussions within the transition team about transition management, our conceptualization of sustainable development and the content and goal of the Integrated System Analysis. The ISA was performed by the CDO with input from TNO and Drift (Deraedt, Loorbach, Van Assche, & Van de Lindt, 2005) and involved an overview of different aspects of Living and Housing, such as housing stock, infrastructure, economic aspects, accessibility, health-issues, ecological aspects (energy, water, air), facilities, education of professionals and cultural aspects. In a synthesis it became clear that there

were a number of persistent problems linked to this system: a rigid and individualistic living culture, a shortage of affordable, high-quality housing, limited flexibility in the building sector, limited space for housing, deteriorating local social networks, high environmental impact, fragmented government policies and a general lack of trust and cooperation between the different actors.

Based on the ISA and a rudimentary actor-selection, an initial transition arena of 20 persons first met early 2005 to discuss the ISA and its conclusions. Actors in the transition arena were individuals from NGOs, government institutions, business, science and intermediaries. The transition arena validated the ISA by agreeing with the analysis in general, only suggesting some minor changes. This provided the basis for further debate: the actors shared a perspective on what the system Living and Housing constituted and agreed upon the necessity to deal with the perceived problems. Based on this general consensus, an envisioning meeting was organized where the transition arena defined criteria for a sustainable Living and Housing. These were defined as: closed material cycles, an integrated policy approach, shared responsibility & transparent decision-making, high quality of buildings and adjacent environment, accessible housing & social justice, balance between private and collective use.

In a third meeting of the transition arena four themes were selected which were perceived by the transition arena to be key issues that offered the largest possible possibilities for innovation as well as the largest barriers for sustainable development: material cycles, building-sector, local livelihoods and spatial planning. In the five structured meetings that followed, the transition agenda was developed. Four working groups were established: Closed material cycles, (Co-) learning and innovating in the construction sector, Living for Life and Living Cities. The guiding principles were translated into transition images for these four themes and different transition paths were formulated accordingly. The ultimate transition agenda included 18 concrete projects, a number of which were already supported. The work done in the working groups was more or less unstructured, but it was certainly directed by the transition team through discussion documents (D. Loorbach & Van de Lindt, 2006), inspiration documents (Van de Lindt, 2006), synthesizing notes, presentations and so on. Involved actors were stakeholders at the tactical level representing various organizations (roughly 85 persons), who often participated in their own time. This enlarged the commitment to the process and its outcomes and ensured the convergence of individual and collective interests at a systems' level in the transition agenda. In the autumn of 2006, this transition agenda was presented to the Flemish government. All relevant documents can be found at www.mina.be/duwobo.

The project and its outcomes (a transition network with a shared transition agenda) show that it is possible and worthwhile to implement the transition arena model integrally. In a context different from the regional approach in Parkstad Limburg, this transition arena focused on a national system without clear boundaries. Initially, the participants had some difficulty to conceptualize the Living and Building system, but later on in the process when the four transition themes were selected it became easier to handle. This was perhaps because these themes could be clearly distinguished as sub-systems for which system innovations could be envisaged. Maybe related to the relatively difficult

system (as opposed to societal systems like energy, agriculture, mobility), a shared sense of urgency to act was largely absent and the involvement of individuals was mostly based on the possibilities to further the interest of innovators and organizations involved in the field. Nevertheless, the transition agenda that was developed provides an innovative and integrated framework for concrete action and is widely considered as an important development for the sector. Regular policy has also acknowledged the importance of the transition arena and agenda and will continue to fund both. Involved actors will take initiatives to develop projects further and agendas and a strategy will be developed to evolve the network and implement the transition agenda.

