

# Accelerating Sustainability Transitions

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Stockholm Resilience Centre  
Research for Governance of Social-Ecological Systems



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# What happens when diverse transition initiatives emerge in a city-region?



## Research Questions:

1. What are the **main mechanisms contributing to the acceleration** of sustainability transitions in city-regions?
2. Which **strategies** can local transition initiatives adopt **to facilitate these mechanisms** and therefore help to accelerate sustainability transitions in their city region?
3. How do local transition initiatives actively attempt to **increase the inclusivity** of the sustainability transitions in the city-region?



**Upscaling is the growth of members, supporters or users of a single transition initiative in order to spread these new ways of thinking, organizing and practicing.**

**Replicating is the take up of new ways of doing, organizing and thinking of one transition initiative by another transition initiative or different actors in order to spread out these new ways.**

**Coupling is the pooling and/or complementing of resources, competences, and capacities in order to exploit synergies between these new ways.**

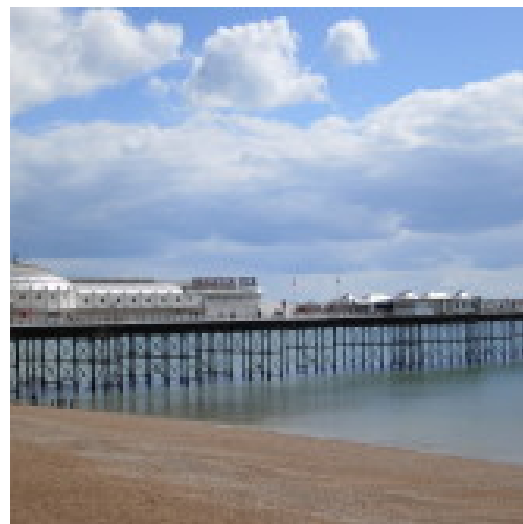
**Instrumentalising is tapping into and capitalizing on opportunities provided by the multi-level governance context of the city-region in order to exploit synergies between these multi-level dynamics.**

**Embedding is the alignment of old and new ways of doing, organizing and thinking in order to integrate them into city-regional governance patterns.**

