



Conference Ambassador Report by Marina Comojo on:

Full Paper Session with full papers 494, 278, 483, 109: Urban Transformations and Transitions (UTT Track). (19th of August 2020, 12.00-13.30)

Presenters: Johan Schot, Gavin McCrory, Kato Allaert, Rick Hölsgens

In the context of the 11th International Sustainability Transition Conference “Governance in an Era of Change – Making Sustainability Transitions Happen”, I was assigned to a full paper session under the overall theme of “Urban Transformations and Transitions”. This session brought four speakers who addressed their research topics ranging from transformative innovation policy, sustainability orientated labs, reflexive monitoring and transdisciplinary governance. Further, they looked at the importance of urban experimentation. Presenters demonstrated that while urbanization is a cause of unsustainable ways of living, it can also be a cornerstone towards sustainability transitions.

The first presenter was Johan Schot, a professor of Global History and Sustainability Transitions at the Utrecht University Centre for Global Challenges. He described how transformative innovation policy to achieve Sustainable Development Goals might assess and redirect experimentation to enable transitions. In order to address this question, the research team looked at projects implemented by science, technology and innovation agencies both in the Global North and Global South. The paper demonstrates how these projects could reorient their efforts to become more transformative by building a learning process with participants through mutual understanding.

The increasing presence and promise of experimental initiatives in governing transitions towards sustainability were underlined by Gavin McCrory, a doctoral student in the division of Physical Resource Theory at Chalmers University of Technology. From considering sustainability-oriented labs as spaces that pursue to address complex sustainability challenges, the research group aims to perform a review that might support policymakers in promoting multi-stakeholder governance. A collection of labs from different backgrounds and fields of research and practice were investigated to understand how radical alternatives can be coproduced, shaped and performed.

Kato Allaert, a human geographer and urbanist from the Dutch Research Institute for Transition, explained how nature-based transition experiments in cities can be understood and scaled up to face complex urban problems. From reflexive monitoring as a participatory governance method, multidisciplinary action research was conducted to support these initiatives and their embodied innovations. The presented paper introduces a cross-case analysis to trace learning outcomes in Genk, Poznań and Glasgow. The results include an analysis of the barriers and opportunities that emerge from experimentation carried out in these cities. The findings point out that the scaling up of nature-based solutions requires the provincial nation of initiatives and a radical change in the urban planning culture.

Finally, Rick Hölsgens a doctoral researcher at the Social Science Research Centre of the Technische Universität Dortmund, highlighted the role that new forms of transdisciplinary governance play in developing strategies and measures towards sustainability transitions in cities. In the context of the

project iResilience, this paper evidences how very local actions focused on civil society activation are needed to implement climate change adaptation measures. Through the generation of living labs in Dortmund and Cologne, experimental transformative governance encouraged collaboration between stakeholders to co-create of multi-faceted strategies at the urban level.

This session showed the importance of establishing innovative critical dialogues in the field of sustainability transitions. This holds especially true for complex urban problems. The discussion of new forms of transformative governance and urban experimentation during these presentations showed the importance of transferring knowledge across traditional disciplines. Furthermore, the speakers emphasised the significance of transcending academia's narrow boundaries. In that sense, these research projects have succeeded in taking the knowledge produced within academia to collaborate with the policymakers and the civil society, and subsequently, continue to co-produce new knowledge to address systemic change.