

TRANSITION
ACADEMY◊

MANIFESTO

EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO
THINK AND ACT FOR RADICAL CHANGE

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FOREWORD

THE GRAND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES of our time spark transformative changes that deeply affect the way we think, organise and behave. Transition challenges in energy, health care, food, education, mobility and urban development call for new ways of thinking and doing. There is a need for more holistic approaches to knowledge and transformative learning. Our ambition is to provide a space to facilitate new ways of learning, knowledge sharing, experimentation and reflection. The Transition Academy was founded to co-create such a learning environment that empowers people to think and act for profound change towards a more resilient and sustainable world.

SINCE 2013, the Transition Academy has successfully developed several courses, trainings and partnerships. There is an enthusiasm amongst those involved to further develop its outreach and activities. With this manifesto we want to share our intentions, motives, views and aspirations. We aim to reach out to like-minded people and organisations that share the same aspirations and want to cooperate in co-creating empowering learning environments. *This document is not set in stone.* On the contrary, the aim is for it to be a living, adaptive manifesto, to evolve and to be further developed with our partners.

We start by presenting **THE TRANSITION ACADEMY** ➡: a place for participating in education and training on transitions towards a more sustainable and resilient world. We explain **OUR APPROACH TO LEARNING** ➡, by challenging people to Think and Act for radical Change. We explain **WHY THE ACADEMY WAS CREATED** ➡, as a way to increase the capacity of people and organisations to deal with the (un)sustainability challenges of our times. Finally, we propose how and with whom **WE LIKE TO COLLABORATE** ➡ in organizing such learning, now and in the future.

THE TRANSITION ACADEMY

The Transition Academy is an academy in the broadest sense of the word, **A PLACE OF STUDY, TRAINING AND EXCHANGE** in the field of sustainability transitions. It is a place that brings together experts in transitions with a rich and diverse set of knowledge and skills, so as to foster synergies between education, practice and research on transitions. The Transition Academy takes a global outlook, while also being embedded in its local Dutch context and the unique urban dynamic of the city of Rotterdam.

Thematically, the focus of the Transition Academy is on **UNDERSTANDING HOW SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS** come about and how they are and can be influenced. Sustainability transitions are processes of fundamental transformation towards more sustainable and resilient societies, in response to a number of persistent problems that contemporary societies face (Grin, Schot and Rotmans 2010). Besides being firmly embedded in both the theory and practice of sustainability transitions, our curriculum also reflects the particular expertise of DRIFT with regard to transition management and the governance of transitions.

Our starting point is that it is impossible to direct transitions in a command and control manner, but that it *is* possible to influence transitions. Such influence is possible by smartly playing into seeds of change that already exist in society, including social and institutional entrepreneurship, political activism and grassroots activism. These processes are complex, long-term and often filled with struggles and challenges.

THE FIELD OF TRANSITION STUDIES offers a wide array of perspectives on understanding and influencing transitions, ranging from economics, history, engineering and ecology, to political science, psychology and sociology. The Transition Academy aspires to be a platform where insights from transition studies and adjacent fields – e.g. sustainability science, environmental governance, social innovation, and socio-ecological resilience – can be shared and critically (re)considered.

We offer education on the following specialised topics:

- ◆ Sustainability Transitions and Transition Management
- ◆ Urban Transition Management
- ◆ Transitions in the Social Domain (health, welfare, youth, education)
- ◆ Social Innovation, Power & Empowerment
- ◆ Environmental Governance for Transformative Actions
- ◆ Learning, Evaluation & Reflexive Monitoring
- ◆ Transformative Science & Action Research
- ◆ Energy Transitions

Each of these topics is represented in TAC-courses, dedicated Master Classes and/or In-company Trainings and is coordinated by **A SPECIALISED TEAM OF EXPERTS AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS** ➔.

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OUR CURRENT OFFER AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

IN ITS FIRST PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT – in which we are now – the Transition Academy offers predominantly demand-driven, tailor-made and specialised education. Our current offer includes several Masterclasses for professionals, spread out over a longer period of time, such as our well-attended Masterclass transition management and a masterclass on social innovation and transformation. We also organise shorter courses and workshops geared towards a mix of independent entrepreneurs, professionals, students and activists. For (PhD) students and researchers, we develop academic workshops, training days, thesis supervision and a few full length courses. Besides these activities, we offer tailor made courses for organisations, businesses and (local) governments, ranging from full length thematic masterclasses to one or two day in-house trainings. **TAKE A LOOK AT OUR CURRENT OFFERS ONLINE** ➔

