



Ecological transition: accompaniment of citizen dynamics and environmental education towards sustainable development, within the framework of the ETRES project

Contents:

For partners of the ETRES project	1
Context.....	2
Within the framework of ETRES.....	2
Citizen dynamics.....	3
Accompanying?	3
Some perspectives for EEDD and ecological transition in France, from the Associations’ point of view:	4
In the international literature	5
The notion of “transition”:	5
Controversies between ecological transition, sustainable development:	7
Definitions and contours:	7
Accompaniment towards ecological transition: “A challenge of social justice and democracy” (Boissonade, 2017).	9
Bibliography	10

For partners of the ETRES project

Elements from the first trans-national meeting, October 2016

Context

"Ecological transition" is a concept made known by Rob Hopkins. It comprises a set of principles and practices from experiments relative to local autonomy in a context of dependency on petrol, finite resources, global warming and the imperative need to reduce CO2 emissions.

Ecological transition is the shift from current production and consumption methods to a more ecological paradigm. It does not have a set definition shared by all the parties concerned. It is not a simple fresh coat of paint on our current society but rather a change of our economic and social model, generating an in-depth transformation of the way we consume, product, work and live together.

Ecological transition encompasses multiple inter-dependant challenges:

- Food industry transition which promotes local, smallholding organic agriculture substituting industrial, chemical and energy and resource consuming agriculture, while reducing sanitary risks.
- Energy transition and the NegaWatt scenario (energy efficiency, energy saving, renewable energy).
- Industrial transition and the circular economy with the production of sustainable goods (the opposite of programmed obsolescence) which can be easily repaired and recycled, and which present a satisfactory carbon footprint level, services which initiate sharing and improved use of assets, work sharing, relocation of activities, etc.
- Preservation of biodiversity as a preoccupation for humanity.
- Reconsidered urban planning: urban intensification, energy savings, parks and gardens, etc.
- Transport oriented towards eco-mobility: vehicle sharing, combined road-rail transport, tele-working.
- Reorganised taxation as an incentive to savings in water, energy, raw materials and to reduce waste and pollution.

Within the framework of ETRES

Stakeholders in the ETRES project come together on the need for a global and transversal vision (Oikos), which invites a change of paradigm in the non-human world. There are no diverse transitions (energy, social, agro-ecological, etc.) but a transition with multiple facets that we have to address in a global manner, in all their complexity. The need for change is urgent but requires a change in model and not a series of juxtaposed methods.

Moreover, this ecological transition can only take place on a local level where citizens and local authorities can invent solutions adapted to their living environment, to a more circular economy, to an ability to adapt to territorial characteristics. It is on the territorial scale that the actors concerned can have a direct impact on the issues in question, through structural frameworks proposed by the State and the Region. This raises the question of the coherence of interactions between territorial dynamics: a commune is a member of a wider council or an agglomeration, which is itself in turn part of a Department or a Region, etc.

Citizen dynamics

This vision of ecological transition implies a central role for citizens! This means no longer imagining public policies from a 'top-down' approach but rather 'bottom-up' and an interaction between the two... An eco-systemic vision may only depend on a representative dynamic. It must take into account all the social, political and economic components within a framework of a participative dynamic; a dynamic which is not only open to all but widely inclusive. Social cohesion is a priority.

This is therefore a question of citizenship and participation – which is at the heart of EEDD (Environmental Education Sustainable Development) as we know it, based on the teaching methods arising from popular education. But we are fully aware of the difficulty of these ambitions! Mobilisation by and of citizens takes different forms in different countries and territories. Networks of associations are more or less advanced between different cultures and legal frameworks.

In recent years, numerous citizen-led movements have developed in relation to economic and ecological problems, growing social inequalities and lack of equity throughout territories. These are often spontaneous citizen movements aimed at taking back power on how things are run, through debate and collective analysis of potential solutions. They are based on the belief that 'know-how' is not the sole driving force, that working together and reviewing situations are equally powerful. These movements develop in opposition to institutions, challenging the latter through a refusal to accept structures which often lose their dynamism over time and do not deliver medium term results.