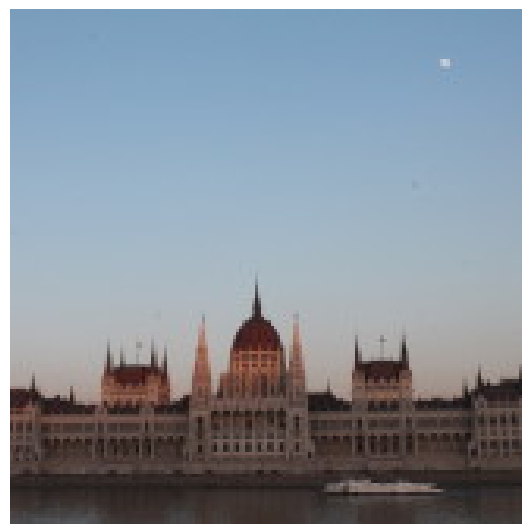
# Acceleration Mechanisms

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Accelerating Transitions





Brighton  
UK



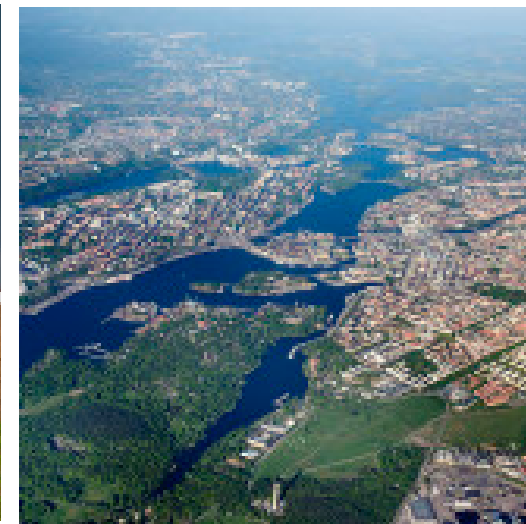
Budapest  
Hungary



Dresden  
Germany



Genk  
Belgium

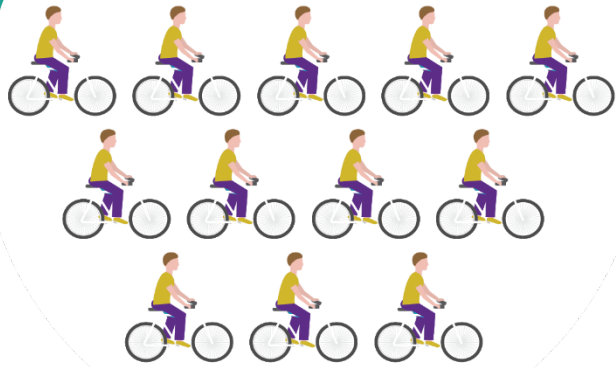


Stockholm  
Sweden

### Collection of empirical data:

- desk work to scan 'Initiative landscape' (up to 100) and 'literature review'
- between 10 and 15 Local Transition Initiatives (LTI) per case (criteria)
- ideally up to 3 semi-structured interviews per LTI – triangulation (2015)
- additional interviews with 'helicopter people' (2014/2015)
- participation local events, meetings, workshop etc.

## Upscaling



***Upscaling is the growth of members, supporters or users of a single transition initiative in order to spread these new ways of thinking, organizing and practicing.***

## Findings:

- upscaling processes in all regions, but **differs across domains**
- **food initiatives** are upscaling in every city region
- **is not a universally shared goal** in initiatives (**tensions occur**)

## Implications:

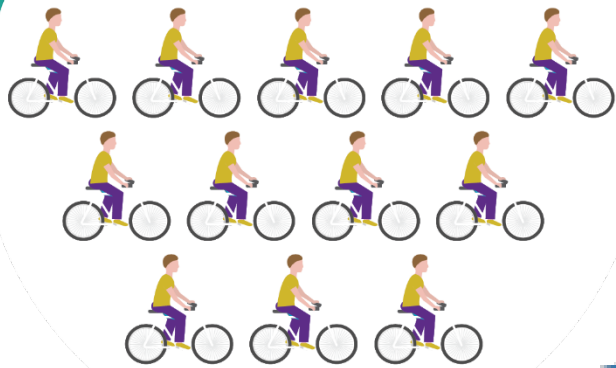
Upscaling as mechanism is **reasonable for single cases**