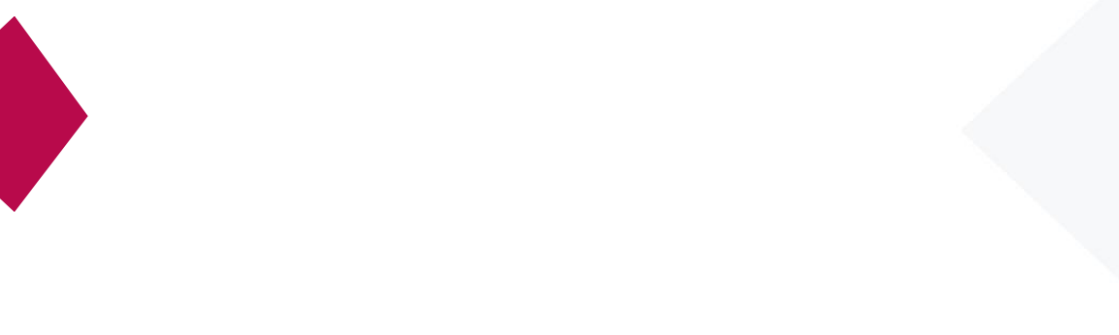
THE COMING YEARS, we aim to work towards a larger global offer, in collaboration with interested parties within and beyond the field of transitions. For example, the international research consortia that many of our lecturers are actively involved in (**DRIFT RESEARCH** ➔), provide great opportunities for the development of new educational programmes. We also aim to further establish the Transition Academy as a research academy for scholars, offering cutting-edge seminars, conferences and lectures on sustainability transitions. Several new programs are currently in development, such as an international executive course on Urban Transition Management, a PhD summer school, and a more elaborate offer of training days and activities for alumni.

IT IS OUR ASPIRATION that all of these efforts feed into the development of full-fledged academic programme on sustainability transitions. This would include an international Master degree, a post graduate school and a vibrant online resource

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hub with world-wide learning opportunities. During the course of these developments, we aim to link the growing international community of transition experts and transformative change agents to an active network of students and alumni, thus enabling the creation of unique learning contexts for mixed target groups, life-long learning and increasing the overall capacity for transformative change.

WHEN TAKING A GLOBAL OUTLOOK, we see the Transition Academy co-evolving with its local Dutch context and with the city of Rotterdam, its harbour and unique urban dynamic. The Transition Academy also reaches out to other proximate cities and regions, such as The Hague, Utrecht and Amsterdam, and cooperates with the many other educational institutes and initiatives therein. We imagine a rich variety of on-site learning environments that welcome citizens from across the world and encourage engagement and learning experiences in local living labs, regional networks, urban farming initiatives and social innovation projects.



THINK * ACT * CHANGE: OUR APPROACH TO LEARNING

WITH A UNIQUE COMBINATION of critical reflection, systematic analysis and practical tools, we challenge participants to question the status quo, broaden their perspective and apply action research and transition thinking to their own context. Participants learn to recognize the deeply rooted, historical origins of contemporary problems, in order to discover potential sources and strategies for fundamental change. The theory is made practical by tackling contemporary social issues in sectors such as energy, water, food, urban development, policy and healthcare.

We reject the false dichotomy between thinking and doing. We believe that action and reflection imply and reinforce one another. In all our activities, we aim to combine deep critical reflection with applied action learning. More specifically, we challenge and empower participants to:


- ◆ **THINK** – Deeply inquiring social change through analysing the dynamics of societal systems and actor-networks, (re)interpreting social relations and beliefs, envisioning alternatives, co-designing strategies for active intervention and critical (self)-reflection.
- ◆ **ACT** – Applying insights, tools and methods to real life challenges and case-studies in one’s own context. Experimenting with solutions, establishing networks and inspiring people.
- ◆ **CHANGE** – Questioning routines, challenging and altering the status quo, both in the social realm as in one’s own practices and perceptions.

The Transition Academy is not a place where transition experts only transfer or deposit knowledge. Transitions are about contemporary challenges and on-going

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processes of transformation, including high levels of complexity and uncertainty. As such, knowledge about transitions is not ready made but always in the making. The Transition Academy is a place for the co-production of such knowledge by sharing ideas and experiences regarding sustainability transitions.

In our view, learners should be in the driver's seat as much as possible, instead of being steered by lecturers and instructors. We subscribe to the same principles expressed by the UNESCO, when they argue that "Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning", which requires "participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action". Within the larger translocal movement to better integrate these principles into education, we position ourselves by focussing in particular on the insights from the field of **TRANSITION STUDIES**. This entails a stronger focus on transformative change, understanding complexity, systems thinking, social learning processes and the inclusion of key (global and local) transition issues into our curriculum.



INCREASING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS

THE SOCIAL, FINANCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES of the 21st century require radically different approaches in our thinking and actions. They provide a sense of urgency as well as an opportunity to work towards a more sustainable future. Even if we cannot agree on what a sustainable future should look like precisely, we can agree that many existing societal systems are unsustainable and that changing those systems requires radical, profound change. These shifts towards a more sustainable, just and resilient world is what we call Transitions.

