2016

INFORMED

CITIES

FORUM

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

PEOPLE, POWER, PARTNERSHIPS

Building Alliances for Urban Sustainability Transitions

June 16-17th 2016

St. Pauli Ruine
Dresden, Germany

The Informed Cities initiative - Making Research Work for Local Sustainability, is a European initiative created by ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between research, policy-making and action in sustainable development at and for the local level. Drawing on various research projects, the Informed Cities initiative is a meeting place for dreamers, thinkers and doers who want to co-create the future of European cities.

On 16-17 June 2016, the **5th Informed Cities Forum** explored ways to co-create sustainable cities of the future with a focus on **People, Partnerships and Power**. City governments, researchers, artists, activists, entrepreneurs, experts and policy specialists converged for an intensive 2-day programme featuring interactive field workshops and insights from a diverse range of voices active in the urban sustainability transition scene.

Let's have a look at what happened!

Welcome Session

DAY 1: 16 JUNE 2016

"The setting of ICF5 will inspire the co-design of the next generation of transition projects in Dresden."

Dr. Kristin Kaufmann

Mayor for Work, Social issues, Health and Housing of the City of Dresden, Germany

"Research needs to understand the realities of cities and relate to those who make cities; the initiatives, the citizens!'"

Dr. Andreas Otto

Deputy Director Head of Research Management, Leibniz Institute for Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER), Dresden, Germany

"It is not only about power and how power changes, but also about the passion for sustainability!"

Dr. Niki Frantzeskaki

Associate Professor, Dutch Research Institute for Transition (DRIFT), Erasmus University Rotterdam

"I am here to listen and bring an outside perspective. I will be a supportive friend!"

Arif Khan

"Critical Friend", Loeb Fellow, Harvard University

"ICF5 will make it possible to see diversity in action!"

Ania Rok

Coordinator, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

Conference Moderator

Session 1: People...

"It's not about talking, but it's about doing!"

Session 1 looked at the people behind transformative processes, setting the stage for looking at real-world examples of transition initiatives. It encouraged a broad view of sustainability transitions by highlighting diversity and the potential for social innovation and bottom-up initiatives, but also the need for empowerment and social and environmental justice.

Mundano, an artist from São Paulo, Brazil, started the session by **telling an inspiring story** of how local street artivism grew into a city-wide movement, making a difference in action and inspiring replication globally. His presentation was followed by a **panel discussion** facilitated by **Dr. Leen Gorissen**, VITO, Belgium. Mundano was joined on the panel by **Joke Quintens** (Deputy Mayor of the City of Genk, Belgium), **Liselotte Noren** (Founder of Refo – an upcycling business, Sweden) and **Gabriella Schneider** (representing Transition Wekerle, Hungary). The panelists engaged in a lively discussion with the audience and the session was concluded with reflections by **Arif Khan** (Loeb Fellow, Harvard University).

'It is not about money, and you might not need politicians. You need to find people that believe that change can happen and dare to do it!

Liselotte Noren

"Strong social initiatives need strong governments! Perceptions about politicians and public servants need to change, and change slowly. Cooperation side by side helps each side to learn more of each other!"

