

Circular economy by Task democracy:



Exploratory questions as a startup tool for
transformative action and transdisciplinary research

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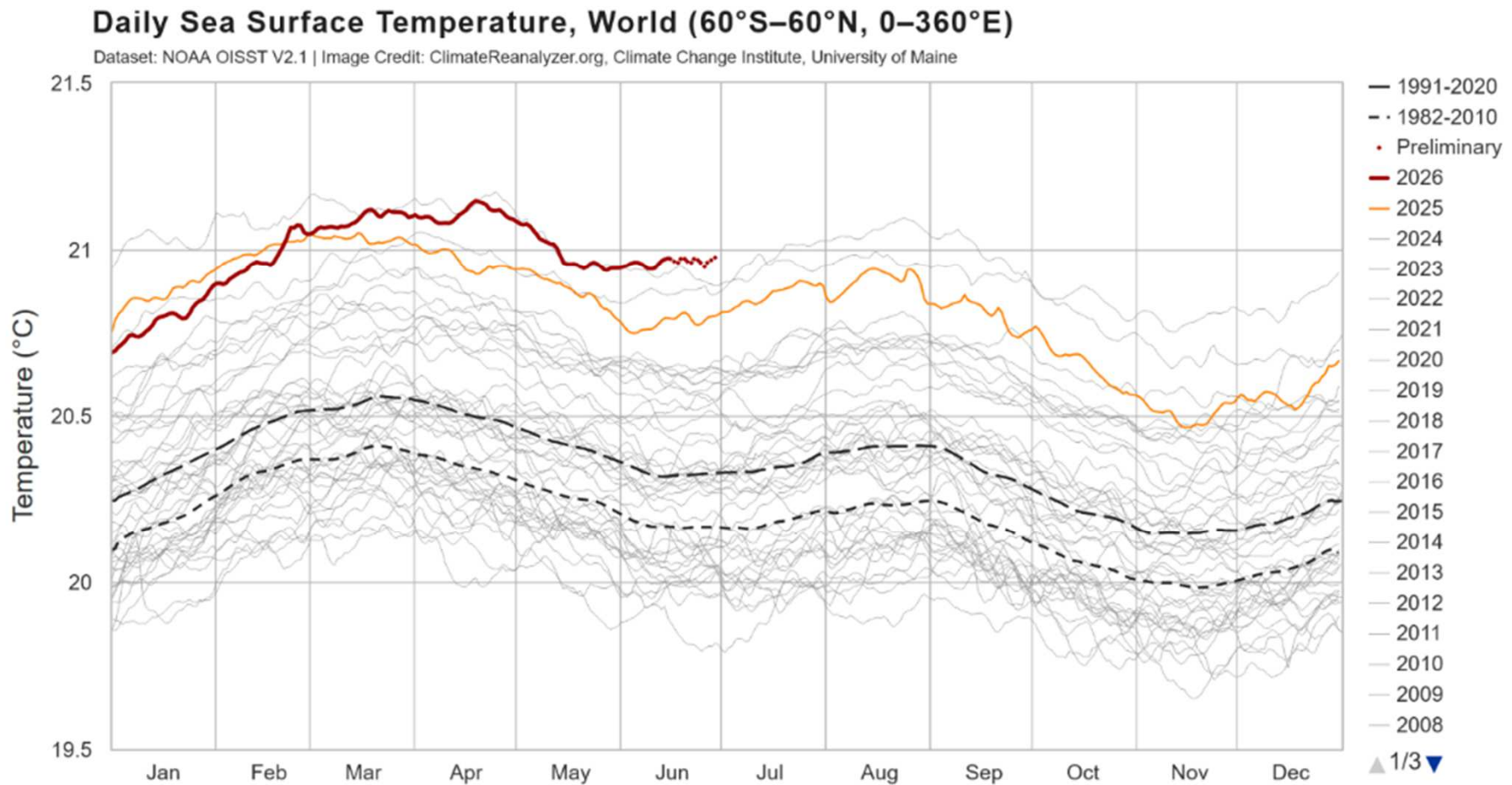
- **Relevance for SBM research**
- **Urgency and crises**
- **Model, tools, results**
- **Application area**
- **Implications for SBM research**
- **Barriers and action plan**
- **Startup questionnaire**
- **Field tests**
- **Conclusions**



Task democracy – relevance for SBM research

- Task democracy proposes a pathway for businesses to **co-create sustainable markets**
- This would benefit from more SBM research on
 - the **role of market wide business networks** in negotiating societal transitions
 - the **role of influential visionary entrepreneurs** to initiate platforms for this

Underestimated urgency



Underestimated urgency



Leon Simons ✓

Climate & Energy research

2w • 🌐

👻 BOO !!

