



**Transities voor  
Duurzame  
Ontwikkeling**

# **Governance for sustainable housing and building: Flemish experiences**

**Erik Paredis**

*Centre for Sustainable Development*

*Ghent University*

*<http://www.cdo.UGent.be>*

# The research project

- Contribution to OECD-study: experiences with governance for “system innovation” in member states.
- Linked to research for *Steunpunt TRADO*
- Two Flemish cases: housing and building (CDO- UGent); materials management (VITO)
- Research questions:
  - Which mechanisms initiate and drive transitions in this case?
  - Which policy structures and policy mechanisms characterize this case?
  - How has policy tried to influence transitions in this case and what can be learned from that?
  - What does this imply for future policy?

# Important observations

1. The housing and building system increasingly experiences (external) pressures. A reorientation seems necessary.
2. One kind of policy response (alongside others): there is a need of “system innovation”, to be initiated with new, experimental forms of governance.
3. These new policy spaces do not function self-evidently: actor are in search of their roles, how decisions are taken, who should be involved... Policy learning becomes important.
4. Existing structures and institutions slow down a translation of results.
5. Governance challenges can be grouped in several central themes: discourse, interests and power, policy coordination, actor roles, beleidscoördinatie en -aansturing, rollen van actoren, meaning of innovation.

# 0. Our housing and building system

## Some typical features:

- High degree of home ownership; single family dwellings; private initiative
- Social housing only 6%
- Suburbanisation and sprawl
- High energy and material intensity
- Important and diversified construction sector; a lot of local SME's
- Highly fragmented form of governance; Flemish departments housing and spatial policy are dominant



# 1. The system under pressure

- **Important trends:**

- **Climate and energy** policy (role EU)
- **Social** impacts: population growth, ageing, migration
- Growing competition over **space**
- Future of **industry** in a globalising knowledge economy



- **Growth of new practices**

- Technology: passive housing, materials, energy technology...
- Space: sustainable neighbourhoods, brownfield developments...
- Socio-cultural: co-housing...



## 2. Policy reaction (1): role for LT ?

- Different policy initiatives try to look at mid and long term:
  - 2004 – present: **transition** proces DuWoBo
  - 2011 – present: development of “**new industrial policy**” (with building through the Round Table Construction)
  - 2011-2012: future vision for **housing policy** until 2050
  - 2010 – present: discussion about a new **spatial plan** for Flanders
  - 2006 – present: development of **sustainable materials management**

## 2. Policy reaction (2): new governance forms

	<b>DuWoBo Since 2004 - ...</b>	<b>Round Table Construction 2012-2013</b>

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<b>Initiator</b>	Department LNE → DAR (team DO)	Department EWI
<b>Goal</b>	Transition to a more sustainable housing and building system, ecological, social en economical; Embedded in SD-policy	Transformation of an industrial sector to a competitive construction-energie-environment cluster. Embedded in new industrial policy

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<b>Process Approach</b>	From transition management (LT-vision, paths, experiments) to own approach with experiments, learning platforms, strategic groups	Experiment in innovative sector policy; self-organisation for long-term strategy development via “entrepreneurial discovery”

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<b>Actors</b>	Network of frontrunners and regime actors from government, industry, science, ngo’s	Representatives of sector organisations with government

 ***Two new forms of policy with transition/transformation as goal***

### 3. Experiences with new policy spaces

## TM in Flanders: Mixed results

Strong in discourse  
creation

*But also*

Limited and weakened  
influence

Strong in netwerk  
formation

*But also*

Strategic behaviour of  
actors

Impulse for practical  
experiments

*But also*

Difficult realisation

Enthusiasm

*But also*

No unlimited involvement



*TM: lack of political strategy outside “arena work”. Additional strategies are needed.*

## 4. Challenges in SI-governance: themes (1)

Related challenges surface in different policy initiatives for SI (in housing and building). This is not abnormal, given the long-established structures, practices and culture in which they try to intervene:

- **Discourse**: How are problems and solutions framed? Are different framings present? Which are dominant? ...
  - *Active intervention is needed for a discourse coalition. Shallow coalitions can hinder progress.*
- **Actors and roles**: Which actors are in/out? What is the relationship between actors? ...
  - *Involvement of only regime actors makes fundamental changes difficult. Outsider-frontrunners seem necessary.*

## 4. Challenges in SI-governance: themes (2)

- **Interests and power:** how do different interests show themselves? Which interests are dominant? Who has which power resources?...
  - *Governance for SI seems to demand an active role of the government. Only “entrepreneurial discovery” risks to loose sight of societal challenges*
- **Policy coordination and steering:** which departments are involved? How is coordination organised within and between policy levels?...
  - *Without involvement of the central departments housing and spatial policy, influence in the core of housing and building policy seems difficult*
- **Innovation:** which kind of innovations are presented als solutions? Which are chosen? What can be financed?...
  - *Innovation in housing and building is not jsut about technology and economy. It also demands socio-cultural and institutional innovations*

## 5. Some conclusions

- A **reorientation** of the housing and building system seems unavoidable, and offers a lot of potential benefits.
- **New governance forms**, with new forms of cooperation are needed: long-term view, systems view, involvement of new actors
- New policy approaches show results, but are **not self-evident**. This is logical.
- **Policy learning** becomes important (e.g. by making tacit knowledge explicit and confronting experiences). But will we learn?