POWER IN TRANSITION

A COMPARATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY ON THE POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS

IAN RINKES EN RAZIA JAGGOE

Student: Ian Rinkes

Studentnumber: 5925762

Email: i.rinkes@students.uu.nl

Student: Razia Jaggoe

Studentnumber: 6491464

Email: r.h.jaggoe@students.uu.nl

Supervisor: Kees Koonings

Email: c.g.koonings@uu.nl

Wordcount: 21398

Date: 9-7-2021

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

List of abbreviations

MLP	Multi-level perspective (transition management framework)
SFSC	Short Food Supply Chain (also referred to as 'short chain' or *korte keten*)
TKK	*Taskforce Korte Keten* (Taskforce Short Food Supply Chain)
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy (also GLB; *gemeenschappelijk landbouwbeleid*)
NSP	*Nationaal Strategisch Plan* (National Strategic Plan: Dutch implementation of CAP)
LNV	*Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit* (Ministry of Agriculture)
VWS	*Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport* (Ministry of Health)
LTO	*Land- en Tuinbouworganisatie* (advocacy group for agri- and horticulturalists)
TCV	*Transitiecoalitie Voedsel* (advocacy group for accelerating the food transition)
IPO	*Interprovinciaal Overleg* (advocacy group for the Provinces)
COPA-COGECA	*Comité des organisations professionnelles agricoles-Comité général de la coopération agricole de l'Union européenne* (European advocacy group for agriculturalists)
WUR	Wageningen University and Research
UFF	Utrecht Food Freedom
UU	Utrecht University
HvA	*Hogeschool van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences)

1. Introduction

"You could sit down in a corner, and shout (…) But that has never really helped. So, yes, building on something structurally, to change a system. From the beginning it's been about system change. Long road, long breath."

- M., April 29th, 2021

Those working on changing 'the system' know all too well that it does not happen overnight. As awareness on the literal un-sustainability of current economical systems is growing, people across society are acknowledging the need for structural change. In our globally interconnected systems of living, mitigating the negative effects of those systems requires a transition involving changes in various arenas (Geels 2010; Rotmans 2012). Such a society-wide transition can only be understood from perspectives of longevity and complexity. In the Netherlands, the concept of transition – whether pertaining to energy, food, or other facets of life – is currently being used, lived and shaped by amongst others policymakers, civilians, entrepreneurs and scientists. While related to complex systems theory (Avelino and Grin 2016) and from there out an academical concept, the notion of transition plays a large role in various social settings. And maybe more importantly, vice versa, the social realities of those working on 'the transition' ultimately shape what the term entails. By looking at the everyday social worlds of two different contexts occupied with the food- and the energy transition, we aim to gain a better understanding of what really makes up a transition. Through focussing on the inherent power dynamics in both the effort to create short food supply chains (SFSC's) in the Netherlands and the steering towards sustainable energy consumption in Rotterdam, we will show how the socio-political settings of these contexts shape the transitions themselves. Ian has researched the network of people striving for SFSC's and more regional food systems, departing from the grassroots-initiated *Taskforce Korte Keten* (TKK). Razia has focused on the conventional hierarchical organization of the Rotterdam municipality, working on their city's energy transition.

1.1 Aim and Central Research Question

Scholarly attention to transitions and system change has increased rapidly the last years (El Bilali 2019) and researchers are heavily involved with the practicing side of sustainability as well. The frontrunners working on these transitions are attempting to strategize and steer far-stretching changes. Yet, fundamental changes are already taking place in several areas of society, where the

frontrunners are regularly challenged and doubted by organizations and people in positions of vested power. This comes as no surprise from those profit-oriented sectors – and the incumbent structures that are built on them – that must eventually change altogether for the purpose of protecting earths' exhausted climate. Since transitions are inherently political, they are shaped by existing and shifting power relations (Avelino 2016). We aim to provide an ethnographic description of power relations in two different organisational contexts working on the food- and energy transition. By interpretatively comparing two wholly different settings in which actors aim for structural changes, we strive to further the understanding of the culturally dictated workings of innovative practices. We have used Grin's (2010) adaptation of the multi-level perspective (Geels 2008, in 2010), as a rough framework for analysis. By adopting this perspective, we also aim to see if it is compatible with ethnographic methods. We have formulated the following central research question: *How do everyday power relations shape the sustainability transition within two organisational contexts in the Netherlands?*

To assess this broad question ethnographically, we dissected it into three subtopics. First, we set out to provide an understanding of the organisational structures in which we conducted research. Without trying to provide an all-encompassing description of the full networks in which we operated, we analysed our research settings ethnographically and studied the networks that emerged around them through fieldwork. The topics of research context and organisational structure are covered in chapter three. Second, we aimed to interpretatively assess the goals, motivations and visions of actors within our settings. This topic is covered in our fourth chapter. Third, and most central to our research question, we have looked at power dynamics in language, lobbying efforts and decision-making. This topic is covered in our fifth chapter, and provides the last empirical material with which we have constructed our conclusion.

1.2 Relevance

Our research has significant theoretical relevance. Recent literature on sustainability transitions points towards the need for more interpretive data on the politics of transition (Avelino and Grin 2017). Anthropological attention for tacit details and the discipline's method of participant observation - which provides deep interpretive understanding of everyday realities - is a perfect fit for the research gap which these transition theorists have identified. Moreover, as of yet there have been no ethnographic studies into our respective research contexts: the Rotterdam municipal bureaucracy and the network around the TKK. Furthermore, our appliance of system theory to real

everyday settings provides a necessary illustration of the contextual details that make up the greater part of transition politics. Finally, in adopting the power levels in the multi-level perspective from Grin (2010) into anthropological research, we are adding to the epistemological debate on research into sustainability transition. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only cultural anthropological research into the politics of sustainability transitions in the Netherlands.

From a societally applied perspective, our research also has significant relevance. A better understanding of transition dynamics - and its inherent power aspects - could help sustainable transition efforts by providing concrete examples and analyses of the social dimension it ultimately relies on. Any research that could increase the efficacy of a transition – which we believe to be the inevitable 'solution' for most contemporary crises – is significant to say the least.

1.3 Methods and Ethics

To gain insight into the organization of people who work at systematic changes in the organization of consumption and production, we have interpretatively compared the bottom-up initiated network of the TKK – working on the food transition – contrasted with the conventional hierarchical institute of the Rotterdam township – working on the energy transition. The larger part of our research was conducted through doing participant observation in the settings described below. We have triangulated the fieldnotes from participant observation with semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Ian's research population consisted of the network around the TKK, as seen through participating at the consultancy company Amped for three months. In total 38 informants provided information regarding organisation, visions, power and a host of other subjects. Most 'field'work was done in Amped's office building in *fort 't Hemeltje* in Houten, in which the companies Local2local and Compazz also reside. Through attending meetings, reading documents, following conversations with other actors and most importantly the tried and proven anthropological method of 'hanging around', an initial understanding of above mentioned topics was constructed. Much of the communication with actors outside 'the fortress' was done through digital media. In some of the digital meetings someone from Amped was present, for example a workgroup with the TKK and five policymakers from different Provinces. In others 'participant' observation was conducted independently, like during a Flevofood board meeting. Aside from participant observation in the office and digital spheres, quite a few days were spent at another fortress (*Lunet I*), in which a sustainability-oriented

youth community called Grounded resides. During the last phase of research twelve semi-structured interviews – ranging from thirty minutes to two hours – were conducted through video calling. Four of the TKK's programming board members were interviewed, and two of its advisory board as well. Six more individuals from other organisations were interviewed and all TKK members represent other organisations as well. Through these conversations, perspectives from a range of actors were gathered. These included Local2local/Amped, Food Hub, WUR, LTO, TCV, ZLTO, Flevofood, Rabobank, the Municipality of Amsterdam, the Province of Flevoland and the Province of Utrecht. A visual representation of informants and interviewees within the broader SFSC-networks can be found in the third chapter.

Razia's research population involved one project team at the municipality of Rotterdam, recruited from the department of Sustainability and the department of Societal Development, consisting of five people, of whom two policymakers, one project leader and one (other) intern - when fieldwork started in January. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this teamwork took place in the digital realm, and eventually was left with three people including Razia. Taking part in this team, many different internal and external network relations were observed in a multitude of meetings, over the period from January 4th, 2021, until the 2nd of April 2021. These meetings involved department heads, (other) policymakers from Sustainability and Societal Development, investment funds, welfare organizations, scientists, project developers, an energy corporation, a housing corporation, social workers, and energy coaches. From this bunch, seven open- and semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed, less than desired due to changing circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Most data were gathered by participating in endless consultations (and preparations for those), often irrelevant for this study.

Taking part in our respective fields automatically introduced us to their documented body of work. Both research settings were packed with textual and visual documents containing strategies, schedules, infographics, briefings, geographical data and official statements. Sometimes these documents aimed to inform actors higher up the hierarchy, co-workers, associates, external stakeholders or 'the public' – and sometimes they served as the skeleton of the forthcoming framework, or as part of lobbies. While taking up all the information in relevant documents, we noticed that there was too much (technical) content to use in the scope of this study. The construction of these documents through spoken and textual conversations between the ones composing them was anthropologically more interesting.

The data from fieldnotes, interviews and documents was organised and analysed using NVivo. Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed fully, those of meetings were transcribed selectively. Ian made more audio recordings in the beginning of fieldwork due to a hand injury. The data was stored in locked files on our laptops, under codes that do not trace back to informants. In preparation of – and during our fieldwork, we have constantly put the welfare of our informants central, through informing them of our research aims, methods and possible risks, before asking for their consented cooperation. Prevention of harm and deception has constantly informed our steps. In analysing data we sometimes discussed with our informants which topics could be covered. We encountered two dilemmas in this respect.

The first ethical dilemma was our concern to achieve the protection of our informants, as we continued to see the ease by which they could be recognized in our writings. Putting the wellbeing of our research populations central, we carefully aimed to protect their identity by refraining from specific descriptions of locations, names of job functions and organizations, and in some cases, replacing gender references with 'them'. Related was the mentioning of sensitive information in business or governance dealings. We have refrained from going into details on some topics, often weakening the 'thick description' that we set out to create. On some occasions, informants specifically noted that some information could not be used, while in others we made our own judgments in the potential harm of focussing on certain topics.

Our second dilemma that we acknowledge in retrospect is that from the start, we have felt invested in the transition aims of our research populations. Feeling involved and in agreement with these larger incentives perhaps impacted our perceptions of our research fields and populations. To address this, our reflective conversations kept us aware of this implication, since in our understanding continuous reflection is the anthropologists' most important skill to exercise. There is of course a large body of literature on public or engaged anthropology, but we felt this particular research did not fit into the category. This was mainly a result of our initial aim to provide a more general overview of power relations, assuming we would not get 'caught up' in the feelings that arose in our research settings. Both of these dilemmas are addressed in more detail in our personal reflections, see attachments.

1.4 Structure Outline

We start out with providing a theoretical framework and a review of relevant literature in the second chapter. The third chapter provides an ethnographic understanding of the two organisational contexts of our research, because these contexts – especially in the case of SFSC-networks – involve larger networks and arrangements we speak of 'ecologies'. Our fourth chapter addresses the goals, motivations and visions of actors in our settings. Our fifth chapter covers the power relations in transition through the lenses of language, lobbying and decision-making. In our empirical chapters (3,4,5) the SFSC-networks are covered first, after which the Municipality of Rotterdam is addressed. In our sixth and final chapter we provide a comparative conclusion of findings and engage in a dialogue with the relevant literature on transitions.

2. Towards an understanding of transition politics

The last decades it has become increasingly clear that the co-evolution of what we call industrialisation, modernisation and globalisation has produced collaborative systems of living that are inherently unsustainable. The increasing size and complexity of infrastructures such as food- and energy production, fuelled by a demand intertwined with the above-mentioned processes, have brought about a growing number of persistent social and environmental problems. A rise in global temperature, heavier soil degradation, a severe reduction of earth's biodiversity and the disconnection between farmers and consumers are some examples. Growing attention towards these problems has fuelled a large body of academic literature on modernity's consequences, sustainability, and socio-technical transformations. We will not describe the academic debate around the concept of sustainability and instead agree with Grin and Avelino (2016) that it is always a normative phrase that can only be researched contextually. In this theoretical exploration we will look at modernity's inherent risks, the field of transition studies, the multi-level perspective and the notion of power in transition. After which we will argue why cultural anthropology could be a discipline well equipped for researching sustainability transition.

2.1 The inherent risks of modernity

-by Ian Rinkes

Modernity itself has been the subject of a lot of scholarly attention. While a proper discussion of the phenomenon is too lengthy to describe here, we will try to shed some light on it. We will use Anthony Giddens' (1998) notion of modernity as a social order more dynamic and technical than any previous ones, characterised by an attitude towards the (natural) world as open to human intervention; industrial production and a market economy as the main economic institutions; and the emergence of political institutions such as the nation-state and mass democracy. We use Giddens' somewhat definitional sociological interpretation of modernity because it falls in line with our focus on systems and the overlap of his work with that of Ulrich Beck, which we will discuss later. Modernity has also been conceptualised more abstractly as new modes of living characterised by a move away from tradition (Newell 2012, Delanty 2007, Foucault 1980), and more critically as the rise of capitalism, consumerism, individualism and alienation (Adorno 1973). All interpretations, however, share the view that modernity cannot be examined without attention for closely related processes such as industrialisation and globalisation (Appadurai 1996).

Globalisation, in fact, cannot be properly examined without (implicitly) mentioning modernity and vice versa (Eriksen 2014, Appadurai 1996). Again, the scholarly debate around this topic is too vast to fully describe here. A simplistic description would be that modernity refers more to modes of living while globalisation has more to do with spatial dynamics. Of course, acceleration, as much a temporal dynamic as a spatial one, is an important part of both globalisation and modernity. The higher pace of movement by people, products and information is a main feature of our next related concept, one that brings us closer to the systemic problems of modernity: uncertainty and risk.

Ulrich Beck's notion of the 'Risk Society' (1992) refers to the idea that industrialised modernity has brought about the as of yet unprecedented possibility to destroy [our] life on this planet. The nature of risk in the era of globalisation has become increasingly unpredictable and too complex for humans, individually and collectively, to respond to with existing safety nets or structures of insurance. The realisation of this omnipresence of risk within modernity coincides with a move away from what Beck calls 'simple modernisation' - characterised by a belief in the linear dynamics of industrial progress - towards a more 'reflexive modernisation', in which increasing concerns about risk lead to self-confronting feedback into ongoing modernising processes. We will further discuss reflexivity in a later section. And we should mention that while we are aware of criticism on Beck's work, it is a useful theoretical translation of the inherence of risk within modern society (Grin and Marijnen 2011, Elliot 2002).

As widely accepted by environmental scientists, philosophers, policymakers and broader society, the current socio-technical system produced by modernity is unsustainable and carries with it inherent risks to our climate and food and energy safety. Staying clear of a description of all the risks involved in global industrial modernity, it is worth providing some context to the risks related to our specific case-studies. The rise of the global agro-food industry has caused rising levels of methane, unprecedented animal cruelty and the disembedding of local food cultures, risks that short food supply chain (SFSC)-efforts are trying to mitigate. Energy production based on fossil fuels is notorious for its contribution in global temperature rises and air pollution, risks that have – albeit indirectly - caused the need for an energy transition in Rotterdam municipality. All of these problems are rooted in globalised, disconnected practices that interact at multiple levels and more often than not transcend contemporary spheres of control and governance.