Joke Quintens

"Artivism has the power to make a fast connection with the system! Deliberately target politicians, put them in an awkward situation to nudge them into communicating."
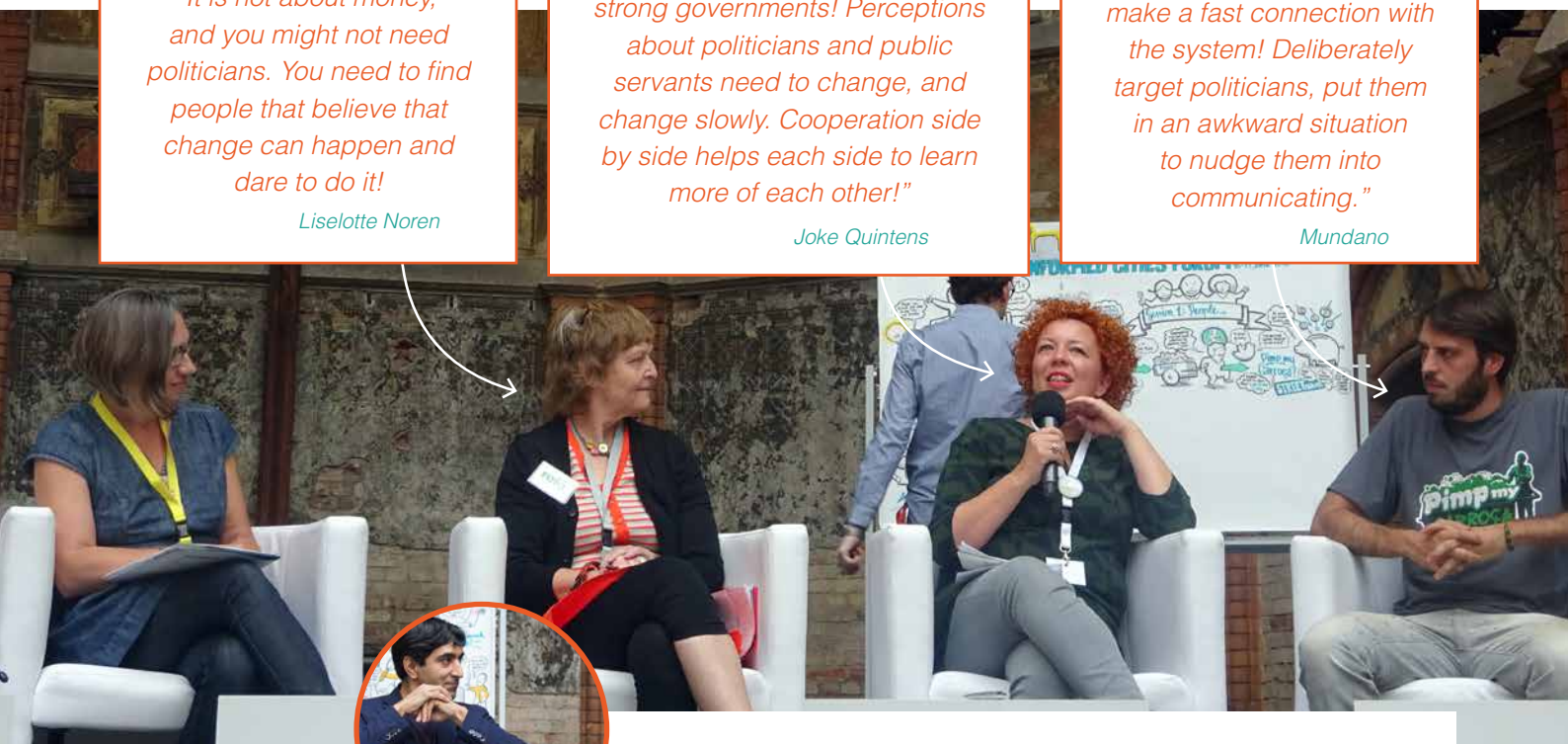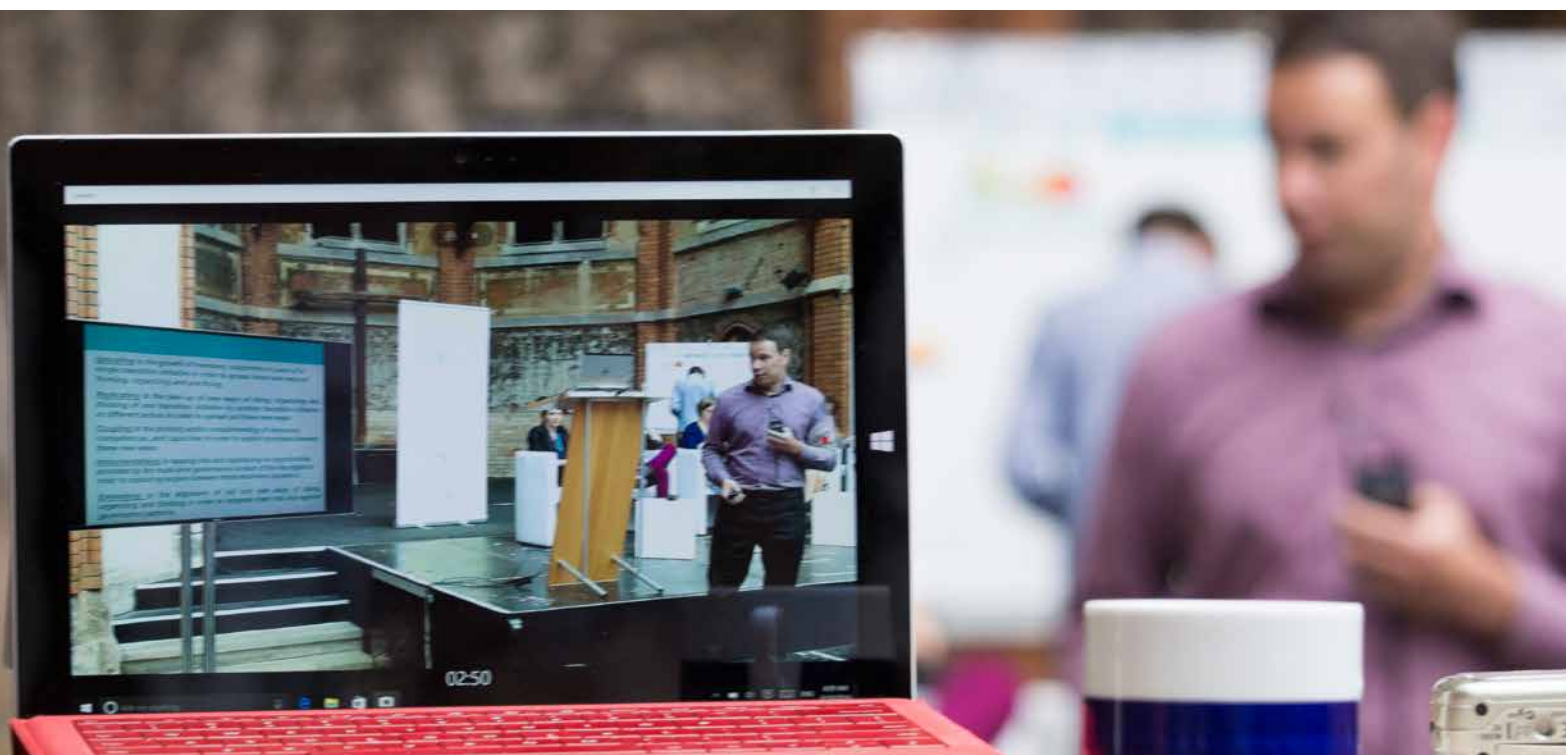
Mundano