This therefore requires building bridges between institutions (administrations, local authorities...) and citizen led initiatives, whether these are structured or not. In France, for example, even relatively structured associative movements such as 'Nuit Debout' are not connected with each other. This implies stimulating democratic movement in the territories and making progress in our conflict management, prevention and absorption practices in sometimes difficult circumstances.

This is all the more important given that there is a real challenge of balance between the institutions, their public policies and citizen-led initiatives. It is therefore important to accompany these transitions without turning one's back on the institutions and while taking care to avoid political takeover of spontaneous citizen movements.

Accompaniment and facilitators?

Accompaniment is the term for a person who helps another in different situations. There is abundant literature on the subject; the actors in the ETRES project have taken time to underline certain elements, concepts and practices which they consider important in this context.

This is accessed through a Socratic methodology of cooperative argumentative dialogue enabling each participant to grasp his or her knowledge, experience and capacities to collectively implement solutions that he or she has imagined. It is important to create the spark to stimulate curiosity, initiative, desire and trust. This is achieved by creating areas for dialogue, formalising directions from group debates and external resources, supporting

initiatives and giving a rhythm. One of the factors of success for accompaniment is the capacity of the group to handle unforeseen circumstances.

The participants address the question of the different positions of the accompanying person, expressed such as: dialogue, ethics, emancipating dimension, non-hierarchy of knowledge, goodwill and gentleness (this is not rupture but transition).

Finally, the participants debate issues of the accompanying person's code of ethics. The latter holds a certain power which has to be used carefully in order to encourage the development of a driving force without excessive control. The aim is to instil autonomy - the accompanying person is destined to withdraw after a certain time.

Some perspectives for EEDD and ecological transition in France, from the Associations' point of view:

The EEDD sector in France is relatively young and in constant evolution. Below is a short extract of a text from the National Schools and Nature Network, widely used in different forms:

Nature animation took off in the 1960s, led by volunteers from the popular education, socio-cultural and sports, tourism, local development, agriculture, environment protection and management... sectors. The first professionals appeared in the 70s and 80s.

These actors faced a number of difficulties, including an absence of professional organisations to enable exchange of practices and collective initiatives, a lack of specialist training courses and adapted training tools, and a lack of social recognition. In response to these difficulties, these actors implemented territorial networks, enabling them to mutually reinforce their actions, learn from each other and improve their visibility. On one hand at the national level with the School and Nature network and on another with Regional Nature and Environment Animation Groups (GRAINE).

Education 'through' and 'for' nature will bring people together; initiatives and training resources enable diversification. At the end of the 1990s, sustainable development confirmed the notions of eco-citizenship and participative democracy. An educational theme relative to the environment which attaches as much importance to the social environment as the natural environment. Animation in relation to the environment clearly implies a cultural dimension: the environment is understood not only as a simple relationship between man and nature but as the relationship between man and the environment in which He lives. This animation therefore takes on a wider scope, from education on the environment towards sustainable development. It is destined to each and every one of us and concerns all territories.

This text enables us to underline several important points with regards to ecological transition.

We first of all note the vocabulary evolution: "education on nature" towards "education on nature and the environment", then "education on the environment", then "education on the environment towards sustainable development/EEDD". These changes have been accompanied by intense debates within the networks. On one hand, holders of an historic line, arguing the essential bond between our practices and nature, criticise an evolution of

the vocabulary as a politically correct alignment on fashionable terminology and an open door to 'green washing'. On the other, the transfer towards sustainable development (EEDD) has been the source of much debate because the term itself is not fully accepted. There are fears that by following vocabulary trends we are turning away from the very core meaning of our activities in order to follow the public financing trail.

Today, the ever wider use of the term 'ecological transition' has brought the debate to the fore again - should we modify the way we present what we are doing to move from EEDD to ATE (Accompaniment of Ecological Transition)?

