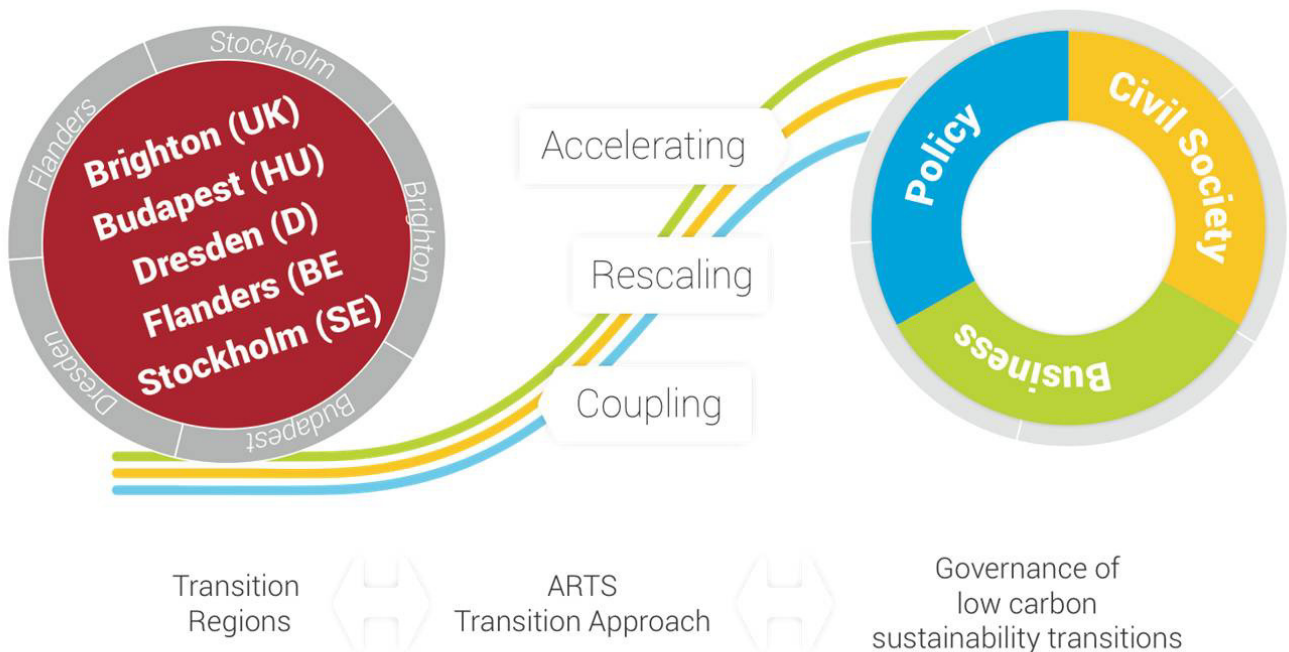


WHO RUNS THIS PLACE? UNPACKING LOCAL GOVERNANCE : SUMMARY

This document is a brief overview of presentations and discussions that took place during the first Transition Talk, held in Brussels on the 28th of May 2014.

Transition Talks are regular events organized in the framework of the ARTS project, bringing together policy-makers from different levels of governance, researchers and representatives of transition initiatives.

ARTS is a research project which aims to benefit theory, policy and practice related to accelerating sustainability transitions. For more information download a [brief overview](#) or visit the [project website](#).



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 603654.

## Our communities are changing, and yet, we need to accelerate!

*Niki Frantzeskaki, Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT), Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands*

- Transitions are fundamental changes in how social needs are fulfilled, long-term processes that cannot be steered from the top-down and therefore need a new governance focus
- The ARTS project is focusing on 5 transition regions, including Brighton, Dresden, Budapest, Stockholm and Flanders, where over the past decade a multitude of transition initiatives have emerged
- Transition initiatives are locally-based activities which drive transformative change towards environmental sustainability, their aim is to transform the way that basic services, such as mobility or energy, are provided, through the renewal or replacement of infrastructures and technologies, rules and norms, routines and practices, etc.
- Acceleration is about the increased pace and scale of change, as well as about increasing diversity of changes happening in multiple domains
- The mission of the ARTS project is to identify the mechanisms and local governance conditions for accelerating sustainability transitions, develop strategies and instruments to assist their acceleration and assess them with dynamic modelling approaches

## Supporting urban sustainability transitions at the European Level

*Ugo Guarnacci, DG Research & Innovation, European Commission*

- In the last few years urban issues have been quickly gaining traction at the European level, leading to a number of initiatives promoted by different Directorates-General and Member States, such as the [Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities](#), the [Covenant of Mayors](#), the [European Green Capital](#) or the [Joint Programming Initiative – Urban Europe](#)



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- The period 2014-2020 will see the establishment or further development of interesting mechanisms to promote urban sustainability, including [Community-Led Local Development](#), the new [URBACT](#) programme, [Mayors Adapt](#) initiative and the extended [Urban Audit](#)
- [Horizon 2020](#), the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, strongly encourages systemic approach to sustainable urban development, as well as a closer relationship with urban stakeholders; local governments are also eligible for the Horizon 2020 funding
- The [Renaturing Cities](#) conference, held on the 13th of May 2014, offered some interesting insights on the importance of nature-based solutions that, as elements of an innovative urban design, can help cities respond to environmental and economic challenges
- There are currently a number of EU projects that address questions similar or related to those addressed by ARTS, such as [TESS](#), [PATHWAYS](#), [GLAMURS](#), [GREEN SURGE](#) or [TRANSIT](#)

### Panel debate: Can a multitude of diverse initiatives turn a region around? Learning from Flanders

*Leen Gorissen (VITO), Jorn Verbeeck (The Flemish Waste & Materials Agency), Bart Vercoutere (i – Cleantech Flanders), moderation: Ania Rok, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability*

- [Flanders in Action](#) is a process initiated by the Government of Flanders to achieve economically innovative, sustainable and socially caring society by 2020, it was integrated in the 2009-2014 coalition agreement and supported by social partners and civil society in the framework of the Pact 2020
- In 2011 the Pact 2020 signatories have decided to focus on 13 transversal themes, representing great societal challenges that will determine the long-term future of Flanders; responding to these challenges requires a new mentality and a new governance approach, employing transition thinking



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- Using transition thinking as a method and working in a quadruple helix (university-industry-government-civil society) is a learning experience for all partners involved and while not always easy, it facilitates integrated approach and ensures greater political sustainability of the initiative
- The themes include e.g. Streamlining of Targeted Innovation Policy (one of the steps was the creation of iCleantech, a cluster for clean and pure technology), Sustainable Materials Management (to build foundation for a green circular regional economy), Flanders' Care (supporting innovation in the care sector and the care economy), Smart Mobility and Sustainable Living and Building
- Transition is the result of mutually reinforcing developments in the economic, cultural, ethical, technological, ecological, social and institutional field; administrations, companies, knowledge institutions, socio-cultural organizations, environmental associations and individual citizens each play their part in this
- The ARTS project will focus on one city in Flanders, starting from the inventory of initiatives, through history and acceleration workshops with selected initiatives, to a dynamic modelling process looking at the opportunities for acceleration

The questions from the audience addressed, among others:

- the inclusiveness of transition initiatives (how to accelerate without leaving anyone behind?),
- protest initiatives as a special case of transition initiatives (what can be learned from protest initiatives?), and
- the issue of building trustful relationships on all levels (e.g. local governments – European Commission, local administration – transition initiatives, researchers- transition initiatives).



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