I can't think of anything scarier than this.

The greenhouse gases we have added to the atmosphere now force over a billion Hiroshima bombs worth of heat into the Earth system every year.

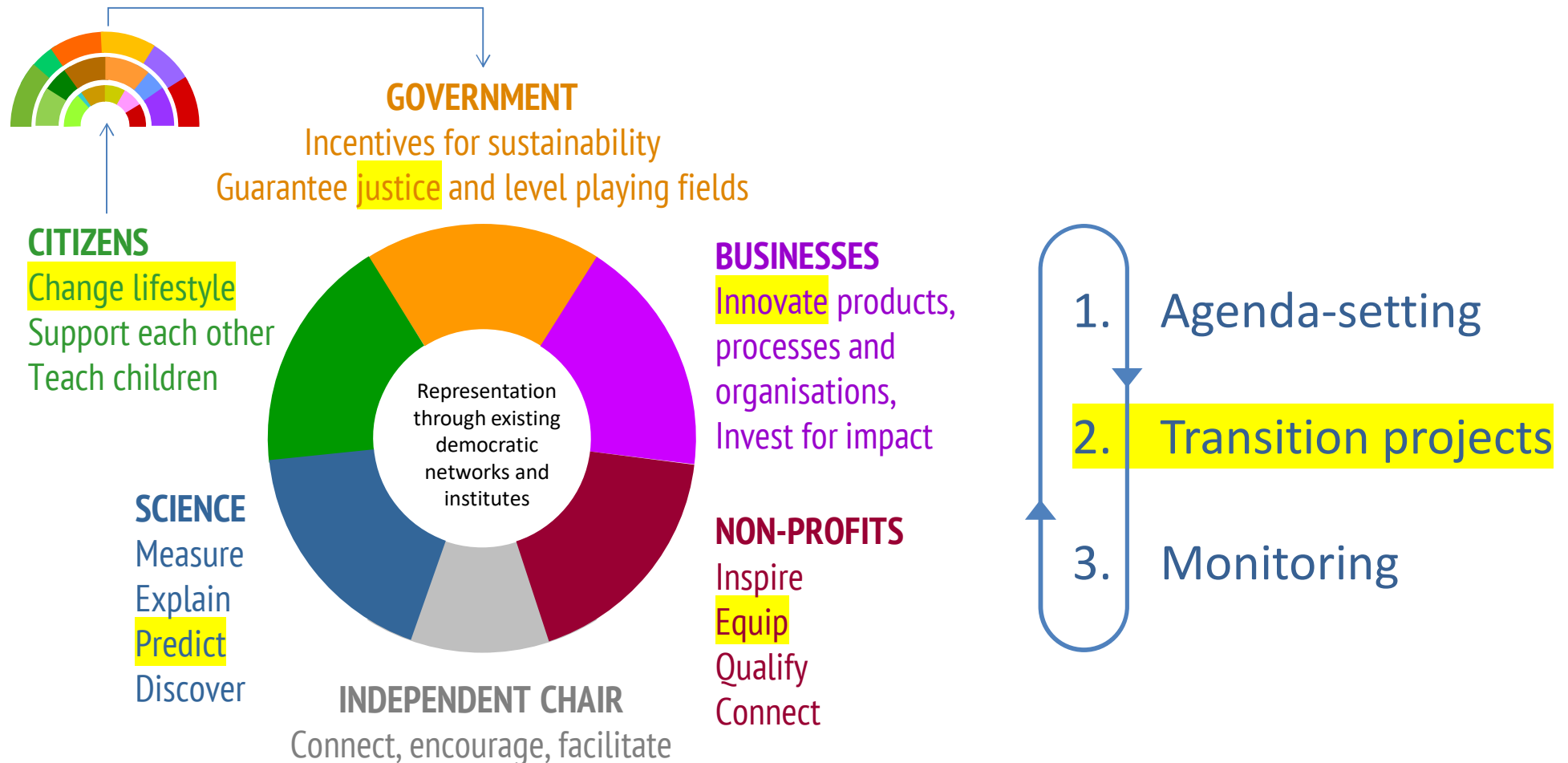
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90 comments · 56 reposts