'What type of illegal activities are we willing to accept or encourage?'

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Session 2: Partnerships
by the ARTS project
Accelerating Transitions

Dr. Niki Frantzeskaki (DRIFT, Rotterdam, the Netherlands) facilitated Session 2 on Partnerships, which introduced and explored the various acceleration mechanisms and discussed recent findings from the ARTS research project.

Dr. Markus Egerman (IOER, Dresden, Germany) presented an overview of the five acceleration mechanisms (**upscaling, replicating, coupling, instrumentalising and embedding**) and findings from the research project to illustrate what happens when diverse transition initiatives emerge in a city and how they contribute to accelerating sustainable transitions in each region. The mechanisms were then substantiated by real-life examples from the project's five case study regions and presented by the local ARTS team: **Prof. Gordon MacKerron** (Brighton, United Kingdom), **Dr. Sara Borgström** (Stockholm, Sweden), **Dr. Leen Gorissen** (Genk, Belgium), **Logan Strenchock** (Budapest, Hungary) and **Kristin Reiß** (Dresden, Germany).

Upscaling

Upscaling had been observed in all regions but there were differences between domains. It seems to not present a universally-shared goal and often creates tension related to limits of growth of transition initiatives. As an example, **Kristin Reiß** (Dresden) introduced the VG Bio Maerkte, a local food co-op, which has successfully scaled up to include 9,000 members.

Replicating

Replication was observed to take many forms, from 'copy and paste' work to more hybridized methods. Transition initiatives commonly took an idea or inspiration from outside the city-region and adapted it to the local context. This adds to the diversity of innovation in a city-region.

Sara Borgström (Stockholm) shared how the concept of green wedges has been used as a window of opportunity and model for NGOs and municipalities to collaborate to protect regional green spaces in and across municipal administrative borders. The collaboration model has been successfully replicated throughout numerous districts in Stockholm.

Embedding

Embedding is not often a universal goal of initiatives, rather there are a variety of motivations and goals. Markus suggested they could be seen as different system logics, from embedding that seeks to 'stretch and transform' existing governance models to a 'fit and conform' model to existing governance models. To facilitate embedding, he suggested that city governments should create interfaces to engage with community initiatives.

Leen Gorissen (Genk) introduced the "Bee Plan" as an example. The Bee Plan started with an informal and unplanned brainstorming session that then was able to successfully bring in political support.

SESSION 2: THE ARTS PROJECT

Coupling

Coupling - the partnering of initiatives to exploit synergies - was found to take many forms and to occur mainly within domains and sectors. Markus noted that network initiatives and 'transitioneurs' were key to successful coupling, whilst the project also observed a tension between Coupling and achieving an initiative's primary aims.

Logan Strenchock (Budapest) introduced 'Cargonomia', a project which created a viable business proposition by connecting a cargo bike manufacturing company, an open bike workshop, and a bike messenger company to provide a home delivery service for products from local organic farms and bakeries. Logan commented that, in order to facilitate Coupling in cities, that "we [researchers] need to create platforms for bringing people together. Designing these could be a role for researchers."

Instrumentalising

Markus stressed how initiatives in each region clearly had to navigate different contexts and that, in particular, the national context matters. However, a common finding from the project was that there is a tension between instrumentalising external funding and the autonomy of initiatives; between striving for instrumentalising and core activities, which is exacerbated by the tendency for 'projectification' - or manipulating an initiative's goals or outcomes to fit an outside funder's objective.

Gordon MacKerron (Brighton) explained how the Brighton Energy Co-Op has successfully used national feed-in tariffs to support the deployment of photovoltaic panels (PV) locally. But at the same time, this support made it difficult to explore other renewable energy generation options, which resulted in a monoculture of PVs and fewer benefits for local communities.

"We need to rethink our roles and the role we play for sustainability transitions!"

Dr. Niki Frantzeskaki

FIELD WORKSHOPS

How can we build a local economy that is good for people and the planet? **Workshop 1** explored socially and environmentally-responsible alternative business models. The workshop focused on three local examples: Lose Laden, a packaging-free shop; Quartiermeister, a socially-oriented beer distributer; and Elbtaler, a local currency initiative.

The founders of Quartiermeister explained their innovative 'lean' business model that focused on creating a brand and building strategic partnerships with existing companies in production and retailing (e.g., businesses in 'bad shape').

A member of Elbtaler explained how local currencies present local solutions for global problems such as financial crisis and how they empower people to take control of money and keep the money circulating in the local economy.

To brainstorm additional measures that promote sustainable business practices, workshop participants were asked to role-play various scenarios with assigned roles.

Workshop 2 delved onto how different people and institutions can work together to accelerate sustainability transitions. Tom Umbriet (Environmental Centre) introduced the local history of collaborations and cooperations across sectors, themes and scales in Dresden. Participants then discussed the following questions during a World Café:

1. How do you reconcile the different logics of doing (practice), organizing, and thinking (culture) of civil society initiatives, private businesses and public authorities?

2. How do you encourage and empower mediators, translators, and networkers (both individuals and networking initiatives)?

3. How do you combine creativity with compliance? How can public authorities "square the circle" between innovativeness and the stickiness of legal codes?