In most cases there is a clear **‘limit of growth’**

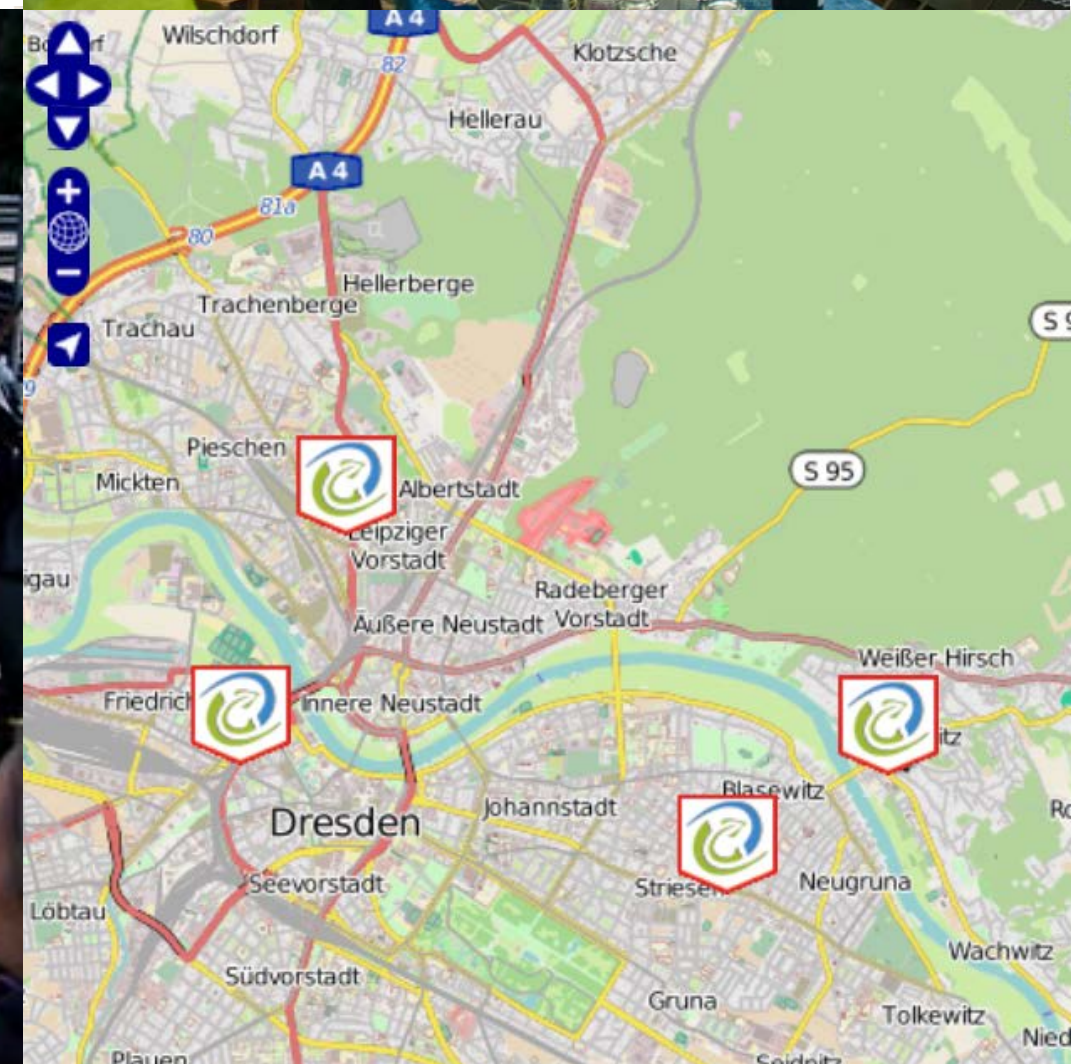
**‘Replicating’ as way out**



Upscaling

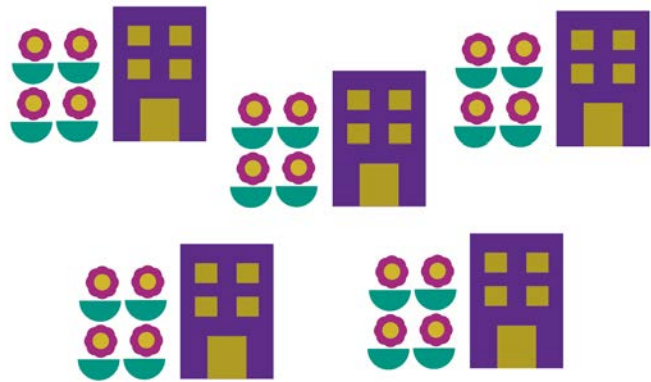


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## Replicating



*Replicating is the take up of new ways of doing, organizing and thinking of one transition initiative by another transition initiative or different actors in order to spread out these new ways.*

## Findings:

- Replication mainly happens **across city-regions** as well as within
- Replication has **many ways** it occurs (copy-paste, hybridisation)
- Single “**transitioneurs**” (agency) often with a key role

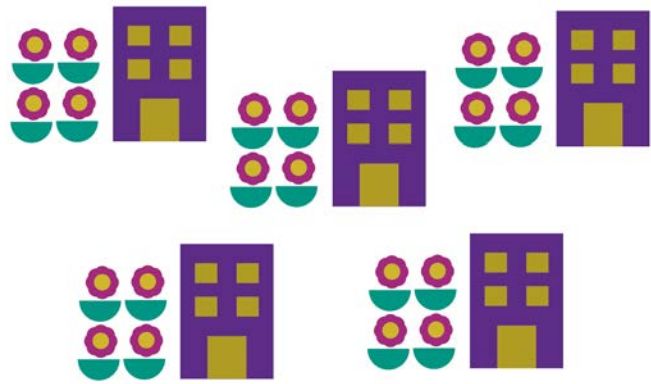
## Implications:

Replicating contributes to an **increased diversity of innovations** due to adaptations/modifications in diverse contexts

