

Transition-Scapes kick-off meeting

Amsterdam, 19 September 2023

Report by Cristina Ampatzidou



The Transition-Scapes kick-off meeting took place at HvA Theo Thijssenhuis (TTH) and was attended by representatives of almost all consortium partners. Jorgen Karskens, Project manager at the Research Group of Civic Interaction Design, opened the meeting and introduced the research team. In the first presentation of the event, Professor of Civic Interaction Design Martijn de Waal outlined the role of civic interaction design today by using design and technology to empower citizens and organizations to contribute to societal challenges. In the Civic Interaction Design research group, this research question is addressed across different scales, from the design of interactive tools to the design or roles of governance and value models, and eventually institutional (re)design.

Presentation of ambitions and trajectory

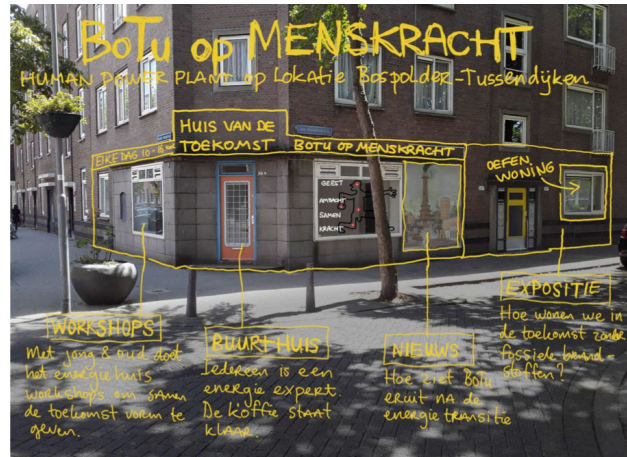
Linda Vlassenrood, Curator and lead researcher of Transition-Scapes, introduced the ambitions and trajectory of the project. We find ourselves amidst multiple and overlapping transitions, which many stakeholders and organisations seem to acknowledge. At least many organisations produce lots of reports about it (see also <https://www.archined.nl/2023/09/de-weg-kwijt-tussen-de-roadmaps-en-beperkt-zicht-tussen-de-toekomstvisies/>). Yet, despite the urgency, we still seem to be in a standstill, experiencing a gap between the system and living world. While there are plenty of bottom-up initiatives, on an institutional level, stakeholders are looking for new tools with which they can visualize various scenarios surrounding complex transition tasks, and make their implications understandable and discussable at the level of the living environment. Transition-Scapes aims to explore the design of interactive exhibition formats with the aim of depicting and representing future scenarios around the (energy) transition, and develop a design framework for the design and use of such a tool by others.

Transition-Scapes consists of three interconnected work trajectories: the main one being a research-through-design track with several workshops on location, which encompasses the design and development of two prototypes and the design framework. This is connected to a Community of Practice which analyses, reflects and interprets the research process in several meetings, and an education-related track in collaboration with the Master Digital Design where a series of rapid prototyping sprints will provide input for the research-through-design process.



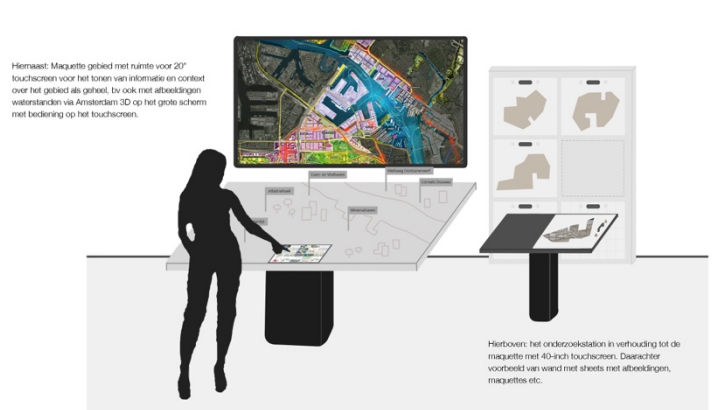
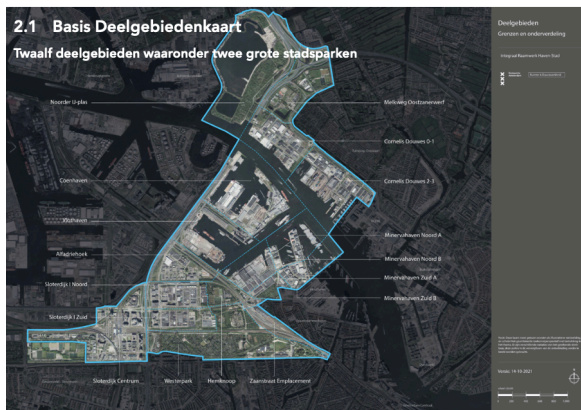
Linda Vlassenrood, Curator and lead researcher of Transition-Scapes, presenting the ambitions and trajectory of the project.

Following the project overview, Linda introduced the two areas for which prototypes will be developed in collaboration with the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) and Arcam. She is currently talking to the different stakeholders to narrow down the scope of the workshops. Bospolder-Tussendijken is a neighborhood in Rotterdam, and one of the top ten of the poorest postal code areas in the Netherlands. It is also an area that is expected to switch off gas before 2030. We intend to collaborate with Huis van de Toekomst here. Since 2019, Huis van de Toekomst has provided a place in Bospolder-Tussendijken where the energy transition is lived, created and discussed from the perspective of residents. Starting from October 2023, Huis van de Toekomst will temporarily manage the ground floor houses with the courtyard of this block designed by architect J.J.P. Oud.