All in all participants highlighted the potential of non-traditional collaborations and the need to put effort into understanding each other.

How do the stories we tell and hear influence our ideas of what is possible? **Workshop 3** invited participants to reflect on the role art and culture in sustainability transitions. En route to the venue participants were asked to explore the city with a 'transitioneur artist's eye', to explore and discuss the urban landscape. The group later reflected on the journey and concluded that it seems that "there aren't enough spaces for art" and that there are opportunities to "turn public places into forums for personal communication".

ARTS partner initiatives shared their work and set the stage for further discussion. Magda Kubecka (City DNA / Cities Magazine) concluded the workshop by suggesting how art could be useful as a tool for transition:

Communication: art as tool, helpful in communicating in simple ways; **Representation**: a tool for people to express; **Inspiration**: a tool to inspire creativity in people; **Change Agent**: a tool for change - to give people power and visibility, playful fun with impact; **Empowerment**: building trust, giving them a place, showing possibilities.

Who decides how a city uses its space? In **Workshop 4**, participants used bicycles to visit local initiatives in Dresden who have struggled to find space in the city. Workshop participants met with local initiatives to discuss ideas for gaining and sustaining free spaces, cooperative urban planning culture, and new forms of funding for urban open spaces.

Workshop participants were invited to reflect on two questions:

1) What were the main legal issues with these places?

2) Why do initiatives need (free) spaces?

Participant discussions touched upon many issues: the importance of "owning" the land; how contracts might create uncertainty rendering investment decisions difficult; the importance of rooting (e.g., to connect with neighbours and to create a "network of solidarity"; who reaps the benefits of temporary use?; how can city-making be democratic? And, finally, how can good things come out of failure?
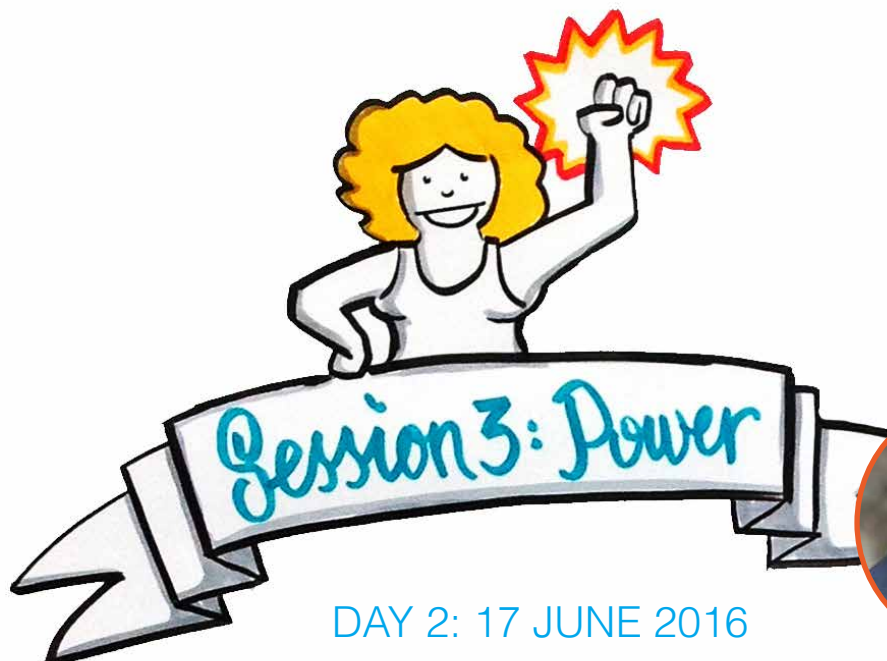
Workshop 5 introduced Dresden's vibrant sustainable food scene and with the assistance of resident participant-guides, who provided first hand experiences of organizing and taking part in local conscious food campaigns. Workshop participants visited a variety of urban gardens, a traditional allotment garden residence, and a local food cooperative, all the while discussing their connection to wider transition themes. The tour was conducted by bicycle and enabled participants to have a better understanding of the close proximity of the urban gardening network in Dresden, while also providing greater insight of how many vibrant community spaces have emerged in formerly marginalized spaces, which were often located next to urban transport infrastructure and in the underutilized industrial periphery of the city.