Some argue that the semantics are important but should not represent a barrier to the comprehension and development of our activity. Today, we have to fight continuously to break down clichés relative to our sector. No, education is not just for children. No, the environment is not just about flowers and butterflies. The very title of 'School and Nature Network' may appear anachronistic and therefore a barrier to the comprehension of EEDD and so to consideration by public authorities as a means of support for progress and initiatives.

Those who hold this line state that for decades now, educational actors in the sector have been accompanying ecological transition in the territories by accompanying participative and citizen-based initiatives. We not only transmit messages or promote eco-gestures, but our activity enables our public, once they have integrated the ins and outs of the wider picture, to imagine their own solutions and work collectively to implement them. This is 'creating a society'. Furthermore, our EEDD practices have always strongly integrated questions of territorial anchoring and the intrinsic link between a local and a global vision. The transversal nature of approaches in the framework of a 'systemic' vision is also at the heart of our action. Finally, the position of the project leader accompanying the dynamic of projects developed by his/her group - not doing, but inciting action through awareness - is also part of the fundamental elements. With regards to this, one could argue that nothing really separates EEDD from 'accompaniment of ecological transition in the territories'.

The reality lies, as often, between these two. EEDD actors form diverse and heterogeneous networks. They are from different sectors (nature protection, local development, scientific education, popular education, outdoor activities, etc.). Some stick to the fundamentals related to nature education, others develop wider associative projects, strongly oriented towards accompanying public policies at different scales on the territory. Each approach is founded, there is not a single approach to EEDD.

In the international literature

In international, European and French literature, we present some biographical elements around the origin of Ecological Transition and accompaniment of this in the territories.

The notion of "transition":

The term "transition" in the environmental and sustainable development context appeared in the 1970s, notably through the Meadows report in 1972 which insisted on the need for

“transition from a growth model towards global stability” highlighting the ecological risks induced by economic and demographic growth. In 1987 the Brundtland report (Boissonade, 2017)¹ recommends “transition towards sustainable development”.

The term ‘transition’ has existed for some time, initially to designate the phases of transformation of substances from one state (liquid) to another (solid).

It involves characterising a change which is not linear but rather a chaotic process. This model is called ‘punctuated equilibrium’ (Loorbach D., 2007)². This model has been applied to ecology, psychology, technological studies, economics and demographics.

Rotmans, Kemps et al. (Rotmans et al. 2000; Rotmans et al. 2001; Rotmans and Loorbach 2001) introduced the concept of transition into the areas of sustainable development, governance and policies.

Their basic hypothesis was that through the understanding of structural societal change processes (like transitions), it must be possible to formulate governance principles, methods and tools to deal with these processes (i.e. transition management).

Transitions are only one of the many pathways of change a system can pass through. We define a transition as a continuous process of societal change, whereby the structure of society (or a subsystem of society) changes fundamentally. This societal transformation process has the following characteristics (Rotmans et al. 2000):

- *It concerns large scale technological, economical, ecological, socio-cultural and institutional developments that influence and reinforce each other;*
- *It is a long-term process that covers at least one generation (25 years);*
- *There are interactions between different scale levels (niche, regime, landscape).* (Loorbach D.,2007)

The concept of transition within the framework of sustainable development originated in Holland around the year 2000 further to research on systemic or socio-technical innovation as part of research on changes to energy models. The State, researchers, civil servants, employer representatives, unions and ONGs worked together to implement energy transition in specific bodies through jointly developing scenarios for sustainable development in all walks of life (energy, agriculture, transport, biodiversity): based on concerted and shared schedules, methods and procedures. (Boulanger P-M., 2008)³.

In the Dictionary of Ecological Thinking (Bourg, 2015)⁴, transition is defined as a ‘process of transformation during which a system moves from one balanced regime to another’.

Transition is a reconfiguration and cultural transformation at all levels and in all sectors, which evolve together in a non-controlled manner because systemic and complex (Boissonade, 2017).