2.2 A multi-level perspective on sustainability transitions

-    by Razia Jaggoe

So, the dominant societal structure – characterised by global industrialism – creates persistent crises that are firmly embedded within that structure. Solving these persistent crises must thus involve the transformation of societal structure itself (Grin 2011, Rotmans 2001). When changes take place in several different areas, while they are connected and strengthen each other, this process is called a transition (Rotmans, 2001: 16). These areas may confine technology, the economy, institutions, behaviour, culture, ecology and belief systems (Rotmans, 2001: 16). Transition refers to the process of intended changes in various domains that together serve a greater, long-term purpose, stretching over time and space. One example of a rather far stretching developed, global, long-term transition is the digitalization that is occurring in many different areas of society.

The transition process that is central to our research is the transition towards sustainable ways of living. Sustainability is pursued by different actors, such as companies and local governments, in various aspects of societies. Governmental institutions and companies are conceptualized as socio-technical systems, consisting of an interdependent and co-evolving mix of technologies, supply chains, infrastructures, markets, regulations, user practices and cultural meanings (Geels, 2018: 225). Socio-technical systems provide societal functions such as mobility, heating, housing and sustenance, and they develop over decades (Geels, 2018: 225). What we are looking into is the transition towards sustainable socio-technical systems, in our context being several food distributing organizations and the municipality of Rotterdam.

Taking a closer look at the different areas in which the process of transition takes place we adopt the multi-level-perspective, as theorized by Geels (2018: 226). *Multi-level-perspective* assumes that transition involves the interaction of processes at three levels, namely at a macro, meso and micro level (Grin, 2011: 1). This division resembles the division into niches, regimes and socio-technical landscapes, that inform changes in socio-technical systems (Rip, Kemp, 1997 in Rotmans, 2001: 19). Each level entails different types of power, to which we will now turn.

The macro level involves conglomerates of institutions and organizations, such as nations or federation of states (Rotmans, 2001: 19). The macro level is also referred to as the socio-technical landscape (or in short: landscape) and consists of material and immaterial components such as

material infrastructure, political culture and coalitions, social values, worldviews and paradigms, the world economy, demography and the natural environment (Rip, Kemp, 1997 in Rotmans, 2001: 19).

Here we find structural power in the form of symbolic and economic capital, or orders of signification, legitimization and domination (Grin, 2011: 4). Perhaps the most relatable example of landscapes with structural power are national and transnational authorities (or bonds) such as the European Union or the legally binding Paris Agreement. The macro level responds relatively slowly to trends and developments, where it's undercurrents can speed up or slow down a transition, but for the most part its structures remain as they are. "*Changes in worldviews (belief systems) and macro policies (such as agreements in WTO rounds or CFC control policy) may rain down upon the macro landscape, but its contours still dictate their convergence into rivers*" (Rotmans, 2001: 20).

The meso level involves networks, communities and organizations, and is otherwise referred to as the regime (Rotmans, 2001: 20). The meso level relates to dominant practices, rules and shared assumptions, "*where the interests, rules and beliefs that guide private action and public policy are often aimed at optimizing instead of transforming systems*" (Rotmans, 2001: 20). The regime embodies dispositional power, visible in rules, resources, actor configurations and dominant images of the issues involved. An example of regimes involving dispositional power - related to our case - would be a municipality, which has to operate within rules and regulations in the socio-technical landscape. Dispositional power in other words positions actors at the (micro) level of experiments, who draw on (meso) rules, resources, actor configurations and dominant (macro) images of the issues involved (Grin, 2011: 4). According to Rotmans (2001: 20), regimes change as a result of internal conflict or external pressure, which can arise bottom-up from the micro level. When this occurs, regimes can turn to a defensive approach whereby other actors are discredited, or a reactive approach where the current system is improved, or an innovative approach by actively seeking to contribute to a transition. Over the course of time all three responses are tangible (Rotmans, 2001:20).

The micro level involves individual actors, such as individuals, companies, or environmental movements and is also referred to as niche level (Rotmans, 2001: 20). Niches are conceived as spaces where innovation is actively protected against certain aspects of the existing regime, such as unfavorable market conditions (Hendriks, Grin, 2007: 335). Niches are also zones where a variety of experiments take place, which facilitate learning and build networks (Kemp et al., 1998, pp. 185– 86).

Here the focus is on *relational power*, referring to differences between actors' competences and abilities, in drawing on the regime's support (Grin, 2011: 4). The micro level includes individual actors, technologies and local practices, where variations to and deviations from the status quo can occur (Rotmans, 2001:19) due to its experimental character. In short, the micro level concerns individuals who operate in niches where experiments are based on relational power.

Changes in one level of Geels' MLP may influence changes in the others (Rotmans, 2001: 20). Market regulations or sustainability goals (for instance) that are transnationally agreed on, at macro level, guide national hence local regulations on a meso level, bordering the area in which networks of individuals operate in the micro sphere. This interrelatedness also works the other way around. If innovations or changes in niches settle into a dominant design around which learning processes take place, a support basis arises, creating the momentum for take-off into meso and macro levels (Rotmans, 2001: 20). By now we might expect that changes only take place if developments in one level correspond with those in other levels, yet the transition process demands interaction between developments at all three levels (Rotmans, 2001:20).

2.3 Criticism on transition theory: power and relationality

- by Ian Rinkes

The heuristic framework of the multi-level perspective (MLP) is a model used in Transition Management (TM) and Strategic Niche Management (SNM). These are governance pathways for steering (sustainable) innovation, co-produced by researchers, policymakers and practitioners. TM, SNM and MLP have been criticized and built upon constantly since their conception (Avelino 2016).

First, the "co-production" of transition theory with policymakers and researchers has been criticized as unacademical action-research and even 'technocratic modes of governance by elite visionary forerunners' (Hendriks 2007). It is true that transition management and the models it uses are action-focused and have been applied and reflected upon in policy. We feel however, that action theory is not necessarily a bad thing when related to changing an inherently dangerous socio-technical system. Nevertheless, it remains the case that transition theory is developed by a handful of researchers (mainly from DRIFT in Rotterdam) and practitioners and is heavily geographically biased. Research is done mainly by English and Dutch researchers and is applied the most in the Netherlands (El Bilali 2019).

More related to MLP's content, it has often been criticised for its poor conceptualisation of niche, regime and landscape (El Bilali 2019) and for lack of attention to power (Meadowcroft 2011; Smith, Stirling and Berkhout 2005). Notions of power have since been integrated into transition theory. As a number of scholars have pointed out, (sustainability) transitions are inherently political (a.o.: Hendriks 2007, Grin 2011, Hoffmann 2013, Avelino and Grin 2016, Avelino et al. 2016). The term *political* here should be understood in its broadest sense, as all co-operating and conflicting activities whereby humans organise their resources to (re-)produce biological and social life (shortened, from Leftwich 1983, in Avelino et al. 2016: p. 557). This broad definition blurs the boundary between 'the political' and 'the social' to illustrate that power is not limited to classical political institutions. To stress the importance of power ('the political') in 'the social', however, Avelino et al. (2016: p. 559) argue for more political sensibility in our understanding of socio-material or socio-technical systems as described above. They also stress the importance of understanding the dispersed nature of power and agency in transitions. Different dimensions of power are located with various interrelated agents at numerous levels (p. 560). This understanding breaks down the neat categories of niche and regime as described by Geels' (2010) MLP. Overall, Avelino et al. (2016) conceptualise transition politics as relational, networked and contextual, as subject to constant (re-)framing and translation and as intertwined with material practices and institutional routines. In all these additions of complexity we can make a simplistic observation: the politics of transition defies neat categorisation and requires a research approach that has attention for contextual details. known amongst anthropologists as thick description. It might be worth examining concepts such as framing and (subcultural) translation at a later stage.

As we saw already in the previous section, Grin (2011) locates Bourdieu's notion of relational power at the micro-(or niche) level of transitions and dispositional power at the meso-(or regime) level. Grin being a co-author in Avelino et al. (2016), in which all power in transitions is understood as relational, these categories should mainly act as a framework for understanding the institutionalisation of certain forms of power. The relational aspect of power involves, especially within certain institutions, a hierarchical aspect. And, probably more related to structural and dispositional power, we must also consider frames of authoritative knowledge and 'regimes of truth' in the Foucauldian sense. Framing constitutes the creation of certain regimes of knowledge, often to make sense of complex matters (Silvast and Virtanen 2019). Dominant frames can thus be conceptualised as 'regimes of truth' with structural influence on attempts at agency. Challenging

innovative ideas, new 'frames', are often constantly reframed to fit the dominant discourse in different institutions, or – from a multi-level perspective – different levels. The strategic games involved in sustainability discourse is an area that is slowly receiving more attention (Avelino 2021). The concept of 'capture' of innovation by incumbent actors shows that transition should be understood as a dialectical process instead of a linear direction (Pel 2015). As research into the notion of power in transitions grows, it becomes broader and more nuanced. Avelino (2021) differentiates power 'over' versus power 'to'; centred versus diffused power; consensual versus conflictual power; constraining versus enabling power; quantity versus quality of power; empowerment versus disempowerment; and power as knowledge versus power inhibiting knowledge. Not choosing sides or making the case for any better understanding of power, she argues that power in transitions can only be researched contextually, with an eye for detail and nuance.

Often referred to in all these works on power in transition are Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour 1980). Relational approaches like ANT or Practice Theory - in combination with MLP - show "that the ways in which actors engage with transition politics are co-produced through socio-material procedures, entanglements with infrastructures, routines and material practices and institutional logic" (Avelino 2016). Since it is mainly on relations that we will conduct our research, it is worth having a look at Latour's ANT. We take the actor-network theory from Bruno Latour and Michel Callon (1980) as a lens through which we view interactions between different entities. The term 'actor' is denoted as 'actant' since it refers to human and non-human entities (Dankert, 2012:47). Our focus is directed at traceable connections – otherwise called groups, interactions, or networks - that we have encountered in our two respective fields. The actor-network theory is focused on the making and remaking of groups through the capacity of one actant to change one or more other actants (Dankert, 2012:47). Hereby traveling and unchanging entities, like documented laws, take part as immutable mobiles, whereas they move and release information whereby actants are impacted. The activity that it takes to change another actant - perhaps negotiations, calculations or even violence - is called translation (Dankert, 2012: 48).

2.4 The case for ethnography in understanding transition politics

- by Ian Rinkes

As is becoming clear, we have now ended up within quite a specific area of study. The large majority of scholars we have so far addressed are based in the Netherlands and heavily involved with the

practitioning side of sustainability transitions as well. This empirical focus on the Netherlands has made us aware of the need for more contextualisation but since we are ourselves conducting research in the Netherlands, we can actually use a number of previous case-studies as contextual material (e.g., Hoffmann 2015, 2007, Grin 2011, Hendriks and Grin 2007). So far, the literature we described has predominantly come from the intertwined fields of sociology, political sciences and the emerging field of transition studies. This fits well within the multidisciplinary approach needed for complex processes such as structural change, however the research gaps we identified have actually pushed us back towards our own discipline of anthropology. As John Grin puts it:

> *Acknowledging the importance of different research paradigms, paradoxically requires a particular post-positivist, interpretative and reflexive approach to scientific research in terms of ontological and epistemological starting points. Contrary to positivism (with its foundationalist assumption of but one truth, and its 'either-or' choice between realist foundationalism or relativism), the interpretative paradigm is at much more ease with different understandings of the world – and of our knowing of it* (Avelino and Grin 2016: p. 23)

This quote is from an article on the epistemology of transition research and is one of many in transition literature pointing towards a more interpretive and reflexive approach. From another academical perspective, Silvast & Virtanen (2019), in their article on the epistemology of the research into complex infrastructures, delineate a method of multi-sited ethnography as the most fruitful research method. The energy infrastructure is taken as an example and the article build's on George Marcus' (1995: in 2019 p. 462) notion of multi-sited ethnography. Moreover, a very recent literature review on short food supply chains (SFSC's) by Chiffoleau and Dourian (2020) shows that - almost exclusively French - ethnographic research has provided valuable insights into this facet of sustainability transitions. While the need for interpretative and reflexive approaches in transition politics research may be clear, and we have seen examples of ethnographic methods in researching the transition, these facts alone are merely pointing in the direction of our own discipline. More precisely, it is cultural anthropology's deep understanding of everyday practices, discourse and performativity that make it such a fitting discipline for analysing the complexities and nuances of the sustainability transition. A more systematic understanding of transitions supplemented with detailed understanding of subtle forms of power at the everyday level will lead us to new insights on both the workings of these large systems and their most micro-levelled details.

3. Ecologies of Transition

In this chapter we will provide a sketch of the two 'ecologies' our respective research settings fit into. Both starting out from the widest perspective that emerged from our research, we will describe the broad landscape around our organisations and their transition efforts. We will then continue to describe the organisational structure of the TKK and SFSC-ecosystem and the Municipality of Rotterdam, after which we will dive into our respective research settings - Amped/Local2local and within these broader structures. We have used elements of multi-level perspective in order to contextualise our research settings in the transition, but have mainly provided a description that emerged inductively from ethnographic data.

3.1 The TKK and the SFSC-ecosystem
3.1.1 Wider Landscape: Food transition in a European context

Food production is currently dominated by a globalised agro-food industry and its unsustainability is recognised by 'global authorities' such as the United Nations (2015) and the European Union. At the time of writing the European Union is entering a new phase in negotiating the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a grand strategy which alongside securing Europe's food needs aims to reduce agricultural emissions and improve biodiversity. One of the many targets in a more sustainable system of food production – at European, national and local levels – is the creation of more regionally oriented food systems. This reduces travelled food kilometres, raises food producer's margins and improves the connection between farmer and consumer. The restored connection between farmers and consumers in turn makes for more transparency in production methods and could further sustainability-related goals such as biodiversity and carbon- and water storage. As many of my informants noted, the SFSC is not the solution to all problems. However, it is considered by many as a vehicle through which systemic problems in producer-consumer relations can be best addressed.

The European CAP provides the guidelines in which the Dutch national government creates its National Strategic Plan (NSP). Again, at a national level the SFSC is considered one of many possible solutions and one informant told me it is not even included in the upcoming NSP. The NSP is created by the Ministry of Agriculture (*Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit;* LNV). Together with LTO (*land- en* tuinbouworganisatie), the provinces (*interprovinciaal overleg;* IPO) and the union of *Waterschappen*, they are shaping the national policy framework in which the aims of

the CAP should be executed. More related to SFSC-initiatives are Interreg, a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and Climate KIC, which is funded by the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT). Local2Local and Amped are also very directly involved in SMARTCHAIN, an institute for smart SFSC-solutions funded by the Horizon 2020 programme. We will delve into the dynamics with these European bodies later on, and this is by no means an overview of all SFSC-related institutes in Europe.

