Co-Designing Transition Experiments

Setting up real-world learning environments to support transition processes

COLLABORATING | Mobilisation Skills

What you will need:

- 3 - 30
- Group
- 30 mins preparation time
- 4 - 6 hrs execution time
- Sticky notes, printed Co-Designing Transition Experiments card deck

Related Tools:

Brainstorming with Eureka

Menu:

"Get students in the lead to drive societal innovations beyond the classroom. From brainstorming ideas to co-creating a transition experiment plan, this process optimises key criteria: radical, strategic, supported, mobilising, feasible, and measurable."

—Guido Knibbe

I. Overview

This tool offers practical guidelines and a printable card deck for co-designing transition experiments. A transition experiment (TE) is defined as an 'innovation project with a societal challenge as a starting point for learning aimed at contributing to a transition', with *learning* as the core strategy for addressing these challenges (Van den Bosch, 2010: 58).

Transition experiments are one of several instruments within Transition Management (TM), a governance approach aimed at transforming unsustainable systems across three interconnected levels: 1) structure: institutional and physical setting, 2) culture: prevailing perspective, and 3) practices: rules, routines, and habits (Loorbach, Rotmans & Kemp, 2016).

Drawing on seven years of experience teaching Placemaking courses, the UvA Placemaking team developed a pedagogical method to support learning in co-designing transition experiments. This method emphasises creating learning environments beyond the classroom and engaging external stakeholders to gather experiential feedback on potential innovations.

The Co-Designing Transition Experiments card deck helps students facilitate the co-design process by applying key transition criteria that help strengthen the experiment's transformative potential, feasibility, measurability and strategic value, building on the work of Loorbach, Rotmans & Kemp (2016).

Learning outcome

- The student is able to mobilise key stakeholders in designing a transition experiment

II. Learning Activity

Students prepare and carry out a design session with key stakeholders, using the Co-Designing Transition Experiments card deck.

1. Engaging with a Place-Based Project

30 mins

Organise for students to engage with projects. The projects can be already ongoing or newly introduced. In any case, the projects should involve a real place where students can set up an experiment.

Choose how much of the project context you will provide and what you will instruct students to research. Students should at least get familiar with three stakeholders, their needs, plans and issues with the place, and what important changes have occurred in the place over the last 20 years.

Tip: optionally, refer to the example project provided.

2. First Brainstorm

20 mins

Instruct students, individually or in teams, and generate rough ideas for a place-based experiment exploring transition possibilities.

Encourage creative thinking by reminding students to suspend judgment during the idea-generation process.

At this stage, students should develop at least one experiment concept and specify on the worksheet:

- The long-term goals the experiment aims to contribute to;

- How these goals align with existing plans of the municipality and relevant stakeholders;
- How these goals address the needs of users and residents in the place.

Tip: refer to Brainstorming with Eureka to support and facilitate this brainstorming session.

3. Using the Card Deck

40 mins

After discussing the long-term goals in the previous step, instruct students to collaboratively develop one experiment concept by using the Co-Designing Transition Experiments card deck and instruction worksheet.

Guide the process by encouraging detailed responses and, when necessary, revisiting earlier topics to ensure all key aspects are thoroughly addressed.

Tip: we recommend working through the cards in order, from top to bottom.

4. Pair up for Co-Design

40 mins

Let students pair up with a team or individual working on a different project and instruct each pair or team to use the card deck collaboratively on both projects, taking turns. This process enables students to receive peer feedback while practicing co-design.

5. Co-Design with Key Stakeholders

2-4 hrs

Now that students have familiarised themselves with the card deck, practiced co-design and developed an initial experiment concept, they are ready to co-design with stakeholders.

Instruct students to reach out to relevant stakeholders and organise a co-design session using the card deck. They can draw on their experiences from Steps 3 and 4 to facilitate the

session.

Consider holding the session outdoors—on campus or in public spaces like the street—to potentially engage a broader audience, including passers-by.

Tip: we recommend allowing students to take the lead in organising and facilitating the co-design session. However, depending on the project's nature and your students' needs, you may choose to support or co-facilitate the co-design session. You can also assist by helping book a location or providing materials such as flip charts and sticky notes.

