

Empowerment and Transition Management

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So far, the conceptualisation of power is one of the missing links in the theory development within transition studies. There is an implicit understanding of power in the transition frameworks but it is not theorised. This paper proposes how concepts of power, empowerment and leadership can be incorporated in the transition management model as presented in the current literature. Within transition studies we can observe a certain schism between the developing theory of transition *dynamics* (TD) on the one hand and the further development of transition *management* (TM) theory on the other hand. One could argue that when discussing power and empowerment, no fundamental distinction should be made between transition dynamics theory and transition management theory. For as soon one considers issues of power, "how it works" and "how it can be influenced" essentially seem to be one and the same issue. However, there is much to be gained from the conceptual distinction between dynamics and management. These two conceptual poles of transition studies differ in the same way that the concept of 'power' holds a different meaning from the concept of 'empowerment' and 'leadership'. As such we aim to understand how power works and what it consists of in the context of transition dynamics, while addressing the transition management framework in terms of empowerment and leadership, i.e. the extent to which actors can influence existing relations of power.

The paper faces this challenge as follows. **Power** is broadly defined as the capacity of actors to mobilise resources, **empowerment** as the transmission between actors of the resources, methods and competences necessary to exercise power and **leadership** as the capacity to influence other actors in terms of 1) increasing their willingness (or unwillingness) to exercise (a certain type of) power and 2) doing that to reach a specific goal. Understandings of power as offered by Parsons, Luhmann, Foucault, Giddens and Arendt are used not only to develop a definition of power but also to make a distinction between different types of resources and different forms of power: systemic, structural, innovative, destructive and transformative. Each form of power comes with its own methods, competences, empowerment techniques and leadership styles. Subsequently, these concepts of power, empowerment and leadership are integrated with the analytical frameworks used in transition studies: 'multi-level', 'multi-phase', 'multi-pattern' and 'transition management', including also 'multi-actor' and 'multi-domain'. The purpose is to make implicit assumptions in the transition management model into explicit premises by reformulating them in terms of power.

Moreover, the paper uses the Dutch mobility sector as an empirical basis. In 2004 / 2005 the Dutch ministries of Economic Affairs, Housing, Land-use Planning and Environmental Management and Transport & Water in collaboration developed the latest Mobility policy plan, in which 'Transition Management' was presented as an innovation strategy for the long term, explaining further that the cabinet will choose this strategy in order to "achieve sustainable mobility (...) with a long-term time horizon and – related to that – innovation programs (...) for the short-term".² In those same years various programmes and platforms have been founded in the name of this 'transition to sustainable mobility'. One of them concerns the *Platform for Sustainable Mobility*³, another one the foundation called *TRANSUMO*, which is an abbreviation of *TRANSition to SUsustainable MObility*.⁴ Observed 'practices of transition management' as applied in various programmes and projects in the Dutch mobility sector will serve to test the applicability of the power, empowerment and leadership concepts as presented in this paper. Thereby the purpose is not only to explain and describe observed phenomena, but also to reformulate and question implicit assumptions currently underlying the transition management model. While doing so, the paper also critically reflects on methodological questions on how to research issues of power, empowerment and leadership within transition studies.

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² Nota Mobiliteit, Uitvoeringsagenda; van Nota naar Mobiliteit, September 2005, V&W en VROM, p. 65

³ http://www.senternovem.nl/energietransitie/duurzame_mobiliteit/index.asp

⁴ <http://www.transumo.nl>