Workshop 5 not only introduced the group of international guests to the dynamic urban garden and local food scene in Dresden, but also offered them an opportunity to share their own experiences, struggles and successes with a group of like-minded peers.

How can modelling support strategic decision-making processes of local initiatives, policymakers and other organizations? **Workshop 6** took on this challenge and invited workshop participants to engage in a model-facilitated game and discussion about transition acceleration strategies in Dresden and the other ARTS regions.

The game framework was comprised of five transition initiatives (TIs) with specific roles (Pass-on Shop, Sustainability Food, City Park, Community Currency, Re-use Center), activity cards (alternative options to reach your goals), and three game tables (Facilitator Table, Coupling Table, Supporter Table). The game was played for several rounds. Participants showed interest and curiosity, particularly with regard to how scaling the activities of the TIs influences change in the city-region.

The highlight of the workshop was realizing that a multi-initiative partnership could have more impact on breaking out of the sustainability bubble by reaching out to new users and scaling up in a multilateral way.

Session 3: Power

Session 3 facilitator,
Prof. Derk Loorbach

DAY 2: 17 JUNE 2016

"Power is a matter of belief."

Diving into the issue of power **Prof. Loorbach** (DRIFT, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands) invited the audience to explore the ways in which transition initiatives challenge existing practices, norms and institutions. He then gave the floor to **Prof. Ricard Gomà** (Professor of Political Science, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain) who **told the story** of Barcelona en Comú.

Prof Gomà's presentation was followed by a **panel discussion** facilitated by Derk Loorbach who was joined by **Paola Cannavò** (Member of the Board of Trustees and the Scientific Committee of the LABoratory for the GOVernance of Commons - LabGov, Italy), **Ugo Guarnacci** (DG Research & Innovation, European Commission) and **Annemarieke van Egeraat** (City of Rotterdam, Netherlands).

Prof. Ricard Gomà shared how transition practices in Barcelona faced the challenge of shifting power relations. Based on his experience, he shared five strategies to build a system of **radical democracy** to empower people:

"Sustainability strategies need to build more democratic power structures, like bringing real power to the people to make transitions stronger!"

Prof. Ricard Gomà

Professor, of Political Science, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain

① Policy-making in common: co-production in every stage of policy process;

② Direct democracy: capacity building for high quality public deliberation;

③ Open code city: open government as window of opportunity for democracy by making information available in real-time;

④ Citizens' management of local public services: devolution to communities;

⑤ Community action plans and joint implementation.

"Local policies always create losers and winners. It's not about 'smart' and 'sustainable'. These are only words. It's about process: who are winners and losers of the process?"

Ugo Guarnacci

"We need to co-create a new kind of power: governance of commons! Start with individuals who recognize commons and build on the Power of Doing!