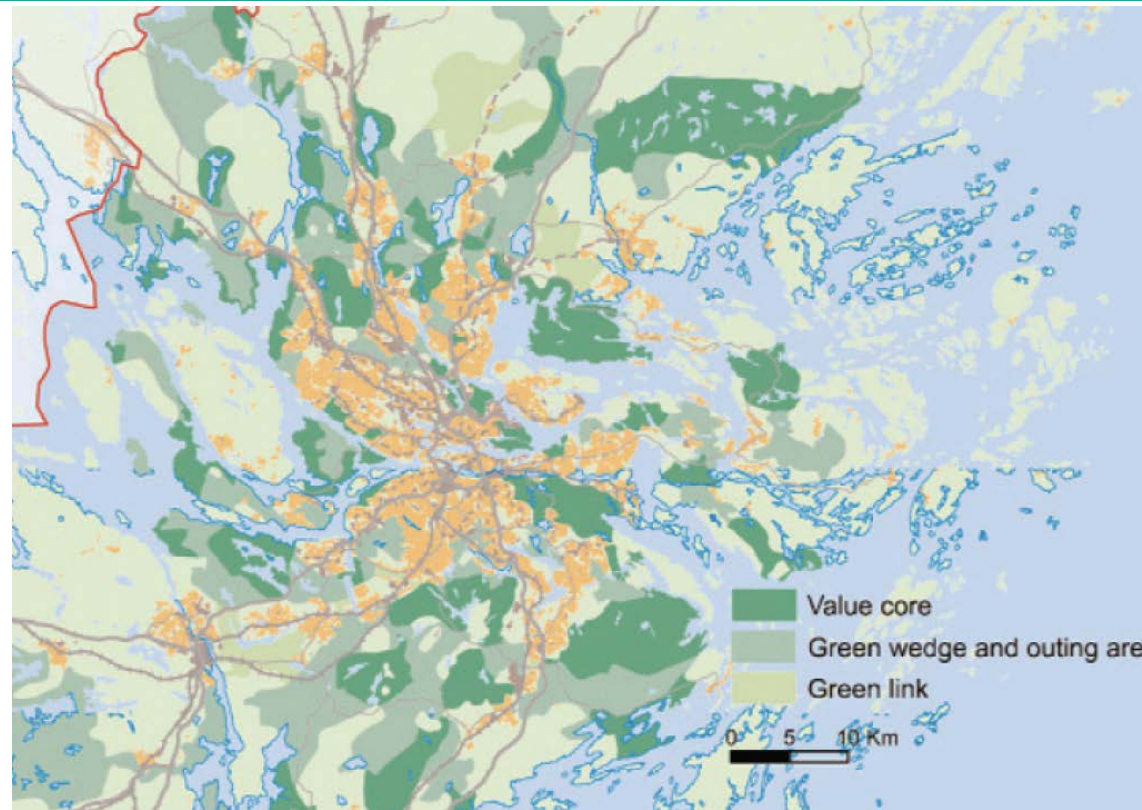
**Requires individual agency and to empower ‘transitioneurs’**



**Replicating**



# Green Wedges





## Coupling



***Coupling is the pooling and/or complementing of resources, competences, and capacities in order to exploit synergies between these new ways.***

## **Findings:**

- **great variety** of ways of coupling, **tensions** with core activities
- rather **within domains** and **within sectors** than across
- **‘network initiatives’** and **“transitioneurs”** (translation) are keys,

## **Implications:**

**Connecting innovators leads to new ideas**

**Platforms** of initiatives at city-level, national level (etc.) allow **sharing and aggregating of advocacy at higher levels**



## Coupling



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*Instrumentalising is tapping into and capitalizing on opportunities provided by the multi-level governance context of the city-region in order to exploit synergies between these multi-level dynamics.*

### Findings:

- is in place, but differs across regions (**national context matters!**)
- tension: dependence on **external funding vs. autonomy** of the TI
- **Tendency of ,projectification‘ / tension with core activities**

### Implications:

Transition initiatives are also **instrumentalised by political agendas** that can be critical for their authenticity

Looking for ways to **ensure a durable income** is (still)  
the best way to stabilize transition initiatives

## Instrumentalising



**BRIGHTON ENERGY**  
**COOPERATIVE** 



**Mark S.**  
£800 invested

**Sheila R.**  
£1500 invested

**Edwina C.**  
£500 invested

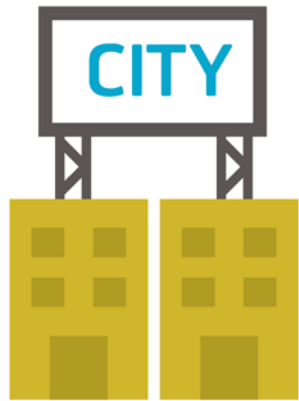
**Pam R.**  
£2000 invested

**Alan T.**  
£10,000 invested

**Pam R.**  
£2000 invested



## Embedding



*Embedding is the alignment of old and new ways of doing, organizing and thinking in order to integrate them into city-regional governance patterns.*

## Findings:

- **Not a universally shared goal** (being different = motivation)
- **Different 'system-logics'** (compartmentalisation / cross-cutting)
- **'stretch and transform'** vs. **'fit and conform'** (A. Smith)