III. Assessment

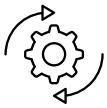
Students create a 2–3 minute videographic that showcases the transition experiment and the process behind it.

Purpose

Assessment of learning (summative assessment) aims to evaluate the extent to which students have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Roles

Teacher-led assessment



Characteristics

Assessment of group work

Materials

Videographic assignment

Assessment

Create a 2–3 minute video that highlights the transition experiment and the process behind it. Showcase research activities and key insights, the co-creation process and identified opportunities for strategic next steps.

The video should have a clear storyline and visually engaging presentation, suitable and accessible for both academic and non-academic audiences.

You will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Quality of insights into local stakeholders and their issues.
- Effort and skill demonstrated in engaging stakeholders throughout the project.
- The transition potential of the experiment and the proposed next steps.
- Optional*:* Quality of storytelling and visual presentation in the video.

IV. Key Advice

An **example project** (Step 1), the **worksheet** (Step 2) and the **Co-Designing Transition Experiments card deck** and **instruction worksheet** (Step 3) can be downloaded below.

Instructing students to create videographics has proven an effective way to assess transition experiments and the processes leading up to them. An example (in Dutch) can be found on youtube.com/watch?v=c4s6k2yKSkk. In UvA's Placemaking courses, students present their videographics to an audience of peers and societal partners. These final products enable teachers to evaluate how well students have achieved the learning outcome of inspiring and mobilising key stakeholders to co-design scientific transition experiments.

More information on Placemaking can be found on placemakingamsterdam.nl.

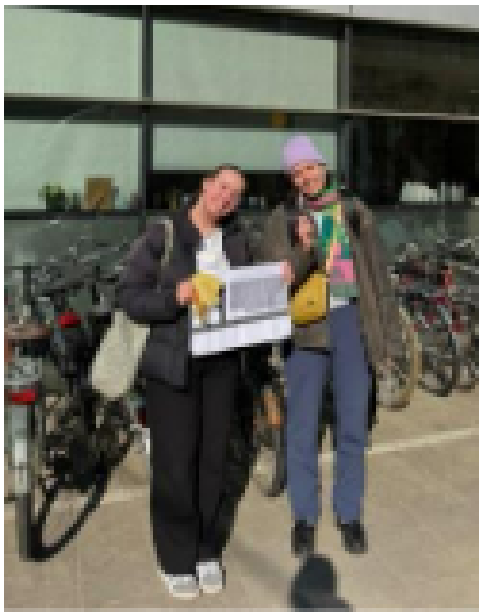
This tool and the Co-Designing Transition Experiments card deck was inspired by the Ex-tra project and the Ex-tra Conversation Starter Deck.

Example Project

“Wild Parking” around the University of Amsterdam’s Roeterseiland Campus

In this Placemaking course project, a student team explored the issue of wild parking around the Roeterseiland Campus (REC) of the University of Amsterdam. On this lively city-centre campus, students, staff, residents and visitors all move through a shared public space.

Although underground bike parking is available, it is often underused. Instead, bikes and scooters are frequently parked on sidewalks, green spaces and at building entrances. The result is a cluttered streetscape, limited accessibility and growing tension between different users of the space.



The students chose not to focus on improving the existing parking facilities. Instead, they asked a different question: *How can we reduce informal bike parking in public spaces, in a way that aligns with how people behave?*

The students carried out a detailed analysis of the location and the issue. They mapped the area, observed user behaviour and spoke with various stakeholders, including municipal officers, campus housing staff and local residents. They used interviews, surveys and informal conversations on the street. A co-creation session with fellow students helped deepen their understanding.

Key insights included:

- **Behavioural norms play a key role.** Parking choices are influenced not only by infrastructure but also by habit, perception and time pressure.
- **The space is overloaded.** Bike parking competes with other functions of the corner, such as socialising and resting.
- **Norms are shifting.** Students tend to view public space more individually, which complicates shared use.
- **Speed matters.** Many informally parked bikes are left there only briefly, suggesting that convenience is the main driver.
- **The basement is already being used.** Students are aware of the underground facility, but it often fills up early in the day.