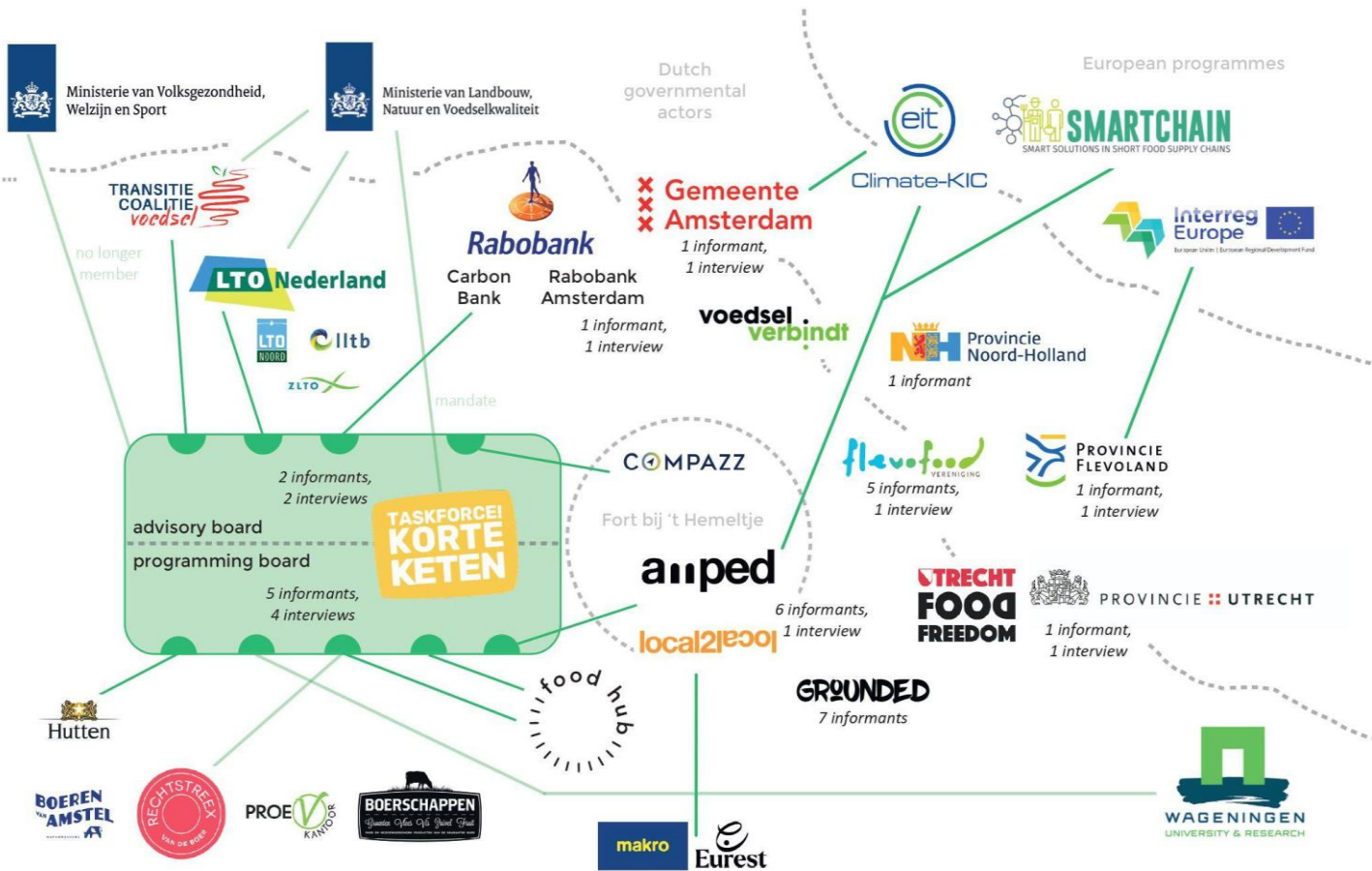### 3.1.2 Organizational Structure: TKK and its surrounding ecosystem

Figure 1: Overview of organisations and informants encountered during fieldwork (comprised by author)

The *Taskforce Korte Keten* was founded by a small group of entrepreneurs and a researcher involved in establishing short food supply chains (SFSC's) in the Netherlands. There was a previous coalition dubbed the *Korte Keten Coalitie*, and all of the TKK's founding members were involved with the creation of SFSC's either through establishing regional food corporations, lecturing and giving workshops on the matter, or researching the phenomenon from an economical perspective. Following a workshop by the Transition Coalition Food on SFSC's, the Taskforce was created after the men realised they were all in part striving for the same goals and were all trying to obtain the same rumoured funding by the Ministry of Agriculture. These initial members were already embedded in partially overlapping networks of policymakers, bankers, entrepreneurs, farmers and scientists. An organisational structure was worked out, consisting of a chairman – an entrepreneur/consultant with an SFSC-company – and a programming board of four. The organisations in which these members were most active were Local2Local (an SFSC-company from Utrecht), Food Hub (an educational group on food transition from Amsterdam) and Wageningen University. Later on, an advisory board of five was added to the TKK, which included leading members from Rabobank, *LTO Nederland* (national interest group for agriculturalists), the Transition Coalition Food and the Ministry of Health. The delegate from the Ministry of Health has since left the TKK.

Such a wide array of stakeholders of course follows varying agendas, and for all members work 'for the TKK' takes up a fraction of their activities. In practice Food Hub and Amped (the mother company of Local2Local) take up most of the everyday operational work, and members of the advisory board can use their network access to try and secure funding for projects or lobby for certain policy changes. Everyday affairs like the execution of projects, the search for funds and the creation of narratives and models for change are done within the context of previously existing organisations. Multiple goals from different stakeholders are constantly realigned for the purpose of reaching shared goals together, but individual organisations carry out their own agenda and board members' organisations may even oppose one another in other contexts. Figure 1 shows a rough overview of the organisations encountered during fieldwork. It is by no means an extensive mapping of all the relations between them, as for example Food Hub has close connections to organisations like the Provinces, Rabobank and *Voedsel Verbindt.*

The TKK started out as a grassroots movement with a large network, and gradually gained support from established government and financial organisations. However, the bottom-up

networking character is still evident. Newer organisations like Food Hub and Local2local are continuously expanding and reconfiguring their network, and so are older organisations like municipalities and banks. In the cooperative structures that SFSC-networks take on, all of these actors use each other's networks to create a 'network of networks' or 'ecosystem'. Notable actors not discussed above include universities, universities of applied sciences, logistical players and European organisations. The most notable university in any agriculture-related problems is Wageningen University and Research (WUR). Other schools have been involved in SFSC-initiatives as well, some examples are Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA), *Aeres Hogeschool* and even Utrecht University of the Arts (HKU). SFSC-entrepreneurs have collaborated with established logistical and foodservice players like Makro, Eurest and Bidfood. On a more landscape level – following MLP – the ecosystem also includes a range of European programmes and organisations. We have seen the European farmer's union of COPA-COCEGA, but within the ecosystem there are also direct links to programmes like Interreg (Regional Development Fund), Climate-KIC and the broader Farm-to-Fork policy. We will discuss the dynamics between these various groups in more detail in chapter three.

Aside from Amped – the company with whom I conducted fieldwork – one actor that emerged often was Food Hub, an Amsterdam-based project bureau for education on the food transition. Its founder, and one parttime employee, are members of the TKK's programming board. Together with Amped, Food Hub executes the bulk of the TKK's active project work. The two companies collaborate closely, writing offers and attending meetings together. Food Hub consists of some eleven team members and like Amped operates on a project-based team structure. Unlike Amped, it does not have an SFSC-food sales company of its own, which the founder described as 'a blessing'.

A very influential actor is the Rabobank, traditionally a cooperative agricultural loan bank and currently on many levels involved with SFSC-initiatives. The previous director of Rabobank Amsterdam – now director of the new Rabo Carbon Bank – is a member of the TKK advisory board. Many SFSC-initiatives rely on Rabobank financing and the bank itself piloted a number of food transition programmes. Without trying to explain the bank's organisational structure – a whole different task – it is important to note that the bank is of course not a monolith. Different regional chapters are involved in different projects, have different incentives, and have different access to resources. Geographical reorganisations are common and currently there are plans for the creation

of a central Rabobank office for the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (MRA). There is a global Rabobank with a Board of Directors, whose decisions impact both large-scale wheat farming in Australia and SFSC-initiatives in Friesland. These widespread global incentives can of course impact the efforts of incentives of fragmented offices in the Netherlands. Rabobank's Amsterdam office seemed most involved with the network around the TKK and even initiated its own SFSC-initiative called *Boeren voor Buren*.

National, regional and local governments are also involved in the setup of more regionally oriented food systems. They serve as initiators of projects or programs and provide subsidies or available hours for projects initiated by private sector organisations. The most important government organisations that emerged from my research were the Ministry of Agriculture (LNV), the Ministry of Health (VWS), the Provinces of Noord-Holland, Flevoland and Utrecht, and the Municipality of Amsterdam. LNV has awarded the TKK with a mandate and has provided some funding in previous years. It is no longer funding the TKK out of grounds that it only provides 'project financing' and does not fund organisations long-term. During my research period a senior member of VWS was still in the advisory board of the TKK but now seems to play a smaller role. Ministries are often spoken about in terms of possible funding and possible changes in regulation. Regional food systems or SFSC's are seldom mentioned in official documents by LNV.

Far more directly involved are Provinces. The TKK is in consultation with all the Provinces and – through Amped and Food Hub – directly working with Noord-Holland, Flevoland and Utrecht, amongst others. All of these governmental bodies have set up groups involved in local food, either as 'activating platforms' or organisations of local food producers. In Flevoland, the Province approached farmers and entrepreneurs to set up an association by the name of *Flevofood*. In Utrecht, the Province set up an alliance called *Utrecht Food Freedom* (UFF) together with Amped and other stakeholders. In Noord-Holland, the Province co-founded an activating platform coined *Voedsel Verbindt*, in which researchers, policymakers, bankers, consultants and agriculturalists try to share their expertise to create a more durable agri-food system. Apart from setting up these groups, the provinces are still actively engaged in regional food projects. Within the Province of Flevoland a function of *Korte Keten Verbinder* (SFSC-connector) was formed, who is still engaged in projects. In Utrecht, a *Gebiedsmakelaar* (Area Developer) co-founded UFF and reappropriated parts of the Dutch Water Line (NHW; *Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie*) to accommodate local food initiatives. In Noord-Holland a Policy Advisor 'Agriculture' and a Policy Official 'Green' are actively involved in SFSC's. All

have to run plans by their provincial executives, the often six-headed board of the *Gedeputeerde Staten* (GS). Degrees of freedom in carrying out projects vary, but anything that costs ''a little bit of budget or is sensitive'' has to be approved by the GS.

Then on a local level in the ecosystem we encounter Municipalities. While there have been talks with more municipalities during my research period, I shall focus on the City of Amsterdam due to its active position in local food efforts. The City has put forward a Food Vision in which local food plays a significant role and it provides funding and FTEs for SFSC-projects. A hired position of 'Senior Program Manager Food Strategy' reports monthly to the Councilor officially responsible for food. Other departments like spatial planning and health are also consulted sometimes. The program manager told me the last Councilor did not prioritize food and a previous Food Vision ended up ''in the drawer''. This is a recurring theme in interviews with people working for governments. Political changes – inherent to these kinds of governmental organisations in democratic states – can wipe initiatives off the agenda far more easily than they become a part of them. A new minister, member of the *Provinciale Staten* (the provincial parliament) or City Councilor can alter the policy frameworks in which their bureaucrats must work and this whimsicality in turn influences governments' relationship with the private sector.

A large number of other 'groups' are involved with the TKK. Under the names *belangenorganisaties*, *strategiegroepen* or *platforms* – these groups have in common that they represent a group of people or a goal that they are lobbying for. They vary greatly in size, goal, following and funding but can be grouped in terms like interest groups or advocacy groups. I will describe here the two most directly involved with the TKK. A major traditional interest group for the agricultural branch is LTO (*Land- en Tuinbouworganisatie*). This organisation stands out from other interest groups in its longevity and complicated organisational structure, which I will therefore not describe here. A senior member of its national office is in the TKK's advisory board, and a member of the programming board has a background in a regional LTO. The national office (LTO Nederland) consists of a mere 25 individuals, while the regional LTO's (ZLTO, LLTB, LTO Noord) and their specific branch departments (e.g. pig husbandry, corn, even rabbits) have a very large backing of farmers, horticulturalists and other agriculture professionals. In advocating the interests of such a wide array of farmers, and through such a complex organisational structure, the group's eventual policy often resemble that of the dominant agricultural regime. LTO is part of a large European agricultural

branche associations called COPA-COGECA and LTO has professional lobbyists working in both The Hague and Brussels.

A far more recently founded advocacy group is the Transition Coalition Food (TCV). It aims to speed up sustainable innovations in the food industry using their members' networking capacities. The TCV lobbies political The Hague as well, and sometimes finds itself – not necessarily at the same side – at the negotiation table with ministries and LTO. A host of other organisations are involved in the push for SFSC's, and unfortunately, I cannot describe all in length. It is however worth noting, and possibly already noticed, that we have not yet covered entrepreneurs and farmers. Before turning to entrepreneurs and SFSC-companies, it is surprising to see the lack of farmers in this research. In this regard, one of my informants expressed the underrepresentation of actual farmers (not LTO's or SFSC-tradesmen) in the TKK. I have attended a Flevofood board-meeting, in which there are two farmers and a horticulturalist. However, as an organisation that it is aimed at growing interest in Flevoland produce, topics covered include mostly non-agricultural topics like growing members base, press moments and the upcoming Floriade.

3.1.3 The Office: Amped and Local2local on *fort 't Hemeltje*

Local2local and its mother company Amped consist of roughly the same people and hold office in the same building. Amped is focused on consultancy and the creation of 'interruptive' models for changing systems. Local2local can be seen as the actual food sales branch of Amped, but it also does advisory work and subsidised projects. I will use the two company names interchangeably since they are also being used like that in my research setting. Next door to Amped's three office rooms – with a 'corona-capacity' of roughly seven employees – another sustainability-focused consultancy company by the name of Compazz holds office. Since all are on the same floor and know one another well, information and strategy are exchanged between them. The owner of Compazz is a shareholder in Local2Local, is also in the advisory board of the TKK and has significant networking power with banks, governments and advocacy groups.

Amped's managing director is in the TKK's programming board. Strategy and focus for Amped and L2L come from him. Projects are executed by everyone, often many at the same time. There is not an obvious hierarchy but employees know when they can and cannot disturb someone else. Often things have to be 'ran by' the managing director and that may take some waiting time for less senior members of the team. Most team members can view each other's schedules and know

when to ask questions or give updates on certain matters. The overall atmosphere ranges from casual to formal, depending on the amount and character of people in a room. The founding members are all middle-aged males with backgrounds in various businesses. The younger team members include some more women and almost all team members below thirty years of age are ex-students from the closely located Utrecht University. Daily tasks include administration, sales, attending online presentations and writing project proposals, offers or scientific papers. Certain projects are given priority depending on what comes out of meetings with the managing director, but every team member is communicating with actors outside Amped and constantly adapts to changing circumstances.

A number of other SFSC-companies are currently within the same overlapping network of actors as Local2Local is. Through a position within the TKK programming board, Local2local's is more connected to the Taskforce than these other companies. Oftentimes SFSC-companies - Local2local included - have alliterative or pun-like names. Not very well translatable into English, they are coined names like *Boerschappen, Rechtstreex* and *Boeren voor Buren*, for example*.*

3.2 The Municipality of Rotterdam

3.2.1 Wider Landscape: Transnational Climate Politics

The energy transition started as a policy experiment in the Netherlands in 2001. After trying several process tools, such as platforms and innovation programs, the energy transition took a serious shape in 2004. Steered in a top-down fashion, transition strategies became institutionalized while niche players, who are small scale companies, in bottom-up networks conducted countless experiments with smart and sustainable ideas for clean energy consumption in the future (Rotmans, 2012: 140). This sketches the energy transition as institutionalized policy driven aim and simultaneously as social transition through movements in society - blurred by its lack of organization (Rotmans, 2012: 148). The Paris Agreement of 2015, signed by hundred-ninety-seven states, for the first time showed worldwide political willingness to formulate strategies to address climate degradation. Not to say that all political authorities committed to the agreement, rather those that have done so are globally dispersed. The Netherlands committed to the Paris Agreement as a member of the European Union. Viewed through the Multi-Level Perspective (Geels, 2018, 226) to scale power levels in transitions,

the European Union illustrates political power at macro level, also referred to as a sociotechnical landscape, since it is an assembly of states with material and immaterial infrastructure. The European Union holds structural power in its ability to legitimize strategy, here seen in mitigation policy. Exemplary of this power is the binding character of the Paris Agreement, obliging European nation-states to their (future or ongoing) reassessment of the larger part of their trade agreements, and the preservation, production, distribution and consumption of (at least) energy. Despite its binding character, however, the Paris Agreement cannot be reinforced with sanctions and joined states are free to determine their own mitigation activity. Patiently, the Dutch nation-state followed its dictate and created the National Climate Agreement in 2019, as an action plan for the simultaneously crafted Dutch Climate Law, with mitigation rulings. Viewed through the Multi-Level-Perspective, the nation-state may resemble the macro power level with structural power, as well as the meso level with dispositional power. Having the ability to create and enforce laws on a national level, exemplifies structural power, yet it resides within the transnational infrastructure of rules and interdependencies. For instance, Dutch energy consumption via gas is imported from Norway, Russia and the Middle East. A more obvious actor at the meso level is the municipality of Rotterdam, who operates within transnational and national established rules, budgets, and infrastructures.