The outline of the Bospolder-Tussendijken neighborhood in Rotterdam and the location where Huis van de Toekomst is currently located.

Arcam is currently working on a permanent exhibition related to Haven-Stad. Haven-Stad is a large industrial area in Amsterdam extending from Sloterdijk, to the Westerpark and the Cornelis Douwesterrein in the North and the Noorder IJ-plas. In the coming decades the area will transform into a new urban development with a high density of 40,000-70,000 new homes, 45,000-58,000 jobs and commercial functions. It should also be a sustainable district without natural gas and with energy-efficient homes. Heat and renewable electricity are generated in the port area and Westpoort, from the water and where possible with solar panels and wind turbines.



The outline of the Haven-Stad area in Amsterdam and a sketch of the upcoming Arcam installation on Havenstad, opening on November 3rd.

Dates

Linda concluded with presenting some important dates that will serve as a guideline for the activities in 2023-2024. Transition-Scapes is a two-year research project that will end in May 2025 with the presentation of several academic papers and a conference.

November 2023:

- Opening exhibition Haven-Stad – Arcam: 3rd November
- Workshop 1: Bospolder-Tussendijken
- Rapid Prototyping by Master Digital Design: site visits

January 2024

Workshop 1: Haven-Stad

February 2024

Workshop 2: Bospolder-Tussendijken

Rapid Prototyping by Master Digital Design: Emerging Futures sprint

March 2024

Workshop 2: Haven-Stad

Rapid Prototyping by Master Digital Design: Emerging Ecologies sprint

April 2024

Community of Practice meeting

May 2024

Workshop 3: Bospolder-Tussendijken

June 2024

Workshop 3: Haven-Stad

Opening International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam at Het Nieuwe Instituut: 29 June (until 13 October 2024)

September 2024

Launch The New Academy – Het Nieuwe Instituut: 20 September (until 4 October 2024)

Community of Practice meeting

October 2024

Start Amsterdam 750: 27 October 2024 (until 27 October 2025)

Presentation of consortium

The kick-off meeting continued with all the partners presenting themselves, each showing two images of their work and explaining their motivation for joining the project. We started with IABR – International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam and ARCAM - Architecture Center Amsterdam, who have long been working in the areas of Bospolder-Tussendijken and Haven-Stad respectively, and continued with Bright, Tellart, UN Studio, Clever^o Franke, TU Delft, Amsterdam Time Machine, One Architecture, Play the City, Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving, AUAS - Spatial Urban Transformation Research Group and KossmanndeJong. Erik de Vries from the Municipality of Amsterdam, made a short announcement on the possible connections between the city's celebrations for its 750th anniversary and Transition-Scapes.

Presentation of various interactive exhibition forms

After a short break, we continued with a presentation and short exercise by design researcher Cristina Ampatzidou of a series of projects that serve as an inspiration for Transition-Scapes. These projects form part of a larger database of projects which the

research team will enrich and analyse in the coming months following three broad directions:

1. The experience or object itself:
Here we ask questions about the key audiences and the role of the visitors, the necessary knowledge and tech savviness people need to be able to enjoy the installation, but also what the duration is, and how the experience unfolds in time in terms of an underlying narrative.
2. The setting in which this is presented:
This includes describing the exhibition space, the technologies and props that are being used and whether the installation is part of a wider, complementary display of information.
3. The (systemic) process in which it is embedded:
Here we examine the context in which the exhibition format was developed. Was it research or education driven, participatory or commercial? We also look at who was involved and what impact there was.

Cristina presented five selected projects that touch upon different aspects that are important for Transition-Scapes. Participants to the meeting were then asked to identify the qualities and discrepancies of these examples in relation to the research goals of Transition-Scapes, in a simple exercise using post-it notes.



Vacant NL, Museum of Us, MIT City Scope, Nature. And Us? And Mitigation of Shock were the five cases that we discussed as relevant references for Transition-Scapes.

The examples we discussed were: *Vacant NL*, the Dutch contribution to the 2010 Venice Biennale. It used blue foam architecture models to visualize the extend of vacancy among government-owned buildings in the Netherlands. Partners appreciated the strong and clear statement made by the uniform models, which functioned as a physical data visualization. However, they also commented on the lack of proposals to tackle the issue at hand.

Museum of Us was a campaign, exhibition, project space and programme of events that brought the exhibition space into an empty shop in the neighborhood and provided prompts for interaction without using any digital technologies. Participants to the meeting found this example a useful reference for the Bospolder-Tussendijken case because of its situatedness and low threshold engagement. At the same time, they questioned what happens with the input that participants provide and whether there is an actual link with policy.

MIT City Scope combines a physical model made out of lego blocks with projection mapping and augmented reality, allowing workshop participants to test different scenarios in real time. Here, meeting participants appreciated the combination of digital and analogue features and the possibilities for conversation that are provided by the City Scope setting. However, they also noticed that it probably works better with more informed audiences and that it would be good if the data used in the simulations would be open.

The exhibition *Nature. and Us?* is a highly technologically mediated and interactive individual experience, with no distinction between the experience and the setting: information and stories are seamlessly choreographed to create a unifying experience. The strongest aspects identified by the partners in this case were the combination of several different objects and technologies to attract visitors' attention. At the same time, they also identified a risk that the exhibition might be overly designed, leaving little room for interpretation and only appealing to specific audiences.

Finally, *Mitigation of Shock* is a highly tangible, immersive but not interactive, experience of a London flat in a near future heavily shaped by climate change. Opinions were quite divided on this one. Some participants thought that the apartment setting and tangible props made it both more relatable and inspiring action, while others felt that it was dystopic and only focusing on one possible future perspective.