¹ Boissonade L., 2017, Transition, “Analysis of a Concept”, *Théma*, General commissioner for sustainable development, Ministry of Ecological Transition and Solidarity, France.

² Loorbach, D. (2007). Transition management. *New mode of governance for sustainable development. Utrecht: International Books.*

Boulanger P-M., 2008, « Une gouvernance du changement sociétal : le transition management », number 11, *La Revue Nouvelle*, Belgium.

⁴Bourg D. and Papaux A., (dir.), Dictionnaire de la pensée écologique, Article ‘Transition, 2015.

Three levels of transition have been identified by Geels and Loorbach (Loorbach, 2007). These levels integrate social innovations on the first level through experimentations on the margin of the established system. These experimentations are then taken into account on a second level: the regimes which are the rules and standards that guide behaviour for the stability of the system. These evolutions are articulated on a third level, which is the landscape represented by the external environment and general trends. Simultaneous evolutions on these three levels initiate transitions (Boissonade, 2017).

In France, the notions of ecological and energy transition have been adopted from 2012 as shown by the creation of the National Council for ecological transition in the same year, a law on energy transition for green growth in 2015 and the national strategy for ecological transition towards sustainable development (2015-2020).

Controversies between ecological transition, sustainable development:

The term of 'ecological transition' seems to be interpreted in many ways. The literature refers to ecological transition in the singular and the plural (Larrère, 2016)⁵. It would appear that the notion of transition in an ecological perspective has been widely referred to from 2006 ad the Cities in Transition movement led by Rob Hopkins, Professor of Permaculture in Kinsale University, Ireland (Hopkins, 2010)⁶. From this point, the term has spread to substitute or follow on from the notion of sustainable development (Larrère, 2016; Theys, 2017).

The 1990s saw the introduction of sustainable development along with all the ambiguity (Theys, 2014) carried by the term 'development', which was highly criticised for the 'economic growth' aspect of the phrase (Larrère, 2016). In all cases, ecological transition does not seem equivalent to the notion of sustainable development and may appear more restricted in terms of vision. "None of these terms has an equal capacity of founding a common vision, of catalysing objectives from different horizons and mobilising the same numbers of stakeholders" (Theys, 2014). However, "More than 'aside from' or 'beyond' sustainable development, we could imagine a second phase". (Theys et al., 2010)⁷.

Definitions and contours:

The term transition used in the movement of Cities in Transition refers to the implementation of a resilience in local communities (bio-regionalism)⁸ in the light of

⁵Larrère Catherine, Larrère Raphaël, Bouleau Raphaël , 2016, "Les transitions écologiques à Cerisy" in Natures Sciences Sociétés, 24, 242-250.

⁶Hopkins Rob, 2010, Manuel de transition, de la dépendance du pétrole à la résilience locale, éditions écosociété.

⁷Theys Jacques, du Tertre Christian, Rauschmayer Felix, 2010, Le développement durable, la seconde étape, Editeur : L'AUBE

⁸Arnsperger C., 2010, Transition écologique et transition économique : Quels fondements pour la pensée ? Quelles tâches pour l'action ? Consulted on 31 October 2017 at: <http://www.econospheres.be/Transition-ecologique-et>, Article published on line 23 February 2010

anticipated shortage in fossil fuels, notably oil. The idea being to re-localise the economy, especially production and consumption, to become as autonomous as possible on the territory in order to reduce reliance on oil. This implies rethinking our territories, governance, social connections and skills in order to develop the means of moving away from this reliance on fossil fuels (Hopkins, 2011). Within this territorial view, ecological transition is imposed as part of a total rupture in order to avoid a catastrophic scenario. In the other visions, the reference is more inclined towards adaptation by anticipation (Larrère, 2016).

According to the French ministry for ecological transition and solidarity:

Ecological transition is an evolution towards a new economic and social model, a sustainable development approach which rethinks our ways of consuming, producing, working and living together in response to the major environmental challenges of climate change, rarefying resources, accelerated loss of biodiversity and multiplied environmental risks. (Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Maritime Affairs 2014).