What did we learn about the transition management approach?
Without going into details of the project and without drawing conclusions regarding the success of the project (it is too soon to judge that), we can already draw some conclusions regarding the possibilities for transition management internationally. Besides, the project offers us the opportunity to reflect upon the effectiveness of the transition arena model. The first results of a project evaluation that includes interviews with key actors involved in the project, questionnaires amongst all participants and a small number of evaluation meetings are as follows (Van Raak, 2006):
- The project was perceived to be a success in terms of output by all those involved
- The participants found the process innovative
- The participants found the process difficult and sometimes even stressful and chaotic
- The participants did feel that transition management is not compatible with Flemish political culture (70%), but they also felt that transition management could very well be applied in other domains (90%)

In this project, the transition team included government officials, substance experts and transition experts. However, it became gradually clear that a number of transition team members were not frontrunners or innovators, but instead adhered to a regular policy approach. This meant in practice that it was difficult to adapt the process to changing demands or dynamics within the network, that it was difficult to divert from the initial process plan, that it was almost impossible to reflect upon the overall process and process goals and that the majority of the time spent was directed to dealing with details of meetings and products. The organization and facilitation of the transition arena process therewith became a very time and energy consuming task and did not produce significant spin-off in terms of institutional innovation, communication of the transition arena process or institutionalization of the transition arena itself. Although the transition arena has built up enough common interest, ambition and knowledge to continue, much more could have been achieved if more entrepreneurial individuals from the government had been involved in the transition team.

It became clear from the interviews and questionnaires that it was not in general a very smooth process. Especially within the transition team, intense discussions between transition researchers and the representatives from the Flemish government led to feelings of uncertainty and chaos. It proved to be difficult to convince the government officials and others involved in facilitation of the transition arena that such an uncertain

and sometimes chaotic process would lead to successful outcomes, only based on previous experiences of the transition researchers involved. In other words, while the transition researchers claimed that a transition management process always involves friction, uncertainty and even disappointment besides excitement, creativity and innovation, other actors involved felt uneasy with this and continuously looked for ways to achieve more structure and control.

When for example there were tensions within the transition arena, or when a session did not deliver very concrete results, the government officials became nervous and tried to structure the process or increase their grip on it. The transition researchers then tried to prevent this in order to maintain the creative space for the transition arena. Although this was never an easy process, it proved to be crucial for the ultimate success of the project, because those involved gradually internalized the transition management approach and developed a strong commitment to the process. When ultimately the results did indeed please everyone, it became much easier to be committed to the process. A general insight must be that transition management processes are by definition uneasy: one needs to let go of certainties while not yet knowing the alternatives. This means that meetings can never be fully structured, that outcomes can never be fully planned, that participants cannot be commanded and that it is impossible to predict the impact of the results. Learning to deal with this type of process is perhaps at the heart of transition management.

What did we learn regarding the transition arena model?
The project proved more in general that the transition arena model is effective and can be adapted to any context in order to develop long-term innovation policies. This requires a continuous iteration between the individuals involved in the transition team, much communication between the transition team and the transition arena and in general much attention to a 'translation' of (the experiences with) transition management in the Netherlands to, in this case, the Flemish context. Although any transition management process will be complex and require creativity, this project proved to require even more attention and time and illustrated the necessity for an experienced transition team and a learning-by-doing attitude. The project illustrated the universal applicability of the basic principles of transition management and the transition arena. It also underlined once more the importance of certain elements of the transition arena model: the composition and functioning of the transition team, the selection of stakeholders, the timing and flexibility of the process and the management of the interface between the transition arena and regular policy.

A similar observation can be made regarding the transition arena and the transition working groups. The selection of participants was done by the Flemish experts in the field of Living and Housing with some selection guidelines. During the process, it became clear that there were an insufficient number of strategic visionaries and too many representatives from the field. The transition arena was very large to begin with (20 persons), and during the selection only limited attention was paid to individual competences, skills and abilities. This made it very difficult to be creative and original in the envisioning phase. Because of an imperfectly functioning transition team and

transition arena, the strategic phase was not successful in producing a fundamentally new perspective on the issue and an associated alternative and inspiring vision. This was also partly due to the lack of resistance to outside pressures from the transition team, which in practice led to a too early shift from the strategic to the tactical phase. Related to the uneasy feeling some had with too abstract meetings and uncertain outcomes, the transition team did not withstand the outside pressure to deliver results, concrete input to other policy processes and the expectation that also the participants would demand more concrete action and discussion.

During the tactical phase of developing transition images and pathways, the participants became much more involved and committed to their specific themes. This was partly because of their natural affinity with the themes and their desire to realize individual or organizational goals. Although this phase produced a large number of transition paths, project ideas and concrete coalitions, the strategic objectives and overall ambitions were scarcely taken up explicitly. This was partly due to the absence of part of the strategic transition arena members who left the process for a number of reasons, and partly because of a too quick shift from the strategic to the tactical phase because of time-limitations and pressure to produce concrete results for policy. The main lesson drawn here is that selection of participants and partners in transition management processes is crucial for the success of (at least) the strategic and tactical phases and needs to be researched further.

