



Transformative Innovation Learning Histories methodology

Principles and practical details

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What is the Transformative Innovation Histories Methodology?

Social science research methods are ways to gather evidence to make interpretive or causal claims. The transformative innovation histories method is useful for both research and policy reflection. It involves:

- 1) Gathering multiple human accounts and documentation of a transformative innovation process and the role of policy in developing it.
- 2) Jointly constructing (within a team or group) written accounts and timeline based on recollection and documentation.

The purpose underlying these activities is:

- a) To allow participants in transformative innovation processes to recognise transformative elements in the case-study and to record and reflect experience and to conceive of ways to improve their future performance.
- b) To help develop an understanding of how the transformative innovation happened, identify factors that led to success, particularly the role of policy making, and areas for improvement.

The process of constructing a transformative innovation history stimulates discussion, reflection and learning and the findings can help inform the next phase of the TIPC programme - this is to develop ideas for future research and transformative innovation policy experimentation.

Rather than privileging the perspective of the researcher the output presents multiple voices in a narrative format that juxtaposes quotes from core participants, researcher reflections on key developments and theoretical insights relating to the innovation.

Benefits of this methodology for the TIPC programme

- 1) The process of co-constructing the transformative innovation history will allow each member to reflect on actions related to a specific example of transformative innovation in their own country context. It allows participants the opportunity to tease out, reflect on transformative elements, consider in what ways it is transformative, and what contributes to this using the vocabulary and ideas developed as a starting point for the case studies (see vocabulary document). The process also allows each of those involved to contribute their own ideas about why it was transformative

and reflect on their own actions, the actions of others and identify ways to strengthen or improve in the future. By combining multiple accounts, researcher reflections and linking back to theoretical insights each member will have a documented account which will provide ideas and possible directions for future policy directions and transformative innovation policy experimentation during the next phase of the consortium.

- 2) Since TIPC is made up of members operating in different country contexts it allows learning across the consortium either from specific cases of transformative innovation or comparing and contrasting experiences across several cases. In this way TIPC really is more than the sum of the individual parts.
- 3) It provides concrete examples of transformative innovation processes in a wide range of contexts that can be used in wider dissemination (through policy briefs, blogs, articles in academic journals) or to articulate the supporting narrative for transformative innovation policymaking

Helping to move towards Policy Experimentation

A learning history is an example of what is called in transition studies a second order learning process (see also vocabulary document). Through experience we learn how to modify the approaches we take to planning and implementing future policies. Within the case study participants have the opportunity to reflect on the transformative innovation and ask themselves whether routines were questioned or not. This helps us to develop a framework for engagement in policy experiments for the next phase.

We have not defined yet what we mean by transformative policy experiment in the next phase, but for the moment we use following definition:

Planned or emergent set of initiatives that focus on the development of a highly novel new socio-technical system likely to lead to substantial sustainability gains. Typically, it embodies an ambitious expectation about change in the future, brings together new networks of actors and engages in a process of second order learning.¹

What will be required from members to support this process?

- Engagement with the idea of transformative change
- Openness to the process. Participants must be able to be candid and as well as revealing successes must be prepared to highlight conflicts, mistakes and other sensitive issues (we have suggested some guidelines under 'research integrity' below)
- Help in identifying relevant written documents to support the development of the case-study
- One day participation in kick off workshop
- Help in organizing one to one engagements and discussions
- Participation in review of transformative innovation history write up
- Participation in final workshop in Bogota

¹ This definition is building on Strategic Niche Management literature, see Kemp et al., 1998; Hoogma et al., 2002; Schot and Geels, 2008; Berkhout et al, 2010; and Kivimaa et al, 2017

What is involved in constructing the transformative innovation history?