The French ministry refers to sustainable development and ecological transition:

When we speak of sustainable development and ecological transition, there is convergence. The objective of ecological transition is to enable sustainable development. Sustainable development makes reference to a development of our societies which the planet can support over the long term: today, our models of growth are not sustainable given the resources available on the planet, so we must integrate a phase of transition to rethink these models and enable a development that is sustainable. Energy transition represents one of the components of ecological transition. It translates the transformation from a society based on abundant consumption of fossil fuels to one which consumes less energy and rejects less CO₂. Such transformation means working both on energy saving and the evolution of the energy mix, with a heightened share of renewable energies. (Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Maritime Affairs 2014).

According to the General Commission for Sustainable Development in France (Boissonade, 2017):

(...) be it ecological, energy, social, solidarity, economical, democratic, digital or managerial, transition is characterised by a deep transformation of our systems. A plurality of stakeholders lay claim to the transition concept: research is concentrated on identifying the bodies and institutions which wish to stake out the directions and civil society is guiding this through innovative experimentation.

Accompaniment towards ecological transition: “A challenge of social justice and democracy” (Boissonade, 2017).

Ecological transition represents a significant societal challenge. In order to exist, it must be just and equitable on a social level. This involves integrating a democratic debate along the lines of the Aarhus convention in 1998 relative to the necessary environmental dialogue and inclusion of all stakeholders in a shared form of governance (Boissonade, 2017, Laigle, 2013)⁹.

The dynamics of ecological transition call upon social transitions, or the capacity of societies to rise to environmental challenges. By avoiding the rigid framework of sustainable development, ecological transition seems to originate from citizen and social initiatives (Laigle, 2013).

Between ecologisation and environmentalism, new forms of eco-citizenship are developing (Granchamp, Glatron, 2016)¹⁰.

The notion of ecologisation designates the process through which the environment is taken into account in public policies, organisations and even professional practices. (Mormont, 2013)¹¹.

A reconfiguration of the policy is taking place through various citizen commitments. The place of everyday life and the existential dimension are gaining ground over more collective dimensions as seen previously (Wallenhorst N., 2016)¹².

This accompaniment of the dynamics of ecological transition must form part of an ethic of care as defined by Joan Tronto: “on the more general level, we suggest that care be considered as a generic activity which includes everything we do to maintain, perpetuate and repair our world so that we can live in it in the best possible manner. This world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, all the elements that we aim to connect to a complex network, supporting life. (Tronto, 2009)¹³. Ecological transition contributes towards empowerment of inhabitants on a territory on a local level.

The idea of transition goes further than a citizenship participation: it replaces each initiative within a group of actions which mutually support each other thus adding meaning to a strategic direction which is developed step by step (...) the transition movement promotes the emergence of citizen and economic initiatives based on a social and territorial line (Laigle, 2013).

⁹Laigle L., 2013, « Pour une transition écologique à visée sociétale », Mouvements n°75, Autumn 2013, p 135.

¹⁰Granchamp L., Glatron S., 2016, Tous écocitoyens ? Réenchantement du quotidien et décentrement du politique, introduction du dossier Environnement et citoyenneté, Revue des sciences sociales, n°55, Strasbourg, France.

¹¹Mormont M., 2013, « Écologisation : entre sciences, conventions et pratiques », Natures Sciences Sociétés 2013/2 (Vol. 21), p. 159-160.

¹²Wallenhorst N., 2016, Citoyenneté existentielle et reconfiguration du politique, les pratiques écologiques de deux jeunes professionnels, dossier Environnement et citoyenneté, Revue des sciences sociales, n°55, Strasbourg, France.

¹³Tronto J., 2009, Un monde vulnérable. Pour une politique du care, Paris, La Découverte.

Transition represents 'a movement towards action' which articulates the initiatives and dynamics of civil society (citizens, associations, businesses, etc.) with the framework of territorial authorities and national political directives declined on different scales.