6.   Insights and reflections

Although it seems too early to draw definitive conclusions, which is always the case in the context of transitions, we are able to formulate some insights and reflections that can inform both theory and practice of transition management. Regarding the project itself, it seems that the first signals are hopeful in terms of anchoring ideas, plans and processes started up by the transition management project. A shared transition agenda has been formulated and several concrete ideas and projects included in the transition agenda are implemented and financed. The transition arena itself also continues to exist in a more formalized structure under the header of the Platform Duurzaam Wonen en Bouwen. Also, a website has been developed by the government integrating existing knowledge and activities and providing a platform for exchange and communication.

It seems that this way the continuation of the substance (the way of thinking and the ideas developed) and of the process (participation and interaction) is secured. However, chances are that the continuation of the transition management process runs into problems of institutionalization, formalization and incorporation by regular policies too quickly. In the context of transition management in the Netherlands, for example in the context of the energy transition, it has proven to be a continuous issue of attention for those involved in organizing transition management, to maintain the necessary creative and innovative space needed for transition management. The tendency of transition arenas is to become, over time important and therewith interesting to regular policy. This process can be used actively to 'transitionize' regular policies, but simultaneously is it necessary to create distance again between the transition arena and regular policy.

A major task of the Platform could be to actively 'manage' the interface between transition and regular policies and ensure the creative and innovative character of the transition management process. In terms of substance, this would mean reflecting upon the scope of the transition, monitoring progress in a broad sense, involving new and innovative ideas and projects, connecting to other innovative developments (possibly in other sectors) and organizing debates upon the relevancy and possibilities of the issue. In terms of process, this could mean lobbying for more funds, time and support from regular policy, strategically building networks and coalitions around specific ambitions, involving new and innovative actors in the transition arenas and stimulating public debate and involvement. One way of simultaneously reflecting upon and actually drawing conclusions from such an ongoing process is through transition monitoring. This could provide a structured framework to analyze and evaluate progress in a participatory setting, so that the monitoring itself functions as a policy instrument to support social learning and innovation.

More abstractly did the project learn that the basic ideas and elements of transition management seem to be generically applicable. However, and that is a crucial lesson already drawn in the Netherlands as well, transition management is highly context specific and therefore needs to be part of an explorative learning-by-doing approach. In other words: blueprint process designs are impossible (although in the described project a highly detailed plan was followed through almost in full) and surprises and crises are to be expected. Important context factors determining the actual form and implementation of transition management are for example: political culture, type of transition and transitional phase, organizing actor, financial and institutional leverage, time and money available, expertise available.

In the described project some factors such as the influence of the political (policy) culture on the possibilities for implementing transition management were underestimated by us. Where the Dutch have a long tradition of future oriented thinking, collective planning and participatory processes, these are relatively new to the Flemish context. One of the achievements of the process, bringing together industry and NGO's, for example was seen by us as only a first step and a 'normal' way to start. It also did take a lot of energy to communicate the idea of a sustainability vision and transition images along with their function in the process. Through debates on such issues, a lot of energy went into discussing the process approach and theory behind transition management instead of actually doing it (an important lesson also drawn from other transition management processes but in practice always hard to deal with). It is therefore very important, for these reasons and others, to clearly discuss and communicate expectations regarding a transition management process.

Transition management finally aims to support and accelerate a fundamental shift in thinking and acting. This can only be achieved in a continuous process of thinking, organizing, acting, evaluating and adjusting: learning-by-doing and doing-by-learning. The role of transition management is to simultaneously ensure the continuation of this reflexive process and to on the other hand institutionalize results and ideas that fit the

changes envisaged. The results of the Sustainable Living and Housing project suggest that a paradigm shift has not yet taken place and also a societal transition process has not yet broken through. It will be necessary to dedicate more energy to this issue the coming years in order to stimulate the sense of urgency and create a new direction of development. This can only be done by thorough, well-structured and creative debates outside the realm of regular policies.

7.   Literature

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