The goals of the energy transition in the Netherlands are established at the transnational level, yet the activities in effort of achieving these goals are delegated to municipalities, to customize approaches to specific areas and populations. These actions are part of a gradual learning curve, where there is little precedence. Resulting from the Paris Agreement and the Dutch Climate Agreement - one transition goal of the municipality is the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions up to 49%, measured from 1990 up to 2030. By 2022 the annual Rotterdam CO_2 emissions should be reversed to a downward trend, and Rotterdam aims to be climate neutral in 2050. To achieve a clean energy supply, fossil wells such as oil, coal and natural gas will be phased out and replaced by clean sources like sun, wind, geothermal energy, aquathermia, residual heat and clean gases from renewable sources. To achieve this, the municipality freed an Energy-transition-budget of 68,2 million euros and an energy-transition-fund of 130 million euros. These are invested in various projects that are executed by project teams in different regions of the municipality, and in initiatives of the market under strict conditions, such as boosting the energy transition and preventing energy poverty. As part of this effort, by 2022 – 10 000 homes will become gas-free and make 15,000 homes

more sustainable. The execution of making households gas-free is first experimented with in designated pilot areas, to which we return in chapter five.

3.2.2 Organizational Structure: Municipality of Rotterdam

Over eleven thousand people work at the traditional hierarchical composition of the municipality of Rotterdam, where the *gemeenteraad,* city council, with forty-five members, forms the highest local authority. Their authority is materialized in their ability to vote for and against motions, amendments, and policy. The second layer of local authority is the *College van Burgemeester en Wethouders*, College of Mayor and Alderman. 'College' in this sense refers to *collegiaal bestuur*, collegial governance – meaning that aldermen are not only accountable for their own portfolios but carry shared responsibility for all portfolio's. Together the mayor and ten aldermen are charged with the daily management of the municipality, and the execution of council resolutions. During the current term, aldermen of the political parties GroenLinks, PvdA, CDA, D66, VVD and ChristenUnie, reached a coalition agreement on their energy transition related ambitions, from 2018 until 2021. These include a Rotterdam Energy and Climate Agreement by which housing corporations, private homeowners, VVEs, energy companies and other partners, execute transition strategies under the direction of the municipality (Coalitieakkoord Rotterdam, 2018: 7). Beside the coalition of aldermen, ten of thirteen parties in the city council of Rotterdam came to a council agreement on the joint effort to achieve the energy transition through five specific transitions, covering the harbor and its industry, energy production, mobility, economy, and the built environment (Raadsakkoord Energietransitie, 2019: 3).

What the municipality is tasked with concerning the city- is divided in six clusters that each consist of multiple departments. In 2018, the municipality launched the new department of *Duurzaamheid*, Sustainability, under the cluster of City Development - together with the dual position of aldermen of Sustainability. At this point Rotterdam has two aldermen charged with the energy transition, who's portfolio's address different aspects of the transition – one is named 'Sustainability, Air Quality and Energy Transition', and the other: 'Construction, Housing and Energy Transition Built Environment'. By integrating the theme of Sustainability into the functions of two aldermen, responsibility is placed to navigate local developments. At the time of this research, there are about fifty employees at the department of Sustainability, who are all given the function of

policymaker. They are assigned to several task teams at once, meaning that people are versatile in educational background and expertise. Compared to other departments, the people working at Sustainability are relatively young and there is a fair balance of female and male employees. One informant described it as 'definitely a white department'. This might be relevant since policymakers are addressing a predominantly coloured population in the city of Rotterdam, for whom climate degradation can have different meanings. The Sustainability department is supported by an organizational consultant, with whom in recurring sessions on a full afternoon with all employees – organizational traditions and customs - culture is built. Here they also discuss *"how to deal with an alderman who is very ambitious and who would rather have a document on his desk today than tomorrow".* In general, policymakers form project teams to address specific assignments given by department heads. From the department of Sustainability these teams are generally formed cluster-overarching to combine and integrate knowledge into the future orientations of the wider municipality.

3.2.3 The Office: Project Team Energy Transition

My fieldwork was conducted with one small project team that was recruited of one policymaker from the department Poverty and Debt, under the cluster of Societal Development and one policymaker from the department of Sustainability – under the City Development cluster. In ways of speaking, the former is often referred to as 'the social domain', and the latter as 'the physical domain', to hint at professional viewpoints. Often these verbal references were used to describe one department head or the other, since our cluster overarching project team answered two department heads. Together, the department heads of Sustainability (residing in the cluster of City Development) and Poverty and Debt (of the cluster Societal Development) commissioned the task of this project team, kept in the loop in weekly meetings. Other members were one project manager, one (other) intern and me in the role of intern. Setting the transition objectives that the municipality aims to achieve, through the previously mentioned coalition agreement and the council agreement, called for the evaluation of its conditions. Accordingly, my project team was tasked with charting one such condition, namely the affordability of the energy transition of the built environment. The specific task of this project team is to produce a program plan for an affordable energy transition. This program plan should give a clear picture of what an affordable, achievable and fair energy transition means for the municipality, and

which target groups are not yet sufficiently in focus but should be. The following transcript, retrieved from a status update document, gives insight into the lines of activity of this team.

1. Inventory and implementation of quick wins.

2. Set up an Affordability program.

3. Analysis of primary processes in Societal Development, commitment of other clusters to the energy transition.

4. Proposal for direction and coordination of policy accountables.

Figure 2: Tasks of Project Team (comprised by author)

The first task covers inventory and implementation of quick wins towards supporting or connecting low-income residents with sustainability. Quick wins refer to instruments and arrangements that already exist, that (can) help make or keep the energy transition affordable for Rotterdammers. These are quick to realize, already in the municipal line and can confine services or instruments. In the same document where the above list of tasks was retrieved, the following message was added to the explanation of this strategy:" Mainly for the stage/politics". In chapter five, we return to this symbolic value of quick wins. The second task is making the affordability program by supporting the creation of an analysis of long-term impact and the most impactful measures in the transition. And on the other hand, answering the following questions: "*What do the numbers tell us to focus on? Where are most cost savings to be made for residents with a narrow budget? Is this behavioural change, or rather an adjustment in the rental property that requires negotiations with housing corporations or lobbying the national government for adapted legislation? Which parties can make the most impact and what role does the municipality have in this?*" The third task involves the inventory of primary processes in Societal Development, which are in contact with - or have a core task in providing support to Rotterdammers. This is aimed to find linking opportunities between transition activities and including – supporting- the most vulnerable Rotterdammers. On the implementation of this sub-result, the team received conflicting signals from the two commissioners,

namely the department head of Sustainability and the department head of Poverty and Debt. It remained unclear whether or not the inventory and analysis of the primary processes MO was desirable – and in the full municipal width or only at 'Poverty and Debt'. Differences in professional views are further addressed in chapter four. The fourth task is the proposal for direction and coordination of resulting policy which emerges from accomplishing the former tasks.

To work on these elements of the eventual program plan, project members gather internal and external input from the Sustainability department, G4 colleagues, research bureau TNO, energy coaches, the energy bank, the Kredietbank Rotterdam, housing corporations, energy companies and the grid manager. They evaluate a growing municipal body of knowledge on the transition, consisting of feedback start notes from colleagues of the social – and the physical domain, notes of both aldermen of energy transition and the alderman of poverty, target group - and other research reports and evaluations, system energy vision discussion documents, and more. Most of my fieldwork took part in the many explorative gatherings with internal and external partners.

Entering the team meant that I was added to the WhatsApp group chat, in which team members sometimes shared news articles, but it usually served to communicate unexpected delays before a meeting - or hiccups during meetings. My digital entrance to the team was confirmed in my addition to the Microsoft Teams group where relevant documents were stored. According to the task or question at hand team members reached out to colleagues from different departments. An organizational logic arose from who reaches out to who. Our project leader, for instance, would almost always handle questions that were directed at the department heads (opdrachtgevers), if the topics would involve anything that from a distance smelled like our team assignment needed approval or rejection. Our policymaker from Societal Development handled communications with anyone of the hierarchical line within 'the social domain'. Our Sustainability policy maker was designated to handle tasks and questions that regard anyone within the sustainability department, and either of the sustainability aldermen.

When I started my fieldwork in January 2021, the municipality had already replaced their work entirely to the digital area due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the national government declared which jobs were essential, and that all non-essential jobs needed to work from home, this was realized rather quickly by policymakers. Before this juncture, they were already working with digital calendars accessible to colleagues, and with the conference-app of Microsoft Teams, the step

to organize digital meetings was not too impressive. Asking colleagues when we could meet to discuss a particular task would often lead to the response: *just look in my calendar and plan something*. To me, agendas of people higher up were not accessible, meaning that I would request their assistants to make an appointment by their access to my digital agenda. Quickly the municipality launched courses to make 'working from home' easier, and without much ado, employees with permanent contracts could apply for all thinkable home office equipment such as ergonomic chairs, extra monitors, and printers. For the members of my project team, the transfer of their work to the digital realm seemed doable in the sense that meetings could still be conducted, and documents could still be shared. Personal circumstances, however, did enter the professional sphere in the context of the home office. Often, children, housemates and animals would move through the image uninvited. Often someone's neighbour was moving, drilling, sawing, or making noise for other reasons. The interaction of the personal with the professional sphere had different implications for different people and without desiring to pinpoint the exact cause, a cocktail of events led two team members to leave the team during my fieldwork.

3.3 Conclusion

As we have seen, both the Municipality of Rotterdam and the TKK are embedded within wider structures of European and Dutch national policy. The TKK is directly connected to some European project bureaus, but is not following centralised aims. The municipality is in essence following larger aims through the Paris agreements, Brussels and the Hague. The TKK is situated in, and built upon, a structure of overlapping networks of researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers and advocacy groups. Its structure is loose and relations in the everyday contexts are often between individual organisations or in cooperation with a small number of other groups. The TKK itself consists of a programming board and an advisory board, the latter of which is composed of actors with networking power on incumbent levels. The organisational structure of the Rotterdam Municipality is a far more traditional and hierarchical one in which the city council and the college of mayor and aldermen steer departments. Policymakers in the project team Energy Transition operate along the lines of two departments. On the office level in which we conducted fieldwork, work methods at Amped are influenced by the networked structure in which they reside. The ecosystem-design is a deliberative tool and makes for a loosely structured team that have constant connection to other actors. Ultimately large decisions are made by a central figure, but all have their say. In the Rotterdam context, municipal employees worked at home, digitally, in scheduled meeting structures.

4. Perspectives on transition

This chapter gives an ethnographic representation of the perspectives of our informants on the transitions they work, and their role in it. As before, to present both research contexts in comparison, we address the same subtopics, starting with the context of the food transition, followed by the energy transition. Here we start with our participants' motivation and self-image as professionals that aim for structural change towards sustainability. This is followed by a description of varying underlying visions and shared frames, after which we will describe the goals and strategies they apply for achieving those aims.

4.1 The TKK and the SFSC-ecosystem:

4.1.1 Personal Perspectives and Motivations: Everybody likes the smiling farmer

"The short chain has a very high hug-factor", one of my informants stated. No one is really 'against' the idea of local food and there is an almost universal agreement on the need for 'shortening the chain'. "Except for the five large retailers in the Netherlands, everyone is in favour of more local consuming", another said. And even retailers are jumping on the 'local'-bandwagon. One only has to open a newspaper to stumble upon ads by Albert Heijn in which they showcase their new *Streeckgenoten* – local producers sporting a large smile while holding their special local product.

In the SFSC-ecosystem, many informants had a personal story or anecdote at the ready regarding motivation. A dream of helping local entrepreneurs; a vision for their children's future; a history of combatting 'the system'. Sometimes motivation is connected to simpler observations in everyday life. Two informants separately mentioned their astonishment after seeing that their green beans were grown in Kenia, out of season, and of poor quality. Others brought up encounters in previous work experience as grounds for their current vision and motivation. One example was the inability of Unilever to question the use of palm oil itself, instead of investing in a quest for 'sustainable palm oil'. Barbara Baarsma – a member of the TKK advisory board and then director of Rabobank Amsterdam – mentioned a conversation with a Brazilian soy farmer as an eye opener in her book on the need for SFSC's (2020). There is a certain performativity to the way entrepreneurs and other 'career-makers' portray themselves. This can be seen as part of a wider trend of *maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen* (MVO) or Corporate Social Responsibility. Actors then perceive other organisation's goals and motivation with varying levels of truth or integrity. Many

informants expressed distrust in media-campaigns by large banks or retailers. These large corporations do indeed have other incentives than smaller initiatives, and often run campaigns mimicking SFSC-efforts while still being invested in the current global agro-food industry. Without trying to assess all of every actor's many incentives – a futile task – let us have a look at the dominant discursive strategies found 'in the short chain'. These do not represent groups of actors opposing one another, nor are their contents incompatible. Through co-optation of certain terms and logic these frames can often overlap. I am not excluding other ways of thinking in these, most informants have vary other thing on their minds.

Nevertheless, these constantly renegotiated discourses can serve as a way of understanding a kind of scale that informs behaviour a great deal. On the one hand, things are perceived as 'in need of change' with a feeling of urgency. On the other, things have to be 'realistically possible'. This scale is constantly reflected upon some by actors, carefully positioning the stance with 'most impact'. Others are more locked in a perception of possibilities as 'realistic' or 'unrealistic' that they do not bother scaling the need for change.

4.1.2 Different Visions: System-thinking and Economic Pragmatism

 "No, you can't skip steps in a transition", I was told by an informant after asking the question of whether it was not actually faster if big corporations took over the SFSC-game. "You have to do it from pain and new value, and eventually the laggards follow the price tag and the smiling farmer". Models of transition or diffusion of innovation are often mentioned when discussing strategy. Theoretical knowledge on transitions is most prevalent at Food Hub, where educational programmes make active use of the multi-level perspective and niche-regime interactions. Food Hub's founder graduated Political Sciences specialising in transition theory. Local2local and the TKK both use the GAIN-model of innovation – developed by Amped – which contains elements of Geels' MLP. In the example above the phrase 'laggards' reveal use of the diffusion of innovation-model by Rogers (1961).

System-thinking, in the broad sense, is not merely the product of 'theories in action' like MLP. News intake, (professional) reading habits and personal experience inform a certain worldview in which the current socio-economic system – to varying extents – is seen as flawed, unsustainable and in need of systematic change.

