

13. Transition Management

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Transition Management (TM) seeks to influence the direction and pace of societal change by enabling new ways of organising, doing, and thinking. It supports actors to move beyond incremental problem solving and engage in transformative change towards desired futures, to stimulate place-based sustainability transitions. A central feature is the establishment of a Transition Arena (TA): a co-creative learning space whose goal is to develop radical ways of thinking. TM seldom aims at broad engagement across society. Rather, TM depends on targeted inclusion of actors who have interests in the transformation in question.



TM AT-A-GLANCE

- Addresses fundamental changes, gives impulse for local change, contributes to collective empowerment.
- Requires substantial planning and resource use, a high level of organisational and scientific skills, and participant commitment.



Benefits

1. Insight into system dynamics and interlinkages of multiple domains, actors, and scales.
2. Inspire innovation by questioning the status quo and being open to unorthodox ideas and actions.
3. Support change agents who are already adopting alternatives, thereby triggering transitions to a greater extent than starting from vested interests.
4. Catalyse local change inspire new and enhance existing initiatives that contribute to the envisioned future.
5. Collective empowerment enable actors in the chosen locality to tackle challenges and seize opportunities for a sustainable transformation.



Challenges and limitations

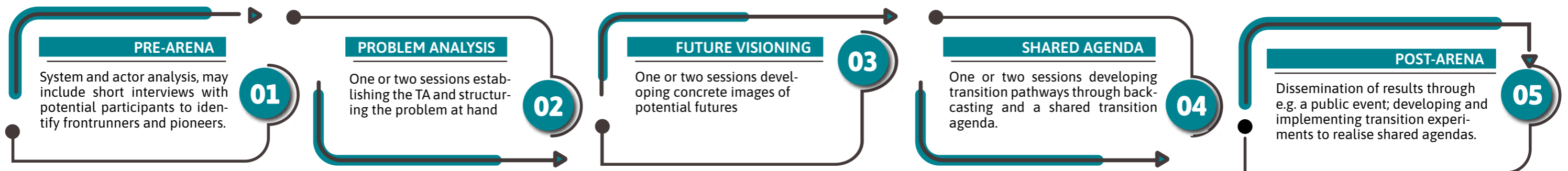
1. **Requires detailed planning** and knowledgeable facilitators.
2. **Demanding and time-consuming** approach that is prone to challenges such as lack of volunteer interest and participant drop-out.
3. **Difficulty of documenting effects** which may therefore be interpreted as implementation failure, even when processes are successful.



Participants


TM has been applied in energy, healthcare, and water, and on the scale of regions, cities, and neighborhoods. For the method to work well 'problem owners' need to commit to the process (e.g. municipalities, relevant organisation, or owners of a site such as a port). The TA should include frontrunners, pioneers and 'niche players'. It is important to strike a balance between being selective-exclusive (focusing on pioneers) and being broad-inclusive (including a greater diversity of stakeholders).

STEPS Building on theories of social learning, co-creation and group-facilitation methods, TAs tends to follow a sequence of steps which should be adapted to local conditions and how far progressed the transition is:




These steps should be adapted to local conditions and how far progressed the transition is. Cutting across the steps below, TM seeks to influence via four key dimensions: *Orienting; Agenda-setting; Activating; and Reflecting.*

Timeframe: TM and TAs require substantial planning which make them more suited for medium-to-long term initiatives. Each TA (including preparations and dissemination) can last about 9-18 months.




OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The establishment of a transition agenda is the main tangible outcome of the process. Ideally, TM should increase the capacity of participants to self-organise, including beyond TA activities. This can include a sense of direction, an impulse for local change and collective empowerment. Interviews conducted can give insights into persistent problems, transition possibilities and an understanding of the dynamics and interlinkages of multiple domains, actors, and scales.



RESOURCES NEEDED

High level of: organisational skills; scientific skills related to data collection, data management, analysis and communication; training of TA facilitators, and their commitment and time. Specific equipment needs will be based on TM topic but generally include a robust technical and organisational infrastructure for data collection, data storage, data processing and data analysis. Digital platforms for registration and categorisation of material are beneficial (e.g. Miro and Mentimeter).



ONLINE/OFFLINE

Can be organised as online and/or offline events. Physical events are preferable, and a mix of the two is better than exclusively online. TM often involves participants with busy schedules which can make the logistics challenging, thus on-line meetings are a suitable part of the mix.

LEARN MORE

Loorbach, D., and Rotmans, J., 2010. *The practice of transition management: Examples and lessons from four distinct cases*. *Futures*, 42(3), 237-246.

Roorda, C., Wittmayer, J., Henneman, P., Steenbergen, F. van, Frantzeskaki, N., and Loorbach, D., 2014. *Transition management in the urban context: guidance manual*. Rotterdam: DRIFT, Erasmus University.

Frantzeskaki, N., Hölscher, K., Bach, M. and Avelino, F., 2018. *Co-creating Sustainable Futures. A primer on Applying Transition Management in Cities*. Cham: Springer

REAL LIFE EXAMPLE: TOMORROW

The TOMORROW project produced a [workbook on TM for Just and Climate Neutral Cities](#) drawing on their work with six cities implementing participatory governance processes aimed at developing 2050 transition roadmaps.