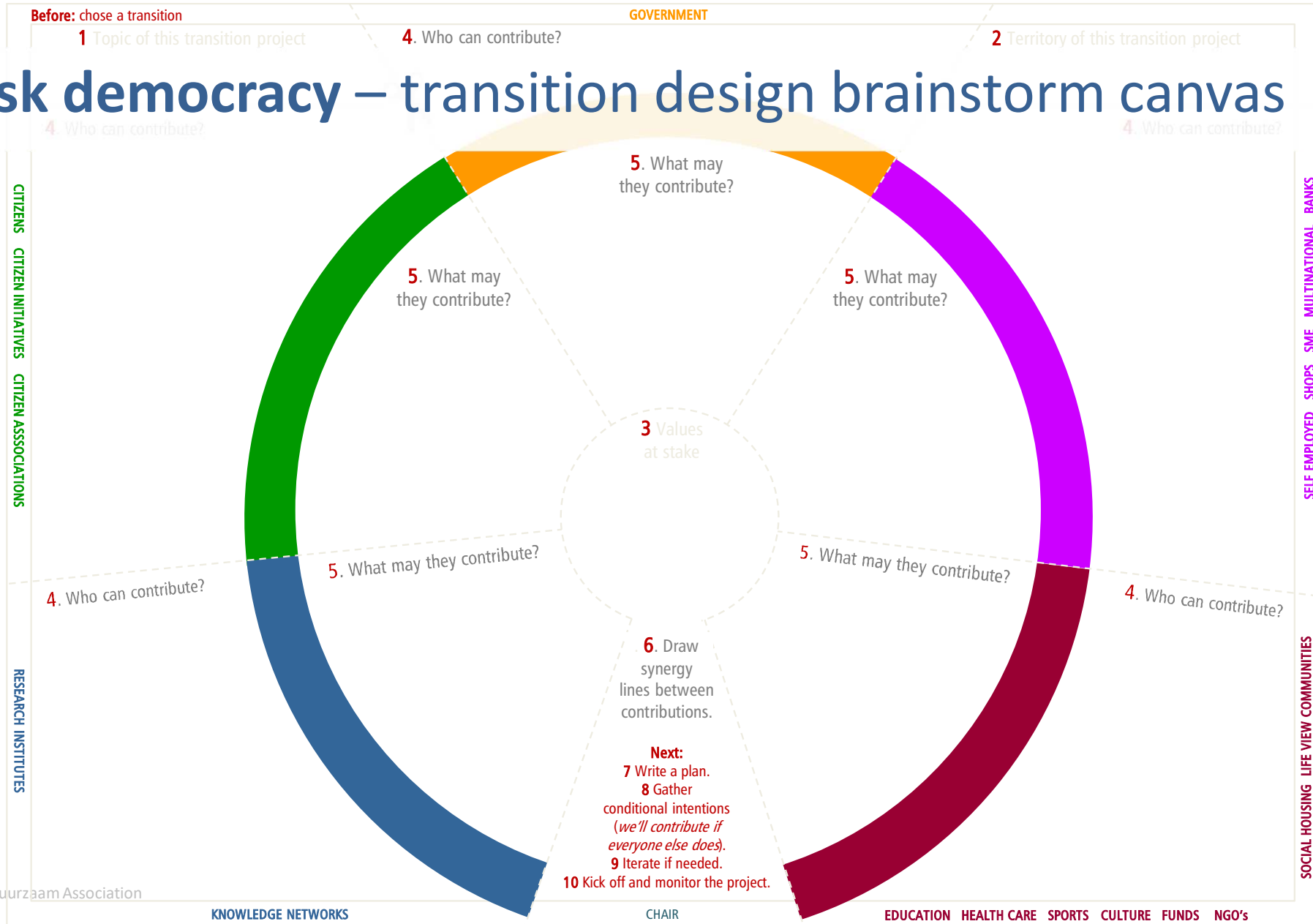
Blind spot in societal crisis handling

Crisis type	Impact: manageable. There are options. Government can handle it.	Impact: existential. There is little or no choice. All of society needs to be mobilised.
Pace: slow. there is time for multilevel political decision making.	• Labor migration, asylum migration • Natural resource shortages • Nitrogen crisis • Grid congestion • Housing crisis • Poverty • Drug crime  Liberal democracy: <u>Parliaments on all levels</u> decide on government policies, laws, budgets and public administration	• Extreme inequality, polarisation • Agriculture soil degradation • Geopolitical tensions • Climate migration • Biodiversity crisis • Climate crisis  Societal agreements: <u>Sector representatives and government</u> agree on transition task division
Pace: fast. Immediate action requires centralised hierarchical decision making.	• Water shortages • Local floodings • Pandemics • Wildfires • Hurricanes • Terrorism  Crisis law: <u>Government crisis or emergency response teams</u> deploy emergency services, police public health authorities, water boards, etc.	• Dike breach • Famine • Foreign aggression • Civil war  State emergency law: <u>War cabinets</u> deploy the military, mobilise all sectors of society, invoke help from allies and the international community