"The real problem lies with the power balance in the retail."

"Ultimately you can't see it as separated from the whole credit-based financial system."

"We have to go up against the whole system. (…) Everyone drives the most expensive car, but is cutting costs on their food!"

The world's large problems are perceived as interconnected and informants often had detailed knowledge on their complexities. There seems to be consensus on the need for 'the system' to change, but proposed 'transition pathways' differ and are contested due to the complexity of the problem. Aware of the uncertainty in solution outcomes, people feel that making change is urgent. This feeling of urgency is most tangible with the younger generations. At Grounded – a sustainability workplace in Utrecht connected to Amped, Local2local and UFF – people aged 20-29 have often adapted their lifestyles to match their views on systemic problems. The people I worked with there – creating a permaculture garden, selling waste-vegetables etc. – often stopped eating meat completely, wore mostly second-hand clothes and some were active in protest movements like Extinction Rebellion. A number of graduates from UU's Global Sustainability Science have worked for Local2local; driving trucks, writing project proposals and doing research. I myself ended up researching the TKK through working for Local2local. And in working with a company actively engaged in the transition, one encounters one of transition's fundamental juxtapositions: That in order to change the system, you need to work according to the rules of that system.

"You need those big boys, (…) They [small potato farms] can't handle the quality standards or the quantities McCain delivers. Those guys stomp out two truckloads of fries in a weekend."

Following this remark about the production of fries in Flevoland, a local entrepreneur noted that to grow the reach of the local food movement, concessions in either the organic- or the local-ness of fries had to be made. This is one of many examples I encountered in which established patterns of efficient production put pressure on the values that are supposed to differentiate SFSC-products. In growing local food businesses, or creating alliances with established logistical companies, actors inevitably have to deal with economic realities. Financial incentives range from simply providing sustenance to entrepreneurial opportunism, but all actors encounter 'the rules of economic law'. The ecosystem contains a number of individuals with their academical roots in economics. Rabobank obviously employs a lot of economists, but so do the WUR, municipalities and other institutions. A reduction in 'food-kilometres' – the distance travelled between production and consumption – is often mentioned as an economic argument in favour of the SFSC. But for short chains to become

truly competitive with long-chain production, a universal system of true cost pricing would have to be established (Baarsma 2020). If pollution, water storage, biodiversity and such are all priced, the SFSC would become 'viable'. In a conversation that featured topics ranging from the Kwakiutl *potlatch* to Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, a researcher told me that countries should have a 'iron' base stock of local food, but leave the rest of food production to the laws of the international division of labour. When asked if true costs could ever truly be accounted for in that division of labour, he replied: "No, that's not gonna work I think"

The true-cost idea is exemplary of the widespread need for measurements and calculations when assessing value in the current socio-economical system. Many informants – economists included – see in shorter food supply chains a value that is not easily measured. In collaborative definition-making and goal-setting however, measured data is considered very important. This data-knowledge will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, but note that the importance of quantifiable data is characteristic of the system that some actors want to change. Not to say that sustainable production methods do not need data, they probably need it even more. But even true-cost efforts can be seen as a way of integrating transitive thinking into dominant economical practices. This integration is of course a core aim of transition itself, but the slow diffusion of innovation does not always stand up to adopting dominant practices. Also characteristic of economic thinking is the idea of growth. Growing SFSC-initiatives is necessary to change dominant agro-food practices, but in growing a local food-business some actors must often use the same principles they are trying to combat. With others these principles are perceived as just reality, with no intention of changing them. A Rabobank director told me:

> "Eventually you want to get Ahold and groups like that crazy enough to join you. Which they
> will in time. (…) Look, Ian, (…) local products should be at the front of supermarket shelves. I
> am a little tired of all these little initiatives. We have to do this big."

The differences in strategies ultimately rely on perceptions and experiences of power relations, goals and 'impact'. In the next chapter we will have a look at the tacit and explicit power dynamics in the SFSC-ecosystem. While heavily informed by reflexive arrangements resulting from those power dynamics, I will briefly describe one case of strategic thinking in the food transition in the next paragraph. Other organisations of course pursue very different strategies and these may be informed by wholly different models.

4.1.3 Views on Transition Strategy: the example of the GAIN transition-model

The TKK has formulated an official goal of 25% market share for short chain products by 2030. This is a grand aim, and was described by a board member as "more of an ambitious guideline, to get things moving". The TKK has adopted the GAIN-transition model from Amped, and it serves as a lens through which we can understand its strategy and view of transition:
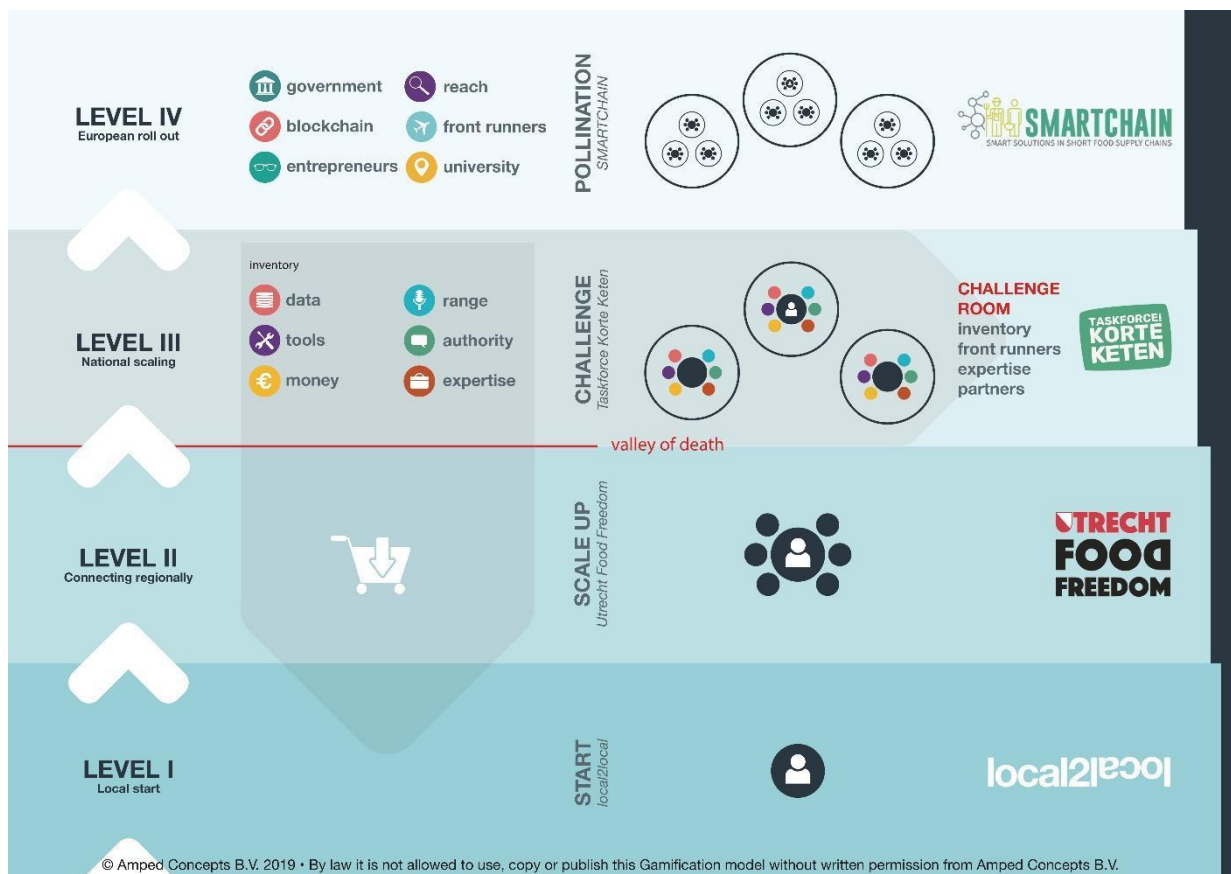
Figure 2: Gain transition model (Amped Concepts 2019)

The models' close resemblance to MLP can be observed straight away and has been described by others (Massar 2019). At level one, we can identify niche actors, individual entrepreneurs trying something innovative in food supply chains. Level two presents a gathering of regional stakeholders around local startups. On level three, clusters of these regional gatherings work together in sharing data, funds, knowledge and reach. The TKK itself is exemplary of this level. Finally, the fourth level presents the roll out of food transition innovations on a European level. The model contains

'gamification' elements to empower entrepreneurs in overcoming challenges. Working with levels, seeing problems as challenges, and striving for an end goal that would initially seem too far-stretched, the model provides a framework for long-term transitive innovation. Level four, and to a lesser extent level three, can be seen as levels that are penetrating the regime levels in Geels' MLP. The GAIN transition-model is a more action-oriented one than MLP. In a way, both are efforts by people concerned with the urgency of transition to get some grip on the complexities of transition itself. It also provides some structure for the seemingly endless longevity of working in the transition. While not talking about the GAIN-model, but being representative of the thinking behind it, one informant told me that "it is about playing the long game, and not necessarily working with the best of your friends". In the next chapter we will have a look at the power dimension of setting definitions and 'defending' them. Also related to power is the reflexivity integrated into strategies. The model above already shows the need for collaboration, reach, and resources. These are ultimately expressions of relational and dispositional power that are striven for. Strategies of course differ for each organisation and even individuals within an organisation. But all are reflexive in the sense that they are very aware of the abilities of other actors and strategize accordingly.

4.2 Energy transition in Rotterdam

4.2.1 Personal Perspectives and Motivations: Growing Climate Awareness

A message that has been echoing throughout most of my interactions, either in meetings, in personal conversations and during interviews, is the rarity among these professionals of previous interest in sustainability issues. Most policymakers, corporate energy employees and housing sustainability employees voiced that they did not have an educational background nor previous association with, or interest in these themes before they entered their current profession. Those that did have related education were relatively young in comparison to their fellows. When asked why someone with little prior interest would now work at this complex phenomenon called the energy transition, the motivations appeared linked to societal developments in this regard and with related and unrelated personal developments.

Climate degradation did not always receive political nor societal attention. To grasp how people are working towards an increased focus on (and execution of) renewable energy sources, I approached

an informant outside of the municipality, who previously worked in national politics, and now benefits from it in the current position as lobbyist for companies that sell green energy solutions. From their perspective, societal awareness of climate disruption grew in 2006 after the documentary 'An Inconvenient Truth' of American Democrat, Al Gore came out, that put the subject of climate degradation on the global political agenda:

> [...] *so, it was for the first time in history that the subject seemed to be going to be exciting. But initially, I just became a parent and wanted to ride the bike to work.*

Not only did this new societal awareness create jobs to address the problem, the new parenthood of my informant also impacted their attraction to work close to home, somewhat coincidentally landing a job in the energy transition. At the municipality, informants emphasized that their attention to current damaging ways of production and consumption grew through the job and is more a process than a sudden discovery. The process triggered personal engagement to reduce the ecological footprint through conscious consumption and eating vegetarian, by gradually learning and reflecting on the impact of consumption. The personal engagement of these policymakers could also be read in their uninvited explanations for driving a car or flying to holiday locations. None of my informants were educated about the subject of transition by their parents, broader family or in primary- and high school. One civil servant noted:

> *"Energy transition is not something I am familiar with at all. Nice to get knowledge of it through this assignment and get the relevance of it in view."*

It was not necessarily a conscious choice to start working at climate related transitions, moreover it results from a cocktail of societal developments, visible in job vacancies and growing attention to consumer awareness by brands, activists, and celebrities. And besides that, changing personal circumstances, like the desire to try something other than the previous job, changing relationships, new parenthood, and a growing devotion to contribute to transitions that are aimed at preserving quality of life for coming generations.

> *"So it also just gave me a certain awareness, of which I think, as a human being I have grown a bit through it and I can also just adjust my actions and so that I also just contribute in a better way to the climate."*

For some, the starting point of awareness of climate related transitions was more distant than for others. Several informants pointed out the weight they carried involving the need for fast and fundamental changes to make sure that everyone is included in climate related transitions. This would trouble them on a personal level and professionally it led them to sometimes ask fundamental questions that "*everyone is bothered by because there are no answers*". In a conversation that I overheard in a digital type of 'coffee machine talk', during the break of a seminar, several staff members agreed that their department was rather politically aligned. Almost everyone was a leftist voter and however understandable they considered that, looking at climate stances, for them the department was insufficient politically diverse. The general professional attitude at the department of Sustainability, according to a policymaker who was there from the start, is an ambitious and strong sense of involvement in all themes that concern sustainability. The more people I spoke to, the clearer I started to see that they were sketching a process attitude often with a starting point in a different profession (or unrelated focus) and often professionally reinventing themselves through a reinvented world image that calls for their action – or a coincidental job at biking distance.

4.2.2 Different Visions: Varying Organizational Cultures

To give a sense of the professional views of my informants, their varying perspectives on the group task is insightful. By combining experts from two very different clusters, the social and the physical environment - in one project team, the general plan was to integrate their combined professional perspectives and forthcoming knowledge, into both their departments. The energy transition of the built environment for instance provides lever for poverty approaches through entering every single household. In practice however, the interaction of departments, visible in the navigation of team efforts by the department heads (commissioners), appeared more varying and troubling than first expected, for which I identified two motivations that shape the differing professional views.

First, the departments have their own organizational culture and their own societal and political pressures, as explained by several municipal informants who have all worked cluster overarching:

"There is a big cultural difference between Societal development and City development, the municipality really doesn't represent one world."

"So what you see with Sustainability is that there is an enormous focus on results and because of that they can also make steps, which also has very good aspects, but yes, the whole poverty story is in their perception something, you know, they just have to arrange."

Beside the cultural difference between departments or clusters, there is the pressure of reputation:

"The field in which City development operates is always under the political microscope, so they can't actually afford not to listen carefully to the alderman. […] Much more on the physical side than on the social side. […] The latter are the areas where you hope you're not at the top of the wrong list."

The wrong list would be for instance, representing the higher rate of poverty or delinquency. According to these informants, the physical domain where the department of Sustainability resides, receives much political attention and has a more technical point of view in the transition. The social domain, where the department of Poverty and Debt resides, is under a longer term type of pressure where fast results matter less than aiming to *"not end at the top of the wrong list"*. The project team is steered by their commissioners who are informed through weekly assemblies, of their alderman's ambitions, and it's their task to navigate the project team towards the alderman's priorities. In the context of my fieldwork, this resulted in two commissioners that were steering the team with different (top-down) motivations and professional cultural backgrounds, with seemingly little interaction with each other, and thereby blurring what should be prioritized.

Informants explain:

"They are joint commissioners from very different worlds. [one commissioner] *would be point of contact but in practice* [the other] *steers along. Having a second steersman in the background is annoying."*

"Sometimes [commissioner] *asks us to do something that the other doesn't consider important, or is surprised by - they don't always talk, I think."*

Not to say that the commissioners opposed each other, but they asked for different lines of priority, sometimes in one-on-one conversations, and sometimes during team meetings. The budget and timeframe for the assignment was at first six months and was prolonged with another six months

that were now reaching its end, leading to result-oriented focus. The tightening of pressure given to the project team showed (professional) character of one municipal authority:

> *"It's not a PHD or anything. If you guys identify something we can ask the national government. Notice I'm getting irritated […] "*

In recurring team discussions different participants contested their substantive tasks and expectations, however in various expressions. Nearly everyone, as I would realize from personal small talk, found these discussions uncomfortable, and the meetings did not lead to a common vision. In combination with personal circumstances, eventually two team members left before the end of the project.

