

Urban sustainability transitions as spaces for experiential learning

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Focus

- **Urban sustainability transitions:** moving towards a more sustainable society through "learning by doing & doing by learning"
- Importance of experimental and experiential learning
- ≠ self-explanatory ideas: their meaning and educative value have to be explored theoretically and empirically

Aims

- Develop and present a **conceptual and analytical framework** for understanding urban sustainability transition initiatives as spaces for experiential learning
- Connect insights from **sustainability transition studies** and **political theory on new arrangements of governance** with theoretical frameworks developed in **pragmatist educational theory**
- Advance further **theoretical and empirical research** on how new political spaces of urban sustainability transitions can function as educative spaces that can foster **creativity** in view of exploring and developing new future visions and action perspectives for a transition towards a more sustainable society

Urban sustainability transitions

- Sustainability transitions = **transformative changes of socio-technical regimes at the systems level**, including major changes in production, consumption and distribution of wealth and well-being
- Urban initiatives = important to catalyse, intensify and accelerate sustainable transformations
- Urban initiatives and niche projects put pressure on dominant systems because they come up with alternatives

Urban sustainability transitions

- **Strategic niche management (SNM):** the successful development of niches requires: i) the articulation of expectations and visions, ii) the building of social networks, and iii) (second order) learning processes
- **Multi-level perspective (MLP)** on sustainability transitions: beyond niche-internal processes only → "contextual" factors: transitions more often take place when the stability of dominant systems is called into question both by landscape pressures and by internal contradictions of the regimes themselves.
- How can urban sustainability initiatives be analysed and understood as learning practices?

New political spaces: institutional void

- Government → multi-actor & multi-level governance (hybrid and autonomous networks)
- **Institutional void** = a situation that is characterised by a lack of generally accepted rules and norms for appropriate policy making and politics (Hajer)
- Involved actors deliberate to get to favourable solutions for particular problems, new institutional rules, new norms of appropriate behaviour and new conceptions of legitimate political intervention
- **Educative space?** More creative and less prescriptive:
 - Beyond teaching and learning predefined answers
 - Imagining & creating new desirable possibilities for a sustainable future

Initiatives

- Question:
 - What are the outcomes of the initiatives: reproduction/creativity?
- Why these outcomes: looking into the black box?

How to make sense of creativity?

- Learning theories
 - Constructivism: prior experiences
 - Socio-cultural theories: encounters with the social/cultural and the physical world
- The interplay between:
 - Peoples prior experiences (knowledge, values, power relations/governance ...)
 - Encountering new artefacts, settings, people ...

Transactional theory

- Complementary to the interactional perspective (natural science)
- A first person perspective on interplays
- John Dewey

Interaction

- Interaction: the encounter between two independent atoms, that one can measure before and after the encounter
- Measurement – independently of the researcher
- Sequential time and causal relations

Transaction

- All participants gets its meaning in an event, simultaneously and reciprocally
- Transaction as a figure
- In every event: history, now and future
- The psychological, the material and cultural are constitutive of each others: they becomes partners – relationally – to each others in a transaction

Educative moment

- Discourse practice = a hierarchical order of value spheres
- Foreground – background: theory of companion meanings and values
- Bodily, poignant and not intentional experience --- the discourse practice is dismantled
- Possibility to create something new - Educative moment

Analytical methods

- Dramaturgical analyses
- Practical epistemology analyses

Dramaturgical analytical frameworks

Hajer, Nahuis

- Empirical attention for the **design** of transition initiatives → performative perspective: the particular design of a setting in which utterances are made affects 'what is said, what can be said, and what can be said with influence'
- **Scripting**: characters in the play, cues for appropriate behaviour, access conditions
- **Staging**: organisation of an interaction through tools, methodologies, activities, formal and informal rules of the game, etc. (incl. artefacts and physical situation)
- **Performance**: the way in which the contextualised interaction itself produces social realities such as understandings of the issue at stake, knowledge, and new power relations

Practical epistemology analysis (PEA)

Wickman & Östman

- **Encounter**: with other people (e.g. teacher, peers), with the physical world, what is read in a book, experimental material, a statement, etc.
 - **Stand fast**: what people already know in a situation, point of departure for interactions with the world
 - **Gap**: break, visible through hesitation, question...
 - **Relation**: to fill a gap, a person has to create a relation between what already stands fast for him/her and what is new in an encounter
- **Learning & meaning making** = bridging gaps by constituting similarities and differences between the new and unknown and what is already known

Fruitful combination?

- Combining PEA and dramaturgical analysis in order to get a better understanding of urban sustainability transitions as educative spaces
- Can – how can – 'gaps' emerging in institutional voids open up for creativity?
- What kind of encounters and which ways to approach them allow for exploring and developing new, sustainable future visions and action perspectives?
- How do the scripting, staging and performance of urban sustainability transition initiatives affect whether and how gaps are noticed and handled and how participants fill gaps with relations?

No Cover Image. Urban Sustainability: A Global Perspective. edited by IGOR VOJNOVIC. Urban sustainability is linked to automobile dependence through the triple set of bottom-line environmental, economic, and social issues, as outlined in table 1. These problems have been developing a synergy of stresses that is finally reaching a point where cities must change or begin to collapse. Whole suburbs of highly car-dependent cities are now being abandoned as the multiple problems of living where there is no option to reach work or services other than long-distance car trips is beginning to destroy the financial, social, and environmental values that once drove such land development. Urban Sustainability Rhetoric and Neoliberal Realities: DURBAN A CITY IN TRANSITION. Urban environmental problems (e.g., air pollution, open space fragmentation and excessive fuel consumption) create the pressing need for urban sustainability. Such complexity poses a challenge to identify the causes of urban environmental problems and how to address them without causing greater deterioration. This integrated framework enables us to make meaningful comparisons among urban scenarios, adding to the existing array of sustainability assessment tools, such as the ecological footprint, life-cycle analysis, and integrated land-use transport GIS models (Deakin, Mitchell, Nijkamp, & Vreeker, 2007 provide a summary of some of these methods). Sustainability transitions. The environmental challenges ahead of us are global and systemic. Therefore, to achieve the EU's long-term sustainability goals, the core systems of our societies will have to change dramatically. That is especially true for the systems related to food, energy, mobility and construction. Achieving sustainability will require fundamental, transformative, and cross-cutting change. From words to action: how can EU policy drive sustainability transitions? The maps show the variations in green urban spaces, self-reported health and deprivation by county. Read more. Overview of limits for exposure of the general population to power frequency EMF in the EU.