EDUCATION PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE in preparing people for transition challenges. We believe that the ability to learn new ideas and practices, both collectively and individually, is a prerequisite for the fundamental societal changes that need to happen. Although our existing education systems have reached high levels of professionalisation over the past decades, we argue that key global and local sustainability transition issues are insufficiently integrated. Societal transition challenges – by definition – require new sets of knowledge, attitudes, skills and values. We argue that transition education should be:

- ◆ Interdisciplinary – acknowledging the co-evolution between culture, politics, economy, technology and ecology and drawing connections between these fields to understand and influence societal processes of transformative change;
- ◆ Transdisciplinary – connecting academic knowledge with the experiential and tacit knowledge of working in practice;
- ◆ Interparadigmatic - appreciating different normative paradigms and different research methods, including both realist science (i.e. 'physical

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facts, numbers, statistics) and interpretative analysis (i.e. values, discourse, perceptions);

- ◆ Intergenerational – understanding the complex interplay between short-term and long-term change and stability, which covers various generations, thus requiring life-long learning across generations.

It is our mission to increase the capacity of people and organisations to deal with the (un)sustainability challenges of our times by:

- ◆ Creating learning environments that empower people to Think and Act for radical Change;
- ◆ Including key global and local sustainability transition issues into our teaching and learning;
- ◆ Focusing on new sets of knowledge, attitudes, skills and values;
- ◆ Contributing to the creation of educational systems that embrace and integrate interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, interparadigmatic and intergenerational approaches as the fundament of learning in, on and for transitions.

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BY AND WITH WHOM?

The Transition Academy has been initiated and is hosted by the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT), based at the [ERASMUS UNIVERSITY OF ROTTERDAM](#) ➔. The hosting by DRIFT of the Transition Academy currently includes the staffing of a core theme, several curriculum developers, and organisational support.

One of our main aims for the Academy is to strengthen collaborative efforts between scholars and practitioners within and beyond existing transition networks. As such, many of our courses and workshops are co-developed in collaborations between transition scholars and practitioners from various different organisations and backgrounds. We also partner with other training institutes who bring additional capacity with regard to logistics, PR, facilitation and practical organisation.

CORE TEAM

The overall academic quality and professional coherence of the Transition Academy is guaranteed and supervised by a dedicated team of academic and organisational professionals:

DR. FLOR AVELINO ➔	Academic Director TAC & Researcher DRIFT
MARIJKE DE POUS ➔	Executive Director TAC
PROF. DR. DERK LOORBACH ➔	Full Professor & Director DRIFT
ASS. PROF. DR. NIKI FRANTZESKAKI ➔	Associate Professor DRIFT
DR. PJ BEERS ➔	Learning Expert TAC & Researcher DRIFT
MARIECÉCILE SCHOUWENAAR ➔	Organisation & Communication TAC

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TEAM OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS

Our curriculum developers are responsible for ensuring the state-of-the-art content of specialized courses and driving the development of new programmes:

- ◆ Transition Studies and Transition Management [DERK LOORBACH ↗](#)
- ◆ Urban Transition Management [CHRIS ROORDA ↗](#)
- ◆ Transitions in the Social Domain [FRANK VAN STEENBERGEN ↗](#)
- ◆ Social Innovation, Power & Empowerment [FLOR AVELINO ↗](#)
- ◆ Environmental Governance for Transformative Actions [NIKI FRANTZESKAKI ↗](#)
- ◆ Transformative Science & Action Research [JULIA WITTMAYER ↗](#)
- ◆ Learning, Evaluation & Reflexive Monitoring [PJ BEERS ↗](#)
- ◆ Energy Transitions [RICK BOSMAN ↗](#)

AFFILIATED LECTURERS AND TRAINERS




Affiliated lectures and trainers are people with whom we have an established relationship through prior involvement in one or more of our courses. These individuals are available as speakers, lecturers or trainers for events, courses or customized in-company trainings and can be contacted directly. We are also exploring collaborations with coaches who can provide coaching on personal development and transformation.


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COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM

By providing curriculum development, quality supervision, a network of affiliated lecturers and trainers, a website and organisational support, the Transition Academy offers a platform to strike-up new, content-driven partnerships aimed at offering top quality education and training in the field of sustainability and transitions. Affiliated institutes and individuals each offer a unique contribution to the Academy.

On our website you can:

- ◆ Read more about our different [TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS](#) 
- ◆ Get an impression of the [INSTITUTES AND ORGANIZATIONS](#)  currently involved in one or more of our programs
- ◆ Take a look at the overview of our [AFFILIATED LECTURERS AND TRAINERS](#) 

We actively pursue new partnerships that fit our aspirations, but very much welcome you to [CONTACT US](#)  with ideas and aspirations.

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EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

- ◆ **STAY INFORMED AND REGISTER** ➔ for the TAC Update and get updates on upcoming courses, research projects and activities from the field.
- ◆ **VISIT OUR WEBSITE** ➔ for an overview of our open courses and register online
- ◆ **DISCUSS A TAILOR MADE OFFER OR GET CURRICULUM ADVICE** ➔ from one of our teachers
- ◆ **HIRE A TRAINER, BECOME A TRAINER OR CO-CREATE** ➔ a course with us
- ◆ **INVEST** ➔ in one or more of our educational programmes or **SPONSOR** ➔ our outreach activities or individual students.

Did you enjoy reading this manifesto?
Do you have any questions or remarks,
or simply want to meet us?

[CONTACT US](#)