4.2.3 Views on Transition Strategy: Scope

The energy transition is understood by most informants as too complex to fully understand as policymakers of Sustainability shared:

> *"Even people with a technical background don't know the ins and outs of the energy transition."*

> *"[…] Not everyone* [here] *has substantive, physics, or relevant corporate knowledge."*

Comparing the current energy transition with previous transitions brought awareness of the size of a transition, keeping the glass halfway full:

> *"Just like the rollout of the Internet or whatever, that didn't happen overnight either, that also just went in very small steps and in thirty years you look back and think wow okay, it looks completely different. That's how I see the energy transition as well."*

With the top-down given goals of the energy transition in Rotterdam, strategies vary along with the task at hand, the specific area and its population (tenants, owners, VVE and entrepreneurs). Policymakers of the Sustainability department explain their starting point for strategizing:

> *"The point of view of how the energy transition works we take from the Trias Energetica. You start by saving energy, the energy you consume you don't need to save, so make sure*

> *you limit your consumption of energy, then make sure your sources are sustainable and then make sure you use the sources you use as wisely as possible."*

The first focus is directed at saving energy, by providing targeted information, deploying energy coaches on a neighbourhood level, facilitating collective purchasing actions of sun panels for instance, and making financing available. Through supporting local initiatives to increase the energy transition, the municipality works to increase societal support for the energy transition. Exemplary for the second step in the Trias Energetica, a policymaker of the social domain explains strategizing the transition to sustainable resources:

> *"From an affordability perspective, three things are important: First, physical modifications to the home that affect rent: insulation and making it adaptive or circular. Second, the moment of becoming natural gas free, and what the other energy carrier will cost, is heat much more expensive or cheaper? The third is more complicated, because what do rising gas prices mean anyways in the next 30 years? What does that mean in market forces? […] Not only the market but also politics have an influence on this."*

Where the first explains the guiding principle for the outset of transition strategy of the municipality, the second gives insight into the large question of affordability of the switch to sustainable resources in the built environment - from a tangible resident's affordability perspective, thereby charting unknown factors that come into play. Strategizing as articulated by informants is a continuous trial of what has not been tried before, and closely watching technological advancements, political developments and knowledge making processes.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we set out to analyse goals, motivations, visions and strategies that actors in our contexts hold. First, in the SFSC-context, we have seen that motivation can carry a performative quality in working in a transition. Personal anecdotes and visions are rather standard with entrepreneurs. These are then judged by other actors in terms of integrity and adequacy. In Rotterdam, political and social attention to problems and pragmatic reasons like wanting jobs closer to home informed motivation. Second, we analysed discursive frames of larger visions or organisational culture. In the broader network of the SFSC-movement, we have put forward the frames of system-thinking and economical pragmatism to illustrate the constant renegotiation of

truth-making in the food transition. The frames overlap, and are often integrated into one another to achieve transitional goals in dominant economic practices, or to change transitional goals according to those practices. In Rotterdam, differences in organizational cultural background – translated to the project team through the different commissioners - is seen leading to unchanged discomfort in the team. Finally, we have provided examples of used transition strategies. The TKK has adopted Amped's GAIN-model, which provides concrete grips for actors working on the abstract long-term idea of food transition. The Rotterdam team on Energy Transition has been occupied with setting definitions on which a strategy could ultimately be built, illustrating the importance of this process. Affordability was an uncertain factor in the execution of strategy in this respect.

5. Power in transition

In this chapter we will provide an ethnographic representation of power dynamics in our two research contexts. First, we use the lenses of language and knowledge to analyse tacit power relations. Second, we take a look at lobbying in the broadest sense of the word. While we cover some professional lobbyists as well, we have included municipal political framing and entrepreneurial strategies for fund acquisition as well. Third, and the closest to our central research question, we describe how the socio-political environments in which our informants operate shape their role in the transition.

5.1 The TKK and the SFSC-ecosystem:

5.1.1 Power in language and knowledge: *Kartrekkers, kwartiermakers en kilometers*

One of my interviewees' job description was that of *kwartiermaker* (quartermaster). In an offer to the Province of Flevoland for the creation of a regional alliance, a *kwartiermakersfase* was proposed by Amped and Food Hub. This term, of military origin, denotes someone who 'paves the way', preparing for something new. The modern semi-corporate quartermasters do not physically prepare army camps, but lay out structures and activate networks for the implementation of new ideas. The long-term routes for transformative practices are sometimes referred to as *kruimelpaden* (breadcrumb trails). The most active or influential actors on those trails are coined *kartrekkers* (cart-pullers). Entrepreneurial people are *doeners* (doers), people perceived as slowing down the transition *remmers* (brakers). The language of movement and 'uncharted territory' in all of these terms reflect the longevity and unknown destination of work 'in the transition'. Terms like *kartrekker* and *kwartiermaker* also hint at the lack of clear leadership or management in novel enterprises. Note that the cart is not being steered but pulled. This is both typical of transition management – in which innovations have to be adopted by other actors – and of the Dutch *poldercultuur* (consensus culture), in which discussing, realigning and making concessions are central. In a reaction on the previously stated offer, an employee of the Province stated:

> "In my opinion we are doing this together as partners, so the Municipality and the Province are not *opdrachtgevers* [commissioning party] but we are doing this with each other, together. Because we all want this. I am a proponent of a having good conversation to see who is doing what part."

Note the emphasis on cooperation and horizontal relations. The phrases *samen*, *met elkaar*, *met zijn allen* (together, with each other, all together) were mentioned in just two sentences. The suggestion of a having a good conversation is exemplary of the seemingly endless dialogue in Dutch civil society. While the majority of informants expressed that they were really done with talking and wanted to start doing, for many of them the reality remains having multiple meetings a day .

When looking at language use in 'the short chain' there is a lot of jargon involved. Sector-specific terms from areas like agriculture, economics, politics and marketing have collided in the SFSC-ecosystem. An extreme example would be the acronyms and abbreviations used in European project- or policy names. Just take a look at this summary of European SFSC-related bodies: SMARTCHAIN (funded by Horizon 2020); IEEP (supported by EU LIFE programme); Interreg (funded by ERDF). Less extreme examples would be things like a *scrum-sprint approach* (a project management style) or the *meitellingen* (yearly mandatory registration of data for agriculturalists). In knowing what these terms mean, actors can demonstrate experience or intelligence, or at the least seem like they know what they are talking about. Measurements like these *meitellingen* are another object of expressed knowledge. With quantifiable data it is not necessarily knowing exact numbers from research (although that is appreciated as well), but more the knowing of *who* is measuring and *what* is measured. And maybe more importantly, what is not. Institutes like Wageningen University and the CBS (Central Bureau for Statistics) hold significant power in this respect and are mobilized and influenced by stakeholders from government- and market-sectors. The percentage of current market share for SFSC-products is a good example of power in data. Researchers may include non-edible flowers in this percentage which results in a higher current market share. This in turn can create the impression that local consumption is already higher, lessening the urgency for a transition to more local food systems. These quantitative choices affect perceptions of reality, in a way that to some informants was very deceiving. With a hint to the Second World War, one noted:

> "We've stopped eating tulip bulbs quite a while ago..."

In quantitatively measuring social values like the connection between farmers and consumers a range of other power problems come into play. What is really measured and what does it represent? And even when measuring quantitative data like market share, there is the importance of the delineation of qualitative definitions. Definition-making is probably the arena in which contestation is the fiercest, since actors base solutions – and thus transition paths – on used definitions. Research is

carried out based on set definitions and in government projects clear definitions are often mandatory for starting out. Within the delineation of the term 'short food supply chain' itself there is an ongoing debate. This is not hard to imagine when a concept is founded on a relativity to 'longer' chains. Some may demarcate the SFSC strictly in terms of food kilometres travelled, others in a specific number of middlemen between production and consumption. Still others propose a broader definition in which social cohesion and ecological value are the core pillars. Since the content of the SFSC is so contested, other concepts like Regional Food System have been proposed to differentiate from the narrow kilometre-based ones. In certain contexts, SFSC's are thrown onto a pile of multifunctional agriculture, circular agriculture or alternative food networks. A senior member of LTO told me:

> "[some of our members are an] entrepreneur with a local product, or a farm shop, or they're in the short chain. [...] That is a category of its own. And it's not always easy to define. We created a special sector department: multifunctional agriculture. [...] So, a farm with a care center or day care. Or one with a short chain, those we kind of put together into multifunctional agriculture."

Note that LTO has eighteen of these sector departments and sectors like 'fur animals' have their own department. Another informant told me that the Ministry of Agriculture did not even mention the concept of short chains in the new National Strategic Plan. All these adaptations, reconfigurations and of the SFSC-concept have impact on the policy and business frameworks that it generates. Active knowledge-making is done through writing scientific papers, creating definitions and delineating measurements. On a more quantitative scale, influencing of collective knowledge frames is done through media campaigns. Creating a positive public impression of one's organisation is done by all actors, and some try to steer impressions of overarching problems as well.

Having easier access to media, some actors are in a more powerful position to change impressions. We have already covered groups like Albert Heijn or Rabobank, but on a smaller scale media quarrels play a role as well.

5.1.2 Lobbying for power: *Kraantjes, potjes en portefeuilles*
It should come as no surprise that money plays a large role in transition power dynamics. According to one informant, the TKK was created because entrepreneurs were bundling their forces for jointly

acquiring funding from the Ministry. Government subsidies - from ministries, municipalities, European Union programmes – are often called upon for establishing or growing SFSC-initiatives. Political cycles influence opportunities for funding and many actors feel that the lack of long-term financing is inhibiting systematic change. However, most actors also feel that relying too much on certain parties for funding inhibits their ability to set goals and definitions independently. This is the case for a governmental institution like LNV: "at least this way we're not an extension of government policy" - or a large bank: "they are leaning too heavily on Rabobank's wallet...". Entrepreneurs may feel that is better to grow based on market principles. The corona-pandemic has fuelled a rise in local consumption and SFSC-companies like Boerschappen and Local2Local have seen a significant grow in revenue because of it. Collaborations with established food-industry players are happening more often and can be used as a way of displaying market power. In fact, SFSC-initiatives are showing their first signs of competition between one another. This is somewhat mitigated by collaborative structures but nevertheless indicative of a rise in market success. As with any business context the SFSC-business is also subject to personal differences in what is perceived as 'entrepreneurship'. Some illustrative remarks by informants were:

> "Then we get out of a meeting feeling like: fuck, we didn't even get what we came for."

> "Yes, well, we're all entrepreneurs. And we're all really stubborn. Me as well. This you can quote."

Perhaps also of interest when contemplating 'entrepreneurialism' in this is that all those entrepreneurs are male, and so are most of the people I interviewed. Having influence over other actors depends not only on structural and dispositional power but also on the personal relational kind. Organisational goals or business decisions are almost always discussed before and after public official statements.

5.1.3 Role in Transition: *Polderen,* dispersed power, and reflexive arrangements

In the networking structure explained in the first chapter, and the use of language in this chapter, it becomes apparent that there is no central leadership in the SFSC-movement. This provides frustration with some actors who feel the government or logistical companies should 'take the lead'. Within local and regional governments, there is often a general perception that they themselves "can't do all that much". Cities like Amsterdam are actively lobbying The Hague to change national

policy in favour of letting municipalities decide on issues like the presence of fast-food restaurants or the use of advertising for unhealthy food. Provinces are united in a central lobbying force coined IPO (*inter-provinciaal overleg*), and they take part in the writing of the National Strategic Plan. We have already covered the lobbying work of LTO and the TCV, sometimes "not necessarily on the same side of the table". Meetings and consensus culture in governments and large advocacy groups make for a perception of slow progress with most entrepreneurs. One described the difference between provinces and municipalities, respectively, as *trage stront vs. snelle stront* (slow shit vs. fast shit). The European Union, while often perceived as far more progressive than the national government, can be equally sluggish in for example paying out subsidies. 'The market', being inherently subject to competition and co-optation, has its own factors that inhibit the quick growth of the SFSC-movement. And the dichotomy between market and civil society itself is not too rigid in the Netherlands, with constant realignment between companies and state actors being the norm.

5.2 Rotterdam Energy transition

5.2.1 Language & Frames: Power of Words

The project team is predominantly engaged in communicating with team members, commissioners, colleagues outside of the project team, research bureaus, energy coaches, housing corporations, the energy bank, etcetera. Most work of policymakers is done through either verbal or written communication, and in the current context this partially involves gathering intel on different interpretations of definitions that are now re-evaluated. Language is not only the main instrument to work with but it is also, in a sense, worked at, by the evaluation of definitions in a transition context. Language is used consciously and subconsciously, and in every shape, it remains a critical area of power, impacting different ends of communication. Policymakers use language to interact in text and voice, writing policy proposals and attending many meetings. Their use of jargon demonstrates its inherent power dynamic, where insiders are expected to understand what others do not necessarily logically understand, and as I will show next, even misunderstanding is part of common insider knowledge. From there, language can build frameworks to strategically position a phenomenon, thereby (ideally) supporting reputations of political authorities in the role of the municipality as whole – since we do not want to land on the wrong lists – and the role of governors like aldermen and councilmen. Positive reputations are effective in all kinds of lobbies, like the acquisition of funds

from the national government or gaining a societal support base. So, considering the emergence of the task, the execution of the task, the means and environment, language is a key domain of power.

In the everyday course of events between office hours, a powerplay can be read from the way of speaking that, in my presence, the digital work floor echoes. The choice of language in the many explorative meetings with colleagues from different departments, confirmed that the organizational culture of one department does not represent the next, as mentioned by municipal informants in chapter four. Two types of 'office talk' or jargon stood out in my observation, that I will refer to as figurative jargon and expert jargon. The former refers to words that have no literal meaning, their meanings are -arguably- multiple interpretable, and the latter concerns words that are merely understood by people with prior substantive knowledge. What I call 'figurative jargon' is part of the organizational culture of the entire municipality of Rotterdam, while 'expert jargon' depends on which expertise resides in which department.

From an informal, recreational gathering – coincidently - about office language, guided by a so-called 'language guru', with hundreds of civil servants from all departments, figurative jargon appeared to be a contested part of the larger organizational culture. In the daily flow of conversation at several moments I heard remarks that I interpreted intuitively, but rarely certain of what it meant. A fraction of these figurative terms: "*doing a pee on top of it, picking something up and then putting it somewhere else, working integral, flattening it, quick wins, dot on the horizon, assessment framework, brown paper session, get up to speed, on the front end, grab your rank, death house construction, steering committee, hybrid meeting, organic change.*" These phrases are figurative without exception and therefore open to interpretation. In the digital gathering with the 'language guru', many civil servants mentioned that because of these terms they often do not understand what is expected of them, leading to confusion and delays in communication and workflow. One participant who received much support in the chat box beside the video meeting, shared that they refrained from asking for an explanation in fear of being the cause for delays in communication and workflow- and being ridiculed. Dozens of civil servants articulating this common experience might demonstrate a less visible part of organizational culture: the common silence about misunderstandings. With the project team, I observed figurative jargon generally used by department heads, board consultants and other positions higher up the hierarchy. Still, figurative

jargon trickled through nearly all interaction between the project team and conversational partners, entirely unquestioned.

The second type of jargon that I encountered seemed a lot clearer to me, although understanding it came with its own implications. Expert jargon refers to words and terms that do have literal meanings but require prior knowledge. *Neighbourhood approach, achievability, natural gas free, building isolation, return on investment, social ecology, affordability, transition, preserving, energy poverty, cleaning, mobility.* These terms were generally used in the documentation of Sustainability and in conversations by policymakers from the department of Sustainability and the project team. Sometimes professionals outside of the department of Sustainability would ask for the meaning of terms and in my observation, policymakers were eager to share their understanding of expert jargon with whoever would ask. In my observation the questioning of expert terms occurred overtly on a general basis in meetings of the project team with others. Perhaps this suggests that literal terms that are evidently part of someone's expertise, is easier to question in the municipal culture, than figurative terms that everyone is expected to understand. In the next paragraph we turn to the controlled use of language to build frames that serve as lobbies.