The students also explored theoretical perspectives to enrich their analysis. Inspired by Reijndorp and Reinders (2010), they saw that people often "claim" space based on personal routines and lived experience, even when doing so breaks rules.

Kelling and Wilson's *Broken Windows Theory* (1982) added another layer of insight. It suggests that visible signs of disorder, like messy bike clusters, can lead to more norm-breaking behaviour. When a space looks neglected or unmanaged, people feel less responsible for it.

Together, these insights helped the students reframe the issue. They no longer viewed informal parking as disobedience, but as a mismatch between system design and how users interact with the space.

Designing a Transition Experiment

Rather than jumping to a solution, the students aimed to design a transition experiment. Their goal was to create a low-threshold intervention that could shift behaviour and generate learning.

Through co-creation, they developed three possible interventions:

1. **Buurthoek (Neighbourhood Corner)**
   Transform the corner into a welcoming social space. A more cared-for and active area can discourage unwanted behaviour and support shared use.

2. **Coloured zones**
   Apply colours and visual cues on the pavement to guide bike parking.
   This form of nudging helps structure behaviour without enforcement.

3. **"Move your bike, make someone's day"**
   Use friendly notes on bikes to raise awareness and encourage respectful parking. This appeals to social responsibility rather than rules.

The ideas were presented to local stakeholders and improved based on their input.

Read more (in Dutch):
https://placemakingamsterdam.nl/partners/uva-huisvestingsontwikkeling-rec/wild-parken-rond-roeterseilandcampus.

Co-Designing Transition Experiments

Brainstorm ideas for a place-based experiment exploring transition possibilities

Place

Describe the location you are focusing on. What challenge or issue do you observe here that calls for

Long-Term Goals

What long-term transformation do you hope this place-based experiment will contribute to?

Existing Plans

What policies, strategies or plans from local authorities or other organisations are relevant to this place?

Co-Designing Transition Experiments ca

Supported

How does the experiment build on insights from on-site research?

Supported

Which individuals, groups and organisations are backing the experiment?

Supported

Who might take the lead in continuing the work after the experiment concludes?

Radical

How can we make the intended change tangible and visible in the space?

Radical

How does the experiment encourage new or alternative uses of the space?

Radical

In what meaningful ways does the experiment differ from the status quo?

Feasible

Feasible

Feasible

Co-Designing Transition Experiments ca

Strategic

How do the goals of the experiment align with existing plans or visions?

Strategic

What role does the experiment play in enabling long-term change?

Strategic

What follow-up steps can help translate the experiment into lasting impact?

Measurable

What questions guide the monitoring of the experiment?

Measurable

What should we measure to understand its effects or impact?

Measurable

Which tools and methods will we use for monitoring?

Mobilising

What makes the

Mobilising

What opportunities do

Mobilising

How can we keep

Co-Designing Transition Experiments

S R

Use the card deck to refine your transition experiment by exploring it across six key categories. For each category, select
and discuss them. Record any insights or adjustments to your concept. Use the small box at the bottom to revisit a categ
new light on it. Designing a transition experiment is not a linear process, so embrace the flexibility to adapt your thinking a

Supported | Radical | Feasable | Strategic | Me

V. References

EXperimenting with City Streets to TRAnsform Urban Mobility (2024) Conversation Starter Deck, Strategies for Change.
https://ex-tra-project.eu/conversation-starter-deck-strategies-for-change/

Loorbach, D., Rotmans, J. & Kemp, R. (2016) Complexity and transition management. In Complexity and Planning (177-198) Routledge.

Placemaking Fietsparkeren REC. (2024, 2 December). Placemaking Amsterdam Fietsparkeren REC videographic [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4s6k2yKSkk

Van den Bosch, S. (2010) Transition Experiments: Exploring societal changes towards sustainability. Erasmus Universiteit.
https://repub.eur.nl/pub/20714/Proefschrift_Suzanne%20van%20den%20Bosch.pdf

---