

## Exploring Power Dynamics in Transformative Social Innovation

Understanding power in decentralised energy initiatives, eco-communities, sharing economy and participatory democracy

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Research group: Innovation Studies

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### Project description

**Social innovations (SI)** are new ways of doing, thinking and organising that have the potential to shape and accelerate sustainability transitions. Examples of social innovations range from energy cooperatives, to carsharing, or participatory budgeting. Such social innovations are *transformative* to the extent that they are able to challenge, alter, and/or replace dominant structures and institutions in society. To become transformative, social innovations navigate complex power dynamics in a process of diffusion, scaling, or mainstreaming.

Our research group studies how power dynamics work in social innovation initiatives and networks across four SI-trends: sharing economy, eco-communities, decentralized energy, and participatory democracy. We apply existing power theories and collaborate with practitioners to develop these further by using innovative transdisciplinary methods. One of the elements is to design a **Critical Power Moments** methodology for retrospective analysis of how power relations are (re)produced/transformed over time.

### Join our team

You will be supervised by Flor Avelino and Tessa de Geus and be part of a driven and ambitious team consisting of 2 PhDs and student assistants working on related topics as part of the POTRANSI-project.

### Your role

Your task will be to conduct a comprehensive literature review on literatures related to social innovation initiatives/networks of decentralized energy initiatives, eco-communities, sharing economy, and participatory democracy. Key responsibilities include:

- Researching how power manifests, and is referred to, in these contexts in relation to the frameworks used in the POTRANSI-project
- Mapping the occurrence and examples of past 'critical power moments' as identified in existing literatures and datasets.

### Job requirements

The most important job requirement is that you are interested and motivated to dive deep into the topic of power and transformative social innovation in these four domains, and that you are curious about both academic research on these topics as well as how it manifests in practice. Strong social skills are an important condition. You should enjoy reading, discussing, and writing, have a critical and analytical mindset, and an excellent proficiency in English.

We are looking forward to getting to know you!