5.2.2 Lobby: in Regional Quick Wins

Apart from the choice of words inside the municipal work floor, the attention to the choice of words that are meant to inform Rotterdammers or aldermen, was apparent with anyone I encountered. The way municipal efforts are addressed reinforce the frame that is desired, when information goes public. Frames serve the purpose of a controlled self-image of the municipality and for instance, specific aldermen. It can build and weaken the societal support base, and it enforces lobbies that are for instance aimed at receiving aid from the national government. In the context of my fieldwork, the interplay of words, frames and lobbies appeared from one line of activity of the team, called 'quick wins'. Both department heads, who commissioned the tasks of this project team continuously prioritized quick wins as an important parallel line of activity. This involved the inventory of existing regulations and instruments that, in a literal sense, may affect affordability for low income Rotterdammers, in making their use of energy more sustainable. On the work floor these are called 'quick wins' because the arrangements already exist and are relatively easy to operationalize. Quick wins, however, also carry an overtly emphasized symbolic value. This was addressed in conversations as well as in for instance, documented task descriptions as: *"mainly for the stage or politics"*.

Adopting these quick wins under the framework of supporting low-income households in the energy transition, was also meant to highlight the Sustainability aldermen in their media appearances. The team effort to achieve 'quick wins' is then projected to the public as sustainability successes. Ans building a frame of success around the aldermen increases their pull at state lobbies and a positive reinforcement of the reputation and workings at the municipality of Rotterdam.

One example of a quick win is the Public Housing Fund. This fund is a success and result of a previous lobby at the state by mayors from several different municipalities. Every municipality can request a budget under strict conditions, to upgrade housing in areas where residents have little investment leeway. The first step is for policymakers to formulate a substantiated proposition to submit to regional aldermen. The following transcript is a negotiation of how to frame the proposal:

"Can we make politics sexy with this?"

"From our Affordability perspective, we can try to attract a few aldermen."

"Something to pay extra attention to those specific low-income groups is going to be in the project letter.[…] we're going to arrange and offer this for them as a pilot. To make it more liveable and sustainable. I think it's nice if you frame it that way, we're giving something to these residents."

Writing a proposition to the sustainability alderman ought to lead to posting a budget request at the state, and if granted, this increases positive media attention for the role of aldermen in the energy transition, expanding their weight in a future request of the national government. The frame that shapes a reputation works to benefit the lobby to receive resources from external forces (state), because of - and leading to positive media attention. Hence, the power in choosing words.

5.2.3 Role in Transition: Through Decision Making

By now we have seen that language is used to build a reputation or framework that plays a leading role in the temptation (lobby) of decision makers. This brings us to answer how decisions are made and by whom. Civil servants research and explore their appointed topics, to form an opinion to be shared with the management and the board. These explorations are, in my observation, first shared within the project team and then with the department heads, who steer and decide on the

composition of what information is sent further up. Through weekly meetings with their assigned aldermen where relevant information is exchanged, department heads are aware of the ambitions, ideas, and priorities of aldermen. This knowledge leads the managerial line to steer project teams and decide on the relevance of information that continues towards aldermen. Another flow of information reaches aldermen through their party networks. The information stream is directed upwards, and along the way it is joined with the political party vision of specific board members. Decision making depends on which information is available, and who gets to decide.

Next, we turn to the case-study of gas free pilot areas of Rotterdam, to demonstrate the role of the municipality in the energy transition. Within the scope of this study, four interrelated groups in Rotterdam are associated with the pilot areas, being the municipality, housing corporations, residents and area developers working with energy operators. By the year 2050, all two-hundred-sixty-three-thousand houses in Rotterdam will quit using natural gas, in line with emission objectives of the Paris Agreement. To launch this unprecedented mission, the national government designated pilot areas where the underground infrastructure for natural gas is replaced with a new infrastructure for, depending on the area, sustainable energy resources. [KC(2] [JR(3] To this cause, the municipality determined two feasible alternatives to gas that it aims to implement for specific areas. These are either residual heat from local industry or electric energy generated by sun or wind. In continuous reflexive arrangements delegates of the municipality, housing corporations, and the energy enterprise of the selected pilot area negotiate the best possible deal to execute replacement of the underground infrastructure. According to an informant working as Sustainability employee at one involved housing corporation, that the project team encountered in explorative meetings, in one case this took two years for a single area, where the corporation haggled discount on *vastrecht,* fixed charges, and bought off technology, so those costs don't fall to tenants. According to the same informant there is a logic as to how the pilot areas are selected:

> *"They very deliberately designated the pilot neighbourhoods based on a lot of corporation property, because that's easy. You have one point of contact. If you move to a neighbourhood where there are only owner-occupied houses, you'll have all these different buyers to talk to, so the choice of these neighbourhoods is often based on how easy it is to get stakeholders around the table and we are ultimately the ones who say yes or no to connecting our homes to the heat network."*

Reaching agreement on execution of transition objectives with a housing corporation means talking to one point of contact with the effect of being able to change the fundaments under a whole neighbourhood. In a later remark, the same informant gives deeper insight into the decision-making process:

> *"[…] legally speaking, we are obliged to ask permission from the residents to carry out the operation on their homes to connect those homes to the heat network, and if seventy percent of our residents say yes, then we have sufficient legal grounds to do so; if we don't reach seventy percent, then we have to go to court and ask the judge: do you think this is so important that we go beyond the outcome and do the work anyway. "*

After two years of negotiating between the municipality, housing corporations and energy enterprises, their agreement still relies on the majority vote of residents. And as I grew to understand, there is crucial ground to object for residents of social housing whereas switching to green energy sources increases the value of those homes. In the current computing system, this means that housing corporations must pay a higher rental levy, while these households see their rents increased. Among informants at the municipality and housing corporations, there is a broad awareness that the energy transition either is not affordable for the municipality, and if it is, it is not affordable for residents. To their reply, some have wondered whether financial vulnerability should be addressed in transition policy, or that different objectives are better kept apart. While all four parties, the municipality, the residents, housing corporations and energy operators, have great stakes in the continuance of the transition of the built environment, eventually, the decision to continue replacing the underground gas infrastructure, and weigh all interests, is left with the judge.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have provided an ethnographic representation of power relations within 'the transition' that is played out in our contexts. First off, we used language and knowledge as lenses to understand tacit power dimensions. In the SFSC-movement, dispersed power and cooperational consensus culture became visible through language. Knowledge-making, in the delineation measurements and the setting of definitions, proved to be heavily contested. In Rotterdam, expert and figurative jargon were ways of tacitly expressing power, sometimes creating confusion for all. In the SFSC, acquisition of funds through either government programs or market dynamics proved to be

very political. In Rotterdam, information sent up the hierarchy by civil servants appeared summarised and filtered to fit the ambitions of local aldermen. The 'quick win', seen in the presentation of sustainability-results to the public, is somewhat related to the data presentation and media campaigns by regional governments, ministries and companies in the SFSC-realm. Presenting to the public the impression that 'the short chain' is already doing great, competes with the view of the need for urgent change in the food supply chain. Finally, we set out to look at how the transition is shaped by socio-political realities in our contexts. In the SFSC-movement, a lack of centralised management makes for adaptability and independence, but also difficulties in getting the SFSC on incumbent political agendas. Rotterdam, despite its hierarchical structure, is also seen to be subject to relational and dispositional powers in decision-making. The example of gas-free pilot area illustrates the diffused power the municipality is dealing with.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis we set out to look at how power emerges from everyday activities in two organizational contexts, respectively aimed at the food- and energy transition. Using ethnographic methods and qualitative interviewing, we aimed to gain empirical insight into the everyday expressions of concepts from theoretical studies into power in sustainability transitions. As we have already shown in our theoretical exploration, the concept of power itself is not uncontested. This led us to approach the field with a broad understanding of the term, as leading power-in-transition theorists point out (Avelino 2021, Avelino and Grin 2017). Neither uncontested is the multi-level framework used in transition theory. Its initial poor conceptualisation of landscape, regime and niche levels, lack of integration of power dynamics and the lack of attention to translation processes between those levels has been addressed by several (Hendriks 2007; Grin 2011; Hoffmann 2013; Avelino and Grin 2016; Avelino et al. 2016; El Bilali 2019).

6.1 Comparative Conclusions of Empirical Data

A comparative analysis of our two research contexts poses its own challenges. The wholly different aims of the two 'types' of transition are somewhat interrelated in the grand undefined aim for sustainability but concern different types of actors and interactions. Nevertheless, we are aiming to analyse power in transition in its broadest sense. A comparison between two very distinct settings actually serves this broadening of understanding the realities of power and cooperation in transitions. The concept of transition itself is also contextualised by providing a thick description of different cases, making us able to provide some empirical material to the gaps identified by leading theorists (Avelino and Grin 2016; Pel 2015). So, let us have a look at how our findings compare.

First off, we have provided an ethnographic representation of two different organisational contexts engaged in 'transition'. Quickly after starting fieldwork into the TKK it became apparent that the everyday executive workings of the Taskforce were based on interactions between different organisations that its members belong to and ones in the wider 'ecosystem'. Rotterdam's municipal bureaucracy - beforehand considered to be one organisation - turned out to have clear divisions between departments. By division of departments, overarching collaborations emphasized the organization of communication to one's own department. The top-down vs. grassroots dichotomy that we assumed before, is most visible in the direction of policy. In 'the energy transition' policy

aims from the Paris agreement, through Europe and the Dutch national government, is being executed by municipalities like Rotterdam. Teams are appointed in a top-down fashion and in eventually municipality employees in transition activities are guided by municipal policy. In the TKK, the fact that an initially formed programming board was later supplemented with an advisory board consisting of people from well-established organisations shows a grassroots approach to organising. 'Policy', in the shape of shared goals, is put into programmes by groups of individuals aiming to change dominant practices. However, as we have shown in our fifth chapter, when it comes to actual power relations this directionality is more complex. A last observation on organisational contexts is the surprising ways in which the two settings reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic. SFSC-companies saw a rise in revenue due to increased popularity in local food, changing some of the relations between TKK-members. Rotterdam turned out to be surprisingly adaptive in replacing work entirely to the digital sphere.

Second, we have tried to interpretatively analyse goals, motivations and visions that we encountered during our fieldwork. A first straightforward observation in this regard is that both our networks consist of different individuals with their own personal goals, motivations and visions. There is of course the general incentive for income in any job, and with most there is satisfaction in doing work that is perceived as valuable or 'having impact'. Other than that we have analysed this facet of our questioning with different methods. In the multi-stakeholder network around the TKK, developing two overlapping discursive frames was useful for analysing the various visions found with different individuals and organisations. All actors had different understandings of both what 'needed to change' and what was 'realistically possible', often fitting one into the other. In Rotterdam, looking at the interplay between organisational goals and personal views on climate-related issues was more productive. Oftentimes process goals were reflected in personal consumption patterns. Overall, actors' professional role and general awareness inform an interest into sustainability matters in both our contexts. In Rotterdam through a rise in societal attention to sustainability issues, and the opening of related jobs, people reflected on their own lifestyles. In the SFSC-movement people often enter certain jobs, businesses or projects because they 'fit their vision'.

Third, and closest to our central question, we have provided an ethnographic representation of power relations within 'the transition' that is played out in our contexts. This we did through looking at language and frames of knowledge, lobbying and funding, and ultimately the role of power in an organisations' role in the transition. In language use we analysed the micropolitical aspects of

jargon (knowing or not knowing terms and phrases), the influential role of setting definitions in the formation of solutions, and the framing of data and results in ways that are inherently political. In Rotterdam, information sent up the hierarchy by civil servants appeared summarised and filtered to fit the ambitions of local aldermen. The 'quick win', seen in the presentation of sustainability-results to the public, is somewhat related to the data presentation and media campaigns by regional governments, ministries and companies in the SFSC-realm. Presenting to the public the impression that 'the short chain' is already doing great, competes with the view of the need for urgent change in the food supply chain. Regarding lobby and fund acquisition, we have identified similar lobby groups like the green energy lobby or the food transition lobby, and have seen that municipalities, provinces and other organisations all lobby for certain legislation changes towards the Hague and Brussels. In the business context surrounding the TKK entrepreneurial dealings are often considered more productive than dealing with governments. Both lobbying and 'doing business', however, ultimately rely on personal social skills and the ability to mobilise certain networks, as we have shown through our ethnographic descriptions.

6.2 Integration into Multi-level Perspective

The aim of this research was to show how the everyday workings in two organizational structures – working 'in' the food- and energy transition - operate along lines of power that eventually shape the organizations' role in the larger transition. If we were to simplistically integrate the power relations observed during our fieldwork into Grin's (2010) multi-level power framework – building forth on Arts and van Tatenhove and Clegg (in Grin 2010), it would be as follows:

Structural power, at socio-technical landscape level, lies with the global agro-food industry that does not have an incentive to fundamentally change their production, marketing and logistical systems. This can be attributed to the agency found with material infrastructure that is expensive to replace and the neoliberal tendency of thinking in terms of efficiency and profit. Structural power can also be found in laws and regulations, often at the European level. These can be both inhibiting or supporting. The supporting kind can be seen as an extension of the – also structural – growing awareness of the high-risk negative effects of global industrialism. A surprising force of the structural kind these past two years is the coronavirus pandemic, which boosted an interest in local consumption in the Netherlands. More specific to the Rotterdam context, structural power is found

in European policy, the Paris agreement and market forces like housing prices, costs of infrastructure and international trade agreements like gas deals with Russia. Furthermore, climate pressure because of rising emissions are at the core of the push for an energy transition.

Dispositional power, at the regime level, lies with the position of incumbent actors. In the SFSC-context a bank or ministry has, for example, access to large-scale media in which they can show their involvement in the food transition. Related dynamics can be seen in authoritative knowledge-making and definition-setting, in which established institutes hold power over what is seen as truth. Resources and the creation of legislation also fall in this dispositional category. Due to the dispositional power of incumbent actors, they are often called upon by other actors for acquiring resources, influencing legislation and creating attention. This is most easily visible in applying for subsidies and lobbying for changes to certain rules. The TKK itself being given a mandate by the Ministry of Agriculture could be regarded as an increase in dispositional power. In the energy-context, the whole municipality, in trying to reach objectives set by the national government, can be regarded as regime. Herein lies a hierarchy and the following of institutional logics. Large energy and housing corporations – being semi-governmental because of their indispensible societal functions – could also be regarded as being on powerful positionalities.

Relational power, at the niche level, lies with the achievements of agents in interaction. In SFSC-circles, knowing what routes to take to gain support from incumbents, creating alliances and increasing market share are all examples of this kind. The colliding of house-owners, housing corporations and green energy companies could be regarded as a relational power 'field'. Opportunities are created by landscape pressure and gaps in the regime.

As becomes clear when reading this model-based analysis, it obscures from several important realities. First, transformative agency can come from anywhere, including within the regime. Several employees of government institutions like municipalities expressed feelings of urgency for change and initiated collaborations with entrepreneurs. Also, the conception of the whole municipality in the Rotterdam context as a regime is too blunt considering the aims of individual actors. Moreover, the significant influence of lobbying and advocacy groups are not fully accounted for in a niche-regime relationship. Second, 'niche' actors can be quite directly involved with actors that would generally be considered high regime or even a social setting closely related to landscape-developments. Through SMARTCHAIN and Climate-KIC, for example, employees of Amped are working together with people from all over Europe in a way that brings together both European

meta-objectives and the personal interests of a carrot-farmer in Dronten. We are not superimposing 'anything European' on 'the landscape', but pointing at the fact that this direct social connection between local initiatives and EU-policy means there is direct knowledge exchange and translation between the two.