Accompanying these movements requires consideration of the challenges facing each territory, inclusion of all stakeholders and above all, operational skills to make any multi-sector changes operational and thus develop a 'system' (Boissonade, 2017).

For the French government, this also means accompanying professional changes and transitions, i.e. the related professions and training requirements.

Accompaniment becomes a posture which is generalised and declined on different scales (Paul, 2004)¹⁴. This posture, which leaves the accompanied party with space for initiative and action, is in total harmony with the ecological dynamics and transitions as they are happening at the moment. Research and experimentation are crucial today, as witnessed by the new research programme Cit'In, launched in Autumn 2017 by a group of research centres, including the French national scientific research centre (CNRS)¹⁵.

Bibliography

- Arnsperger C., 2010, *Transition écologique et transition économique : Quels fondements pour la pensée ? Quelles tâches pour l'action ?* Consulted on 31 October 2017 at: <http://www.econospheres.be/Transition-ecologique-et>, Article published on line on 23 February 2010
- Boissonade L., 2017, La transition, "Analyse d'un concept", *Théma*, Commissariat général au développement durable, Ministère de la transition écologique et solidaire, France.
- Boulanger P-M., 2008, « Une gouvernance du changement sociétal: le transition management », numéro 11, *La Revue Nouvelle*, Belgique.
- Bourg D., Kaufmann A., Méda D., 2016, *L'âge de la transition, en route pour la reconversion écologique*, Editions Les petits matins/institut Veblen, Diffusion Seuil.
- Bourg D., 2012, "Transition écologique, plutôt que développement durable" in *Revue Vraiment Durable*, consulted on cairn: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-vraiment-durable-2012-1-page-77.htm>
- Bourg D. et Papaux A.Larrère Catherine, Larrère Raphaël, Bouleau Raphaël , 2016, "Les transitions écologiques à Cerisy" in *Natures Sciences Sociétés*, 24, 242-250.
- , (dir.), *Dictionnaire de la pensée écologique*, Article 'Transition », 2015.
- Granchamp L., Glatron S., 2016, *Tous écocitoyens ? Réenchantement du quotidien et décentrement du politique*, introduction du dossier *Environnement et citoyenneté*, *Revue des sciences sociales*, n°55, Strasbourg, France.

¹⁴ PAUL Maela (2004). *L'accompagnement : une posture professionnelle spécifique*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 351 p.

¹⁵ <https://citin.hypotheses.org/>, published on 03/09/2017; consulted on 31/10/2017. 'The object of the call for shows of interest is to build a research community on ecological transition integrating work from the Cit'In with researchers in social, human and environmental sciences or other researchers who work or envisage working with the stakeholders concerned in a cooperative manner on democratic experimentation for ecological and energy transition.'

- Hopkins R., Astruc L., 2015, *Le pouvoir d'agir ensemble ici et maintenant, entretiens*, Editions Actes Sud, Domaine du Possible, Arles.
- Hopkins Rob, 2010, Manuel de transition, de la dépendance du pétrole à la résilience locale, éditions écosociété.
- Theys J., du Tertre C., Rauschmayer F., 2010, *Le développement durable, la seconde étape*, Editeur : L'AUBE
- Laigle L., 2013, « Pour une transition écologique à visée sociétale », *Mouvements n°75*, Autumn 2013, p 135.
- Loorbach, D. (2007). Transition management. *New mode of governance for sustainable development. Utrecht: International Books.*
- Paul M., 2004, *L'accompagnement : une posture professionnelle spécifique*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 351 p.
- Tronto J., 2009, Un monde vulnérable. Pour une politique du care, Paris, La Découverte.
- Wallenhorst N., 2016, Citoyenneté existentielle et reconfiguration du politique, les pratiques écologiques de deux jeunes professionnels, dossier Environnement et citoyenneté, Revue des sciences sociales, n°55, Strasbourg, France.