Task democracy – structure model and process model



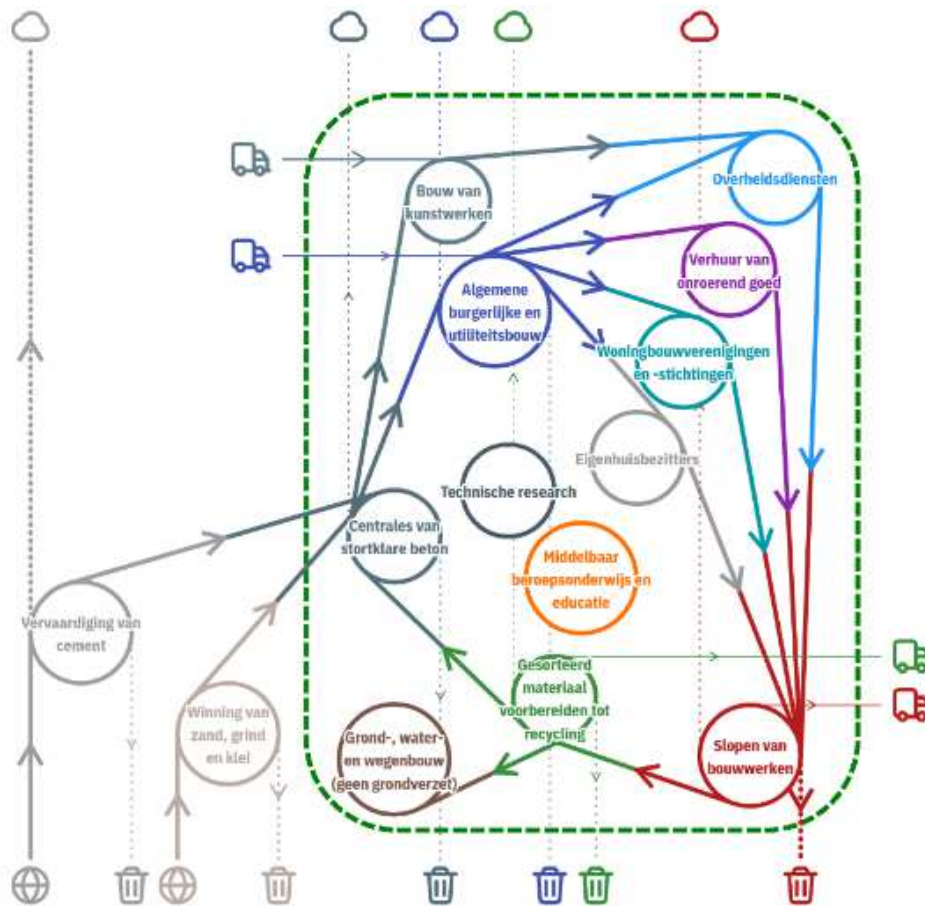
Task democracy – transition design brainstorm canvas





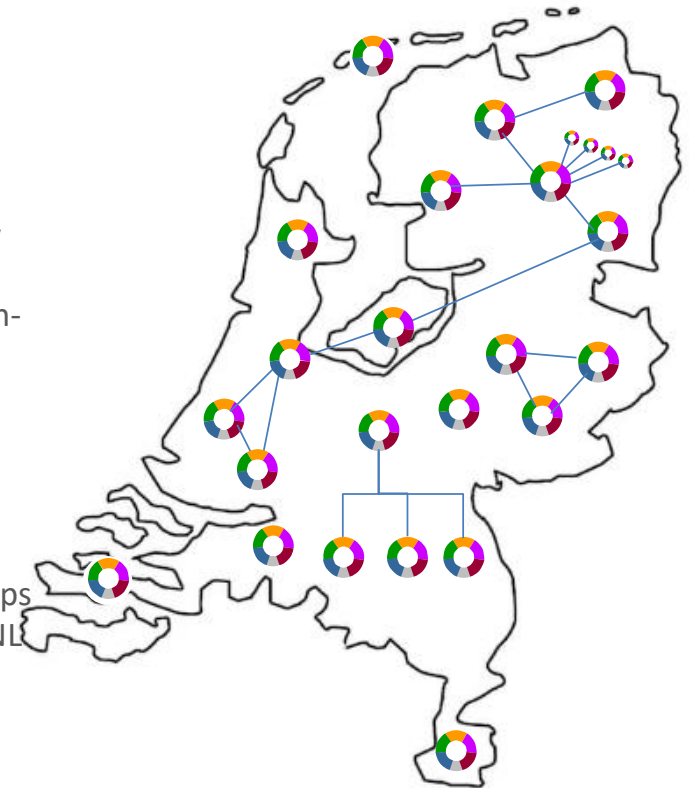
Task democracy – CE-visual and transition agreement