## Implications:

**City administration and governments are well advised to create interfaces to community led initiatives**

**Initiatives are well advised to learn more about opportunities and limits of public officials and politicians**



## Embedding



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# Acceleration Mechanisms

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# Additional slides

# **Altering and (re)configuring new social relations via shifting and broadening roles and responsibilities in urban transitions**

## ***Citizens***

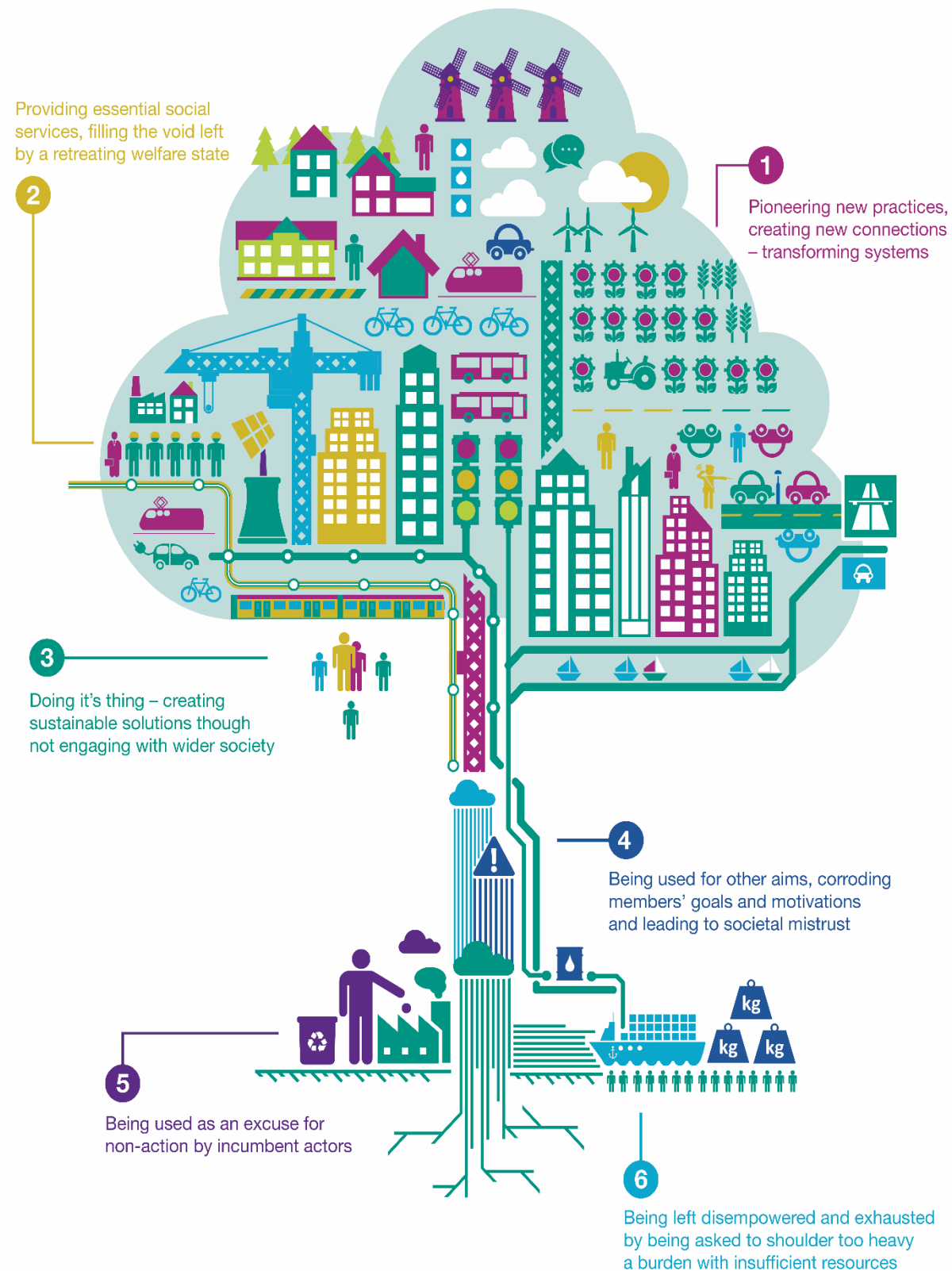
from users to prosumers and stewards of urban commons