Communities realize that something is important, and they want to do something with it! Citizens have the knowledge! People can co-manage urban commons."
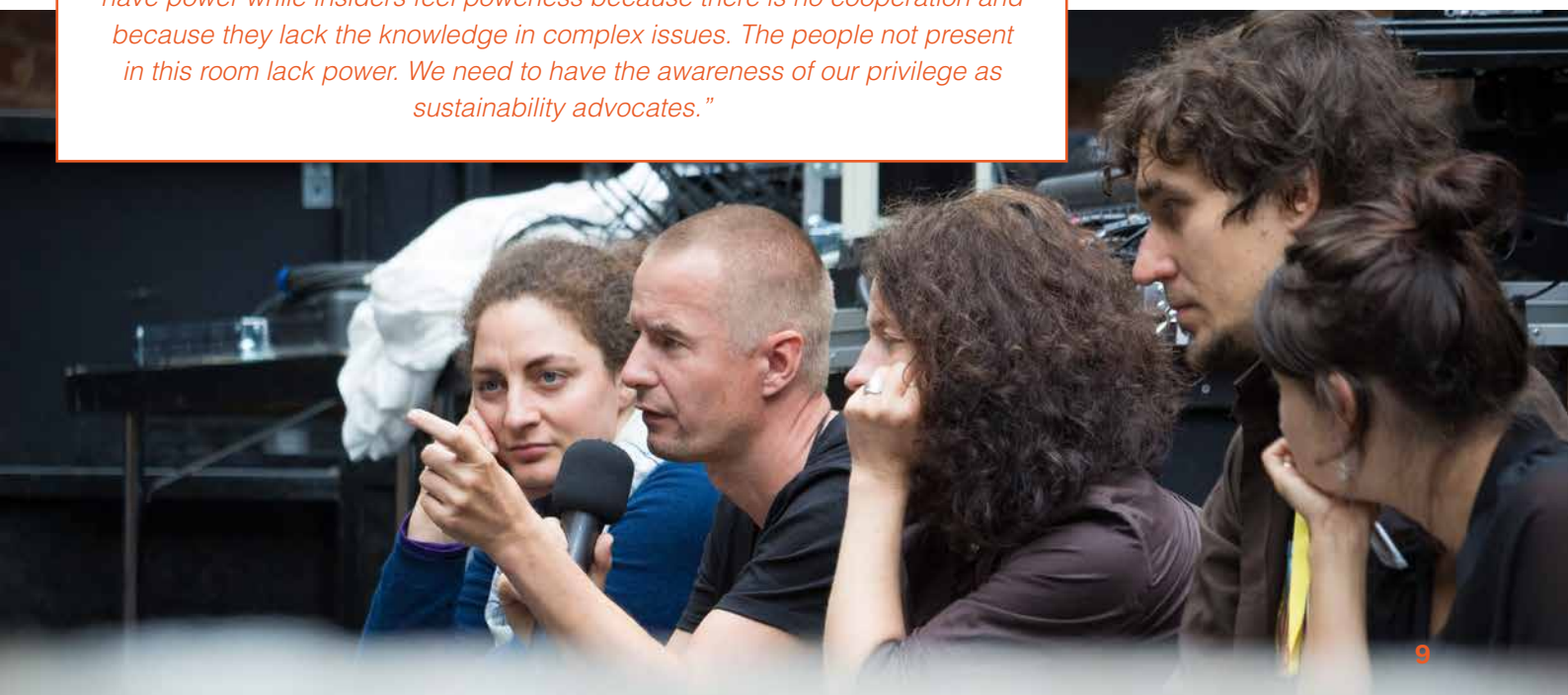
Paola Cannavò

"Asking democratic systems to transform themselves is a struggle. But we have good people in governments! We need to educate and empower people. The current system wastes talent! There are amazingly many talents!"
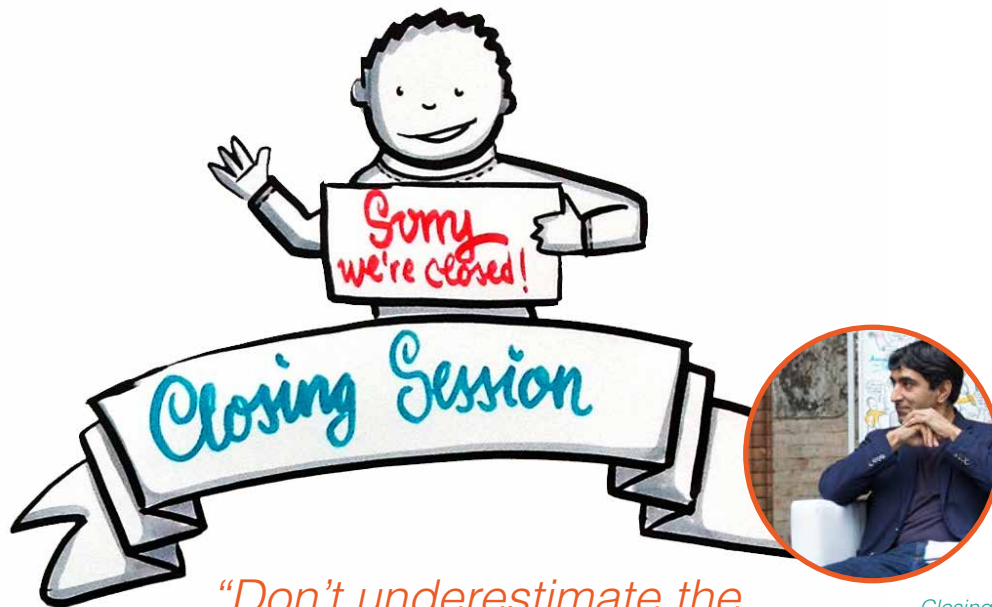
Annemarieke van Egeraat