Finally, and related to all points above, all power is relational. Of course, personal networks are mobilised in regime practices as well, but in this, change is not directed solely up- and downwards on the level perspective. And when it is, it does not move in one direction. The dialectical relationship between 'niche' and 'regime' is best visualised in co-optation practices and the reflexive arrangements of all actors in the SFSC-movement. Or in the context of Rotterdam – by looking at how civil servants work at the energy transition, the notion that authority is not logical. Together with the trained anthropological perception, the multi-level-perspective helped to map the evident organizational hierarchy of the governing body as seen from the municipality, stretching out beyond nation-states, and within the township through communication and formation. Goals and funds for the energy transition are set at the European Union and beyond that in covenants at the highest political position of power. The execution of these goals however is delegated by the Dutch nation-state to all municipalities, with the preconception that there is not one sustainable energy source, or solution, to fit all Dutch citizens and entrepreneurs who at this point depend on fossil fuels. To perform the transition objectives, districts rely on state regulations, funding and laws, but also on transnational trade agreements and geo-political tensions concerning the fossil fuel industry, which have been left underexposed in this study. In theory, the governing hierarchy stands, yet in transition practice it appears interdependent and interrelated with many other societal forces, of which housing corporations and their tenants are exemplary. Finally, what these findings come down to is the relationality of the practices in transitions where townships and enterprises are interrelated and therefore behave interdependent despite of formal rankings.

We could analytically fit all of these nuances 'back' into transition frameworks. Regimes like the institutional logic of the Rotterdam township are distributed over people, thus obviously containing different aims and views (Grin, Geels, Avelino). The direct social link between a 'niche' company and a 'landscape' policy in SFSC-projects is exemplary of what Hoffman (2013) would coin a 'carrier wave' – a structural force supporting a niche innovation. Rotterdam's energy transition, from 'within the regime' is the result of landscape pressure to the national and municipal regime, where cracks in the regime are filled with 'green' innovations from niche spheres, thus still fitting the MLP-

frame. The co-opting and perceived weakening of food transition efforts by large companies like Albert Heijn could be regarded as 'Trojan Horse'-developments (Pel 2015), in which the evolutionary nature of transitions could eventually overcome the initial capture.

6.3 Epistemology of Ethnography in Transition Frameworks

In de- and re-constructing transition management frameworks we are actively engaging with the epistemological debate around them. As Avelino and Grin (2016) argued, deconstructivist critique (in the inherently non-definable way Derrida 'defined' it) of transition frameworks can be useful in showcasing transition's "unintended consequences and harmful paths paved by good intentions'' (Avelino and Grin 2016 p. 20). Yet in pushing forward the idea that due to transitions' complexity we can never know how they function contemporarily – maybe even suggesting that it is better to do nothing at all – deconstruction can obscure from the initial assumption that systematic change is needed. Thus, Avelino and Grin argue, a 'reconstructivist' approach is needed with interpretative methods (ibid 21-22). An interpretative stance is what we have taken at the beginning. However, the exercise of putting together ethnographic interpretive data with a modular framework like MLP is not without its challenges.

We argue that the use of a multi-level perspective in this short period of ethnography is useful as a heuristic framework, but contains the danger of framing everything within its terms. Certain phenomena, like relationality in Rotterdam's municipal hierarchy or media hijacks in the TKK context, are better analysed using different frames. Less broad theoretical concepts – resulting from transition management - like Hoffmann's (2013) carrier waves, Pel's (2015) notion of capture or some of the many empirical works on niche-regime relations offer greater insight. Also, without explicitly using it as a theoretical frame, our methods and analyses have often resembled those of actor-network approaches. The agency of non-human (e.g. material, other biological) entities in agricultural and energy infrastructure is something that could be further be anthropologically explored. We think transition management *can be* a useful lens, but should not be used as a guiding framework for anthropological research over a three-month period. Our use of earlier theory made our fieldwork findings seem more novel than they were after diving into the literature again. Over all,

we could regard this research as an exploratory one, both descriptively - regarding our contexts - and epistemologically - regarding the combination of cultural anthropology with transition studies.

Directions for further research – which we ourselves also would have liked to delve into deeper – would be ethnographic descriptions of lobbying work in the transition; the influence of non-human actants; co-optation of narratives from the incumbent perspective; and a deeper understanding of translation processes in general. Concluding, the overlap between the disciplines of cultural anthropology and transition studies is one that we found fascinating and would have liked to have explored with far more time, energy and a more experienced position in the field, or a desk chair for that matter.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. "Negative dialectics." A&C Black 1 (1973).

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota
        Press 1 (1996).

Archief12. "*Coalitieakkoord Rotterdam 2018 - 2021*." Last modified June 26, 2018.
        https://archief12.archiefweb.eu/archives/archiefweb/20200809083542/http://www.rotterd
        am.nl/bestuur-organisatie/college-van-benw/Coalitieakkoord-2018-2022.pdf

Avelino, Flor. "Theories of power and social change. Power contestations and their implications for
        research on social change and innovation." *Journal of Political Power* (2021).

Avelino, Flor, and Jan Rotmans. "Power in transition: an interdisciplinary framework to study power
        in relation to structural change." *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 4 (2009): 543-569.

Avelino, Flor, and John Grin. "Beyond deconstruction. A reconstructive perspective on sustainability
        transition governance." *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 22 (2017): 15-25.

Avelino, Flor, John Grin, Bonno Pel, and Shivant Jhagroe. "The politics of sustainability transitions."
        Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning 18, no. 5 (2016): 557-567.

Baarsma, Barbara. *Nederland Voedselparadijs: Kansen Voor Korte Ketens.* Uitgeverij Pluim, 2020.

Beck, Ulrich, Scott Lash, Brian Wynne. "*Risk society: Towards a New Modernity*." Sage 17 (1992).

Boeije, Hennie. *Analysis in Qualitative Research.* Sage Publications, 2009.

Boholm, Åsa. "Risk perception and social anthropology: Critique of cultural theory." *Ethnos* 61, no. 1-
2 (1996): 64-84.

Chiffoleau, Yuna, and Tara Dourian. "Sustainable Food Supply Chains: Is Shortening the Answer? A Literature Review for a Research and Innovation Agenda." *Sustainability* 12, no. 23 (2020): 9831.

Dankert, Ritske. "Actor–Network Theory*." International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home* (2012): 46-50.

Delanty, Gerard. "Modernity." *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology* (2007).

DeWalt, Kathleen M., Billie R. DeWalt, and Coral B. Wayland. "Participant observation." In *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology*, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press (1998): 259-300.

Douglas, Mary, and Aaron Wildavsky. *Risk and culture: An essay on the selection of technological and environmental dangers*. Univ of California Press, 1983.

Elliott, Anthony. "Beck's sociology of risk: a critical assessment." *Sociology* 36, no. 2 (2002): 293-315.

El Bilali, Hamid. "The Multi-Level Perspective in Research onSustainability Transitions in Agriculture and FoodSystems: A Systematic Review." *Agriculture 74*, no. 9 (2019): 1-24.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. *Globalization: The key concepts*. A&C Black, 2014.

Foucault, Michel. "*Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings." 1972-1977*. Vintage, 1980.

Geels, Frank W. "Ontologies, socio-technical transitions (to sustainability), and the multi-level perspective." *Research policy* 39, no. 4 (2010): 495-510.

Geels, Frank W. "Disruption and low-carbon system transformation: Progress and new challenges in socio-technical transitions research and the Multi-Level Perspective." *Energy Research & Social Science* 37 (2018): 224-231.

Giddens, Anthony, and Christopher Pierson. *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making sense of modernity*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

Grin, John. The Politics of Transition Governance: Conceptual understanding and implications for transition management. *Int. J. Sustainable Development*, vol 14 (2011)

Grin, John. *'Doing' system innovations from within the heart of the regime*. Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning, 22(5), 682–694. (2020)

Grin, John, and Esther Marijnen. "Global Threats, Global Changes and Connected Communities in the Global Agrofood System." *Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace*, 2011, 1005–18.

Hendriks, Carolyn M., & Grin, John. *Contextualizing Reflexive Governance: the Politics of Dutch Transitions to Sustainability.* Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning, 9(3–4), 333–350. (2007)

van Hulst, Merlijn J. *Town hall tales: culture as storytelling in local government*. Eburon Uitgeverij BV, 2008.

Hoffman, Jesse. "Theorizing power in transition studies: the role of creativity and novel practices in structural change." *Policy Sciences* 46, no. 3 (2013): 257-275.

Hoffman, Jesse, and Anne Loeber. "Exploring the micro-politics in transitions from a practice perspective: The case of greenhouse innovation in the Netherlands." *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 18, no. 5 (2016): 692-711.

Hölscher, Katharina, Niki Frantzeskaki, Timon McPhearson, and Derk Loorbach. "Tales of transforming cities: Transformative climate governance capacities in New York City, US and Rotterdam, Netherlands." *Journal of environmental management* 231 (2019): 843-857.

Meadowcroft, James. *"Engaging with the Politics of Sustainability Transitions."* Environmental
Innovation and Societal Transitions 1 (2011): 70-75.

Milton, Kay. *Environmentalism and cultural theory: exploring the role of anthropology in
environmental discourse*. Routledge, 2002.

Newell, Sasha. *The Modernity Bluff: crime, consumption, and citizenship in Côte d'Ivoire*. University of
Chicago Press, 2012.

Pel, Bonno. *"Trojan horses in transitions: A dialectical perspective on innovation 'capture'."*
Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning 18, no. 5 (2016): 673-691.

Rotmans, Jan, René Kemp, and Marjolein Van Asselt. "More evolution than revolution: transition
management in public policy." *Foresight-The journal of future studies, strategic thinking and
policy* 3, no. 1 (2001): 15-31.

Rotmans, Jan. *In het oog van de orkaan* (1ste ed.). Aeneas, Uitgeverij Voor Vakinformatie, 2012.

Silvast, Antti, and Mikko J. Virtanen. "An assemblage of framings and tamings: multi-sited analysis of
infrastructures as a methodology." *Journal of Cultural Economy* 12, no. 6 (2019): 461-477.

Smith, Adrian, Stirling, Andy, Berkhout, Frans. *"The Governance Of Sustainable Socio-
Technical Transitions."* Research Policy 34 (2005): 1491–1510.

United Nations. *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015)

VNG. "*Raadsakkoord Energietransitie."* Last modified April 1, 2019.
https://vng.nl/sites/default/files/2019-11/rdam-raadsakkoord_energietransitie.pdf

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Samenvatting in Onderzoekstaal

Wij, Ian Rinkes en Razia Jaggoe, bachelorstudenten van de opleiding Culturele Antropologie aan universiteit Utrecht, hebben een vergelijkend afstudeeronderzoek verricht in twee organisatievormen die werken aan duurzaamheidstransities. Dit heeft betrekking op de Taskforce Korte Keten (TKK), onderzocht vanuit het bedrijf Amped, en de gemeente Rotterdam. Dit veldwerkonderzoek is verricht vanaf januari 2021 tot en met april 2021. Deze periode vond plaats tijdens de COVID-19 pandemie, en de landelijke maatregelen hadden tot gevolg dat gemeente Rotterdam alle werkzaamheden naar het digitale kantoor heeft verplaatst. In het geval van Amped/Local2local werden er maatregelen genomen op kantoor

Het voorkomen van schade aan informanten stond centraal in het voorbereiden, verrichten en beschrijven van dit onderzoek. Ter bescherming van beide onderzoekspopulaties hebben wij het doel van dit onderzoek in schrift en woord met hen gedeeld, alvorens wij hen om toestemming hebben gevraagd. De opslag van de verzamelde data is geanonimiseerd en bewaard op onze laptops in versleutelde mappen. Ter voorkoming van schade aan informanten hebben wij in het verslag van dit onderzoek ons uiterste best gedaan om functietitels, specifieke namen van afdelingen en organisaties en andere herleidbare informatie, te herformuleren.

Het doel van dit vergelijkende onderzoek was het in kaart brengen van de machtswerking in alledaagse praktijken van een veronderstelde bottom-up organisatiestructuur die werkt aan de voedseltransitie, en een veronderstelde top-down organisatiestructuur die werkt aan de energietransitie. Onze observaties demonstreren echter een onderlinge afhankelijkheid binnen de netwerken van onze respectievelijke organisaties, zowel in een hiërarchische lijn als in een horizontale, die heldere categorisering vertroebelen. De maatschappelijke en wetenschappelijke meerwaarde van dit onderzoek is een - volgens onze transitie literatuur vooralsnog afwezig - sociaal perspectief op veelal technisch beschouwde en grotendeels experimentele transities, die een termijn van tientallen jaren bestrijken en op verschillende niveaus samenlevingen beïnvloeden, gezien de globale verbondenheid van productie, consumptie en distributie.

Ian's veldwerk vond plaats op een centrale locatie van een kleiner netwerk, Amped/Local2local, binnen Taskforce de Korte Keten (TKK), waar in een netwerkstructuur wordt samengewerkt aan kortere voedselketens en regionale voedselsystemen. Door te kijken naar de bredere ecosysteem-structuur van de korte keten-beweging kwamen enorm veel verschillende organisaties en doelen naar voren. Met een focus op Amped en de TKK - maar de perspectieven van andere actoren als Rabobank, LTO of Provincies in acht nemend - is een grove schets van het netwerk gemaakt. Binnen dit netwerk zijn 38 informanten gesproken en twaalf interviews gehouden. Daarnaast zijn van verscheidene organisaties beleidsplannen en strategiedocumenten gelezen. Naast een grove netwerkanalyse is er gekeken naar doelen, motivaties en visies van verschillende actoren. Ten slotte is er een analyse gedaan van impliciete en meer expliciete machtsverhoudingen door de lenzen van taal, kennis, netwerkmacht en uiteindelijk de effecten daarvan op de rol in de voedseltransitie.

Razia's veldwerk vond plaats bij een afdeling overstijgend projectteam van gemeente Rotterdam, waar gewerkt wordt aan een haalbare en betaalbare energietransitie. Doelen met betrekking tot de energietransitie van de gebouwde omgeving zijn op transnationaal niveau vastgesteld, en via de

nationale overheid in gebieden gespecificeerd, waar de uitvoering aan gemeenten is gedelegeerd. Door zicht te krijgen op de persoonlijke perspectieven en motivaties van beleidsmedewerkers, en organisatorische cultuurverschillen ontstaat een weergave van hoe wordt gewerkt aan de ongekende transitie van de gebouwde Rotterdamse omgeving. Taal blijkt hierbij een voornaam domein van macht, waar kennis wordt uitgedragen via figuurlijke en expertise jargon, en frames strategisch zijn geconstrueerd voor de lobby van wethouders. Macht in de vorm van de capaciteit om besluiten te nemen, bijvoorbeeld in de uitvoering van gas-vrije pilot-wijken, blijkt echter in de transitiecontext in wisselende mate relationeel, in tegenstelling tot de vanzelfsprekendheid van politieke hiërarchie die deze doelen vaststelt.

De comparatieve aard van dit onderzoek waaruit machtswerkingen van een bottom-up organisatiestructuur en een top-down organisatiestructuur opdoemen, kunnen toekomstig onderzoek onderbouwen.