"I won't start on my own ...
... but we wouldn't object
being forced collectively"



Task democracy – Application area

- **Purpose:** effective handling of slow-but-existential crises
- **Method:**
 - Create a **support infrastructure** (community, toolkit, network, events, etc.) for transition accelerators (NGO's, researchers, consultants, facilitators, educators, funds, etc)
 - Maintain an expanding **knowledge base** with academic research and community contributions
 - **Invite all influential visionairies** in science, citizens, government, businesses, non-profits **to create a platform**
 - Call on governments to participate and provide **(meeting) facilities and support**
- **Phases:** research ► consultation ► debate ► small-scale experiments ► roll-out institutionalisation
- **Governance:** joint steering board by SDG NL (coordinator) and national task group representatives
- **Funding:** program: national administration; platforms: local govt, transitions: task groups
- **Potential:** around **10,000 task democratic platforms** for coordination of transitions in NL
 - E.g. village/neighbourhood councils, municipal transition chambers, municipal product councils (such as food councils), regional and national versions, water boards, area cooperatives, energy cooperatives, commons.



Implications for SBM Research: new directions

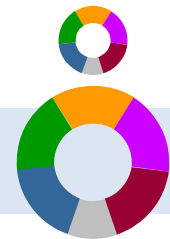
- Task democracy offers a pathway for businesses to **co-create sustainable markets** by synergetic collaboration with four other societal transition task groups
- This requires more research focus on the **role of business networks** in negotiating transition contributions
 - **Offering** innovation directions in products, services, processes and ownership models
 - **Inviting** inputs and support from science
 - **Triggering** citizens/customers to self-organisation for purchasing power
 - **Demanding** level playing field regulations and sustainable (price) policies from governments
 - **Proposing** other business (branch) networks to join forces for supply chain transitions
 - **Requesting** non-profits to inspire and prepare society for change (e.g. cohesion, curricula, commons)
- And in the **role of influential visionary entrepreneurs** to initiate platforms for such negotiation, in collaboration with their likes in the other four task groups

Implementation **barriers**

- **Under development** – relatively unknown
- **Differs** significantly from traditional models such as the helix family – risky?
- **Minority positions** for task groups – conflict with self-images, power dynamics?
- **Requires a joint effort** of five task groups – deadlock?

First mover action plan

- **First mover profile**
 - **Influential visionary** in one of the task groups (e.g. an entrepreneur)
 - Personal relations with **top level society wide network boards** in his/her task group
 - Willing to help set up a **platform for transition acceleration**
 - Access to **methodical support** (e.g. a facilitator or a transdisciplinary research project)
- **Initial action**
 - **Fill in the start-up questionnaire**
 - Find influential visionaries in the **other four task groups** in the same territory
 - Form an **initiator group**
- **Initiator group**
 - Do a **platform simulation** to learn the process
 - Develop a modest but **society wide transition plan**
 - Chose concepts for the platform **manifesto** and internal **rulings**
 - Find a **supportive public administrator** in the surrounding territory (a champion)
 - Invite **top level network boards** for an exploration session
 - Repeat the **simulation**, present the **manifesto**, explain the **rulings**
 - Ask support for and initiate the **transition plan**
- **Administrator group**
 - **Decide** to establish a preliminary platform
- **Preliminary platform**
 - Repeat the **simulation** to learn the process
 - Develop and **decide** about the manifesto and the rulings
 - Prepare the **platform installation**
- **Permanent platform**
 - **Start the transition cycle**: transition agenda setting, initiating transition projects, measuring trends and progress



Result: a CE Round Table Start-up Questionnaire template

Usage: first copy the table, remove non-applicable scale columns and add a wide column for answers. Next, in dialogue with task group representatives, fill in direct available answers and leave others for later.