## ***Scientists***

from 'ivory towers' to knowledge co-producers and intermediaries

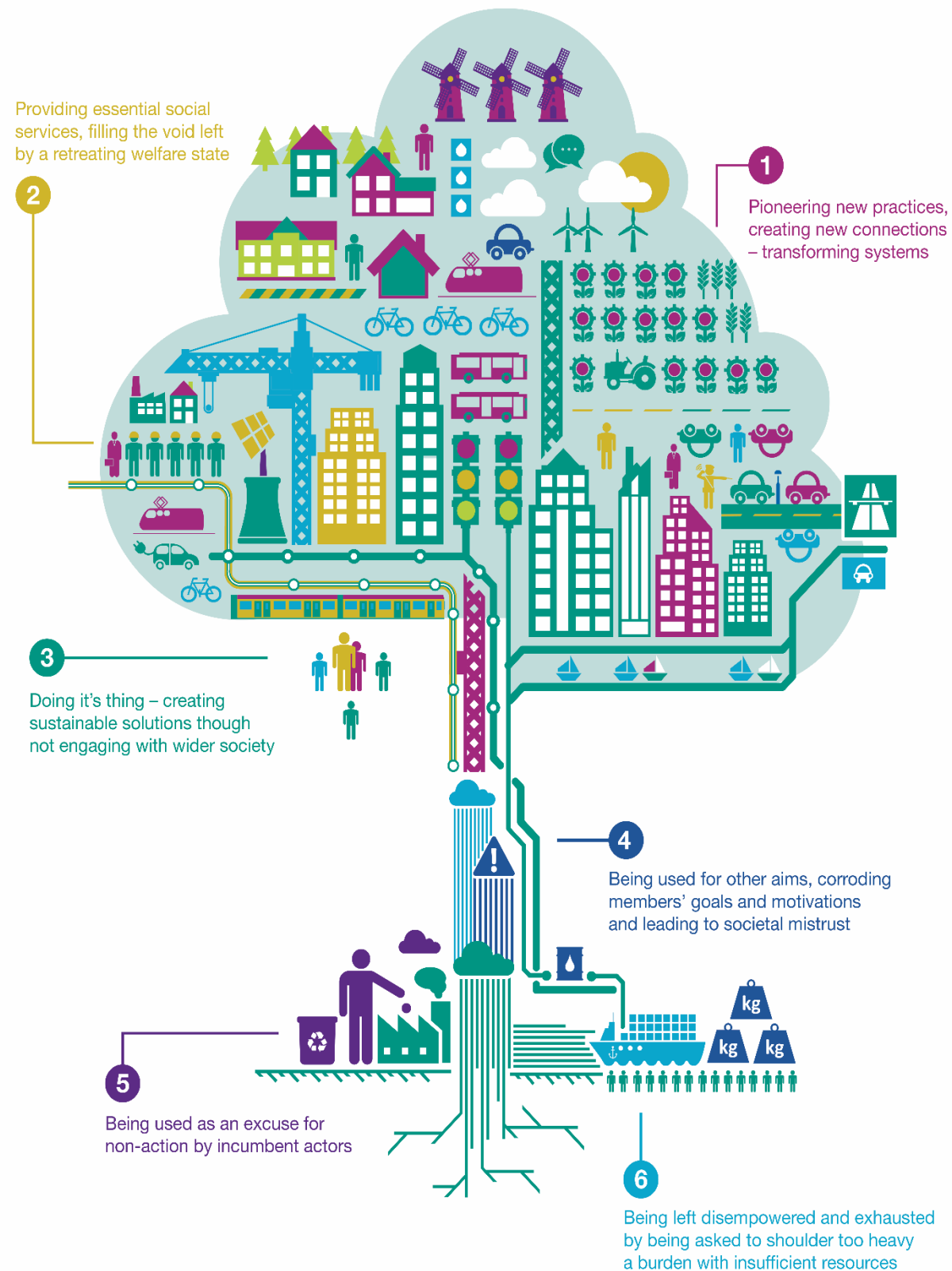
## ***Local Governments***

from regulators to innovators and facilitators



1. Pioneering new solutions and transforming systems
2. Providing essential social services, filling the void left by a retreating welfare state
3. Creating sustainable solutions through not engaging with the wider society





4. Being used for other means, leading to mistrust

5. Being used as an excuse for non-action

6. Being left disempowered and exhausted by delivering services with insufficient resources