COLLECTIVE THOUGHTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

"Power is a matter of perspective: government outsiders believe that institutions have power while insiders feel powerless because there is no cooperation and because they lack the knowledge in complex issues. The people not present in this room lack power. We need to have the awareness of our privilege as sustainability advocates."

Closing Session

"Don't underestimate the power of fun! The sustainability movement needs to be more about fun!"

Closing Session Thoughts
Arif Khan

To start the closing session, **Prof. Derk Loorbach** invited everybody to think of a symbol, word or gesture that could connect those engaged in bringing about change towards sustainability, which stimulated a lively discussion about boundaries, organisation, and systems. **Arif Kahn** then presented his reflections on the 5th Informed Cities Forum, raising five points:

① Embrace the unknowns with curiosity and be comfortable with uncertainty!

② Natural, organic growth - what can be lost in acceleration? Love, passion, joy? What we want is a greater sense of love of humanity!

③ Activists should be aware of the allure of funding and not to be turned into bureaucrats and visa versa. These are different roles and both of them are important.

④ Accepting and learning from our failures is something that social movements should embrace.

⑤ Expand the understanding of sustainability to also include resilience, equity for other humans, as an understanding of the environment of humans.

To close the session and the 5th Informed Cities Forum, **Ania Rok** invited all of the conference attendees on stage and to gather in a circle. She asked everyone to think of **one word** to represent what they will take with them from the conferece and then say it out loud as a microphone was passed around the circle from person to person. The exercise generated over 100 inspiring words for others to take home with them, the perfect end to an inspiring conference.

"Maybe the change we want, is that it is about heart and soul, sharing, social values and inclusion. That it is about those initiatives and people now invisible to the system becoming the dominant way? This is the struggle of acceleration! The survival of the soul!"
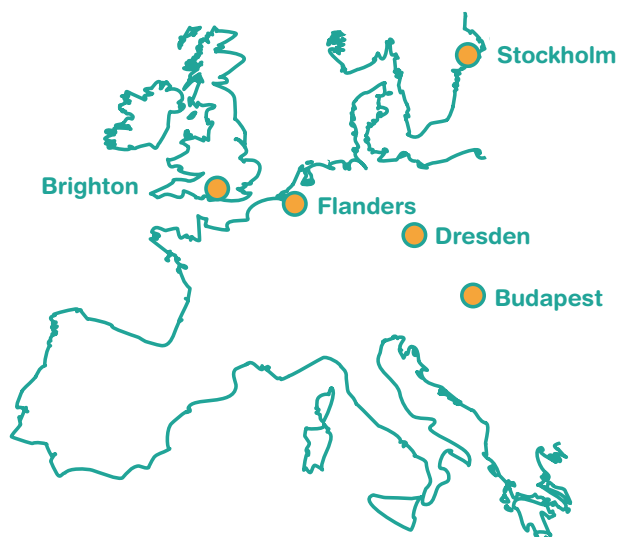
Derk Loorbach

"We need positive stories so that people can say: This what I am fighting for! This where I want to go!"

Markus Egerman

"I am heading for the mountain. I can look up and check if I am going into the right direction without having to know what that mountain is or whether I am on the right path towards the mountain."

We are currently present in the following regions

Stockholm

Brighton

Flanders

Dresden

Budapest

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