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Local examples</i>	<i>National examples</i>	<i>Global examples</i>
A: Identification			
What is the territorial scope of this initiative?	Town, city, municipality	Province, region, national state	Continent, treaty organisation, UN
What product family is in need of sustainable transition within this territory?	Food, clothing, furniture, consumer electronics, household chemistry, bicycles.	Building materials, agriculture equipment, plastics, cosmetics, electronics, cars, public transport systems.	Power plants, wind turbines, airplanes, ships, oil, metals, bulk chemistry, medicines, textile, social media, AI, satellites, weapons.
What are key characteristics of this product family and supply line within this territory?	Local chain sections, local market volume	All chain sections apart from import and export, national market volume	All chain sections, global market volume

- To what extent are product family related task groups organised? - Which institutions and networks represent these task groups? - Who are sustainability opinion leaders in these task groups?	- Science: local expert groups - Citizens: local initiatives - Government: municipality - Businesses: local networks - Non-profits: local collective of educational institutes	- Science: national scientific council - Citizens: national consumers association; demand side business network - Government: ministries, agencies - Businesses: branch organisations - Nonprofits: national education council	- Science: intergovernmental scientific panel on this product family - Citizens: global citizens movements - Government: UN General Assembly - Businesses: global business branch network - Non-profits: UNESCO
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B: Transitions			
If a task-democratic product council would exist, what categories of product or supply line	Biodiversity loss, GHG emissions, food waste, pollution,	Ditto plus insufficiencies in research data, consumer information,	Ditto plus resource depletion, labour conditions, chain transparency
sustainability issues would they prioritise?	brain drain, repair shop viability	regulation, level playing field, innovation support, education	
Given such issues, what might be elements of society wide transition projects?	Development of regional supply chains, local business ecosystems ('valleys'), education, repair facilities, waste collection	Development of databases, product information, legislation, price policies, subsidies, compensations, curricula,	Development of international treaties, trade agreements, legislation, standardisation, certification, targets and sanctions

C: Benefits and barriers			
What benefits do opinion leaders in these task groups expect from round table collaboration between task groups for CE transitions?	Increased mutual understanding, increased local transformation capability	Increased mutual understanding, increased national transformation capability	Increased mutual understanding, increased global transformation capability
What implementation barriers do opinion leaders in these task groups expect regarding round table collaboration between task groups for CE transitions?	Unknown concept Minority positions Waiting for others Extra layer Corporatism	Unknown concept Minority positions Waiting for others Extra layer Corporatism	Unknown concept Minority positions Waiting for others Extra layer Corporatism
What collective measures may mitigate those barriers?	Lecture, scientific advice, workshop, think tank, pilot project	Scientific review, facilitated subnational experiments, developers community	Global research agenda, national experiments, developers community

D: Task group response			
How would task group opinion leaders respond to an invitation to collectively explore round table collaboration between task groups for CE transitions, on a scale from surely reject to surely accept? How do they estimate the response from the other task groups?	Expert groups Village councils Municipality Business networks Non-profits	Scientific CE council Province parliaments National government National entrepreneurial networks	Global scientific CE council National parliaments UN General Assembly Global business association
		National non-profit councils	Global non-profit councils

Evaluating the start-up questionnaire

- **Attitude up front:** initiators of task-democratic product councils consider a start-up questionnaire a welcome instrument;
- **First impression:** initiators consider the topics and the questions relevant;
- **First use experience:** initiators are able to answer the questions in reasonable time;
- **Direct result:** initiators indicate that answering the questions helps them in preparing next steps;
- **Impact:** in next steps, the intended goals are achieved.

Upcoming fields tests

- Three local food councils (awaiting subsidy)
- Regionals biobased materials council (first interviews taken)
- Neighbourhood council focusing on energy transition (proposal)
- Regional area cooperative (proposal to the board)
- National federation of transition accelerators (proposal to We All NL)
- National SDG action plan (draft, requested by SDG Netherlands)

Conclusions

- The polycrisis and the need for CE are **underestimated**
- Societal handling of slow-but-existential crises is **underregulated**
- A new type of **transition negotiating platform** is needed (e.g. task democracy)
- Such platforms reposition **business networks** in the societal context
- Creating such platforms is an action perspective for **influential visionaries**
- This transition pathway informs new RQ's for **SBM research**