In summary each process will include the following steps:

- 1) Preparation
- 2) Workshop, one-to-one engagements and follow up
- 3) Write up

Step 1 – Preparation

The result of the preparation step is:

- 1) Bounding of case-study in time, place and an agreement on the set of activities which are included and excluded
- 2) Construction of provisional time line (please see the example in the Carbon Conversations example)
- 3) Provisional construction of actor network map that is identification of main actors (individuals, groupings within organisations, and organisations) and their relationships. Do they interact? In what ways? For what purpose? What is power dynamics between actors? (hierarchical or more horizontal relationship?). Also provide list of actors not included but who are relevant
- 4) Preparation of workshop including list of people to be invited

Step 2 – The Transformative Innovation History Workshop/s

The workshop will consist of 15-20 people that are considered to be key actors in the innovation process. There will also be a number of facilitators who have an understanding of the TIPC aims and objectives and the vocabulary used. Consideration should also be given to ensuring there are sufficient people to take notes and observations and help the flow of the workshop/s.

In some countries, mini-workshops will be organised to help accommodate availability requirements and geography. However, despite being smaller, we expect they will follow a similar structure. The organisers are invited to consider how they might best do this.

What participants will get out of the workshop:

- Be part of a process that allows for collaborative analysis, networking and joint action between a range of actors involved in the 'transformative' project.
- Opportunity to reflect on the project they have been part of through the lens of transformative innovation which is a way of mobilising innovation to address a wide range of societal challenges including inequality, unemployment and climate change.
- Have a dedicated and 'safe' space to explore with a range of actors involved in the project how transformative it has been and how such projects might be improved or successfully scaled in the future
- Through mapping a timeline of the innovation and understanding the role and possible viewpoints of all actors involved participants will gain a better understanding of main events, and viewpoints of all actors involved and can consider how to improve on or learn from this for future 'transformative' projects
- Gain a better understanding and a vocabulary for understanding transformative change and ways of nurturing and supporting this type of change process through policy

The typical structure of a workshop includes:

- 1) Introductions – why is everyone here, what do we hope to get out of the workshop (all), what specific knowledge of the transformative innovation do individual participants bring, motivations for taking part. The aim is to clarify why we are all involved in this workshop and the aims and objectives, what we hope to get out of it.
- 2) Discussion of the time line and actor network of the transformative innovation. There may be disagreement as to the significance of certain events which is to be expected and is part of the process and all events can be captured. The aim would be to finish the exercise with a general agreement on a set of key events and the key actors involved, how they were connected and what was the involvement. A possible structure for this session could be: split into two sub groups working on the two different aspects of 1) timeline and 2) actor network with an hour each for discussion and then swap for a further hour so each group covers both exercises. Then bring back to short reporting back, capturing key points in plenary.
- 3) Open discussion with participants on whether the case was transformative, in what sense?
- 4) Introduction of transformative elements based on project vocabulary. This will be small group work spread across 4-5 groups with a facilitator and each group will discuss a different aspect of the criteria to get a deeper understanding of how that applies to the particular case
- 5) Reflections on these elements, taking into account results under 3
- 6) Reflect on the role of policy in this process
- 7) Definition of follow-up steps which includes further discussion with actors on:
 - time line (chronology)
 - actor network
 - transformative elements

This will be done through deeper, one-to-one engagements aimed at actors not present in the workshop/s and actors who are present but want to deepen the discussion in another context, e.g. in a more closed setting

These engagements are based on results of the workshop and aim to:

- a) Identify new events to add to the timeline
- b) Add additional information about events
- c) Identify new relationships to add to the network maps
- d) Bring additional information about relationships
- e) Uncover transformative impact

There are no set questions and the discussion is related to the discussions held during the workshop but offer the opportunity to go deeper. Example open questions could be:

Why was the event/relationship important?

What was role of policy in shaping transformative elements of the project? (This could be positive, negative or neutral)

Were there specific combinations of policies that contributed to this project being transformative? (E.g. the policy mix)

Who was involved?

Why were they involved?

How did they contribute/participate?

What were the results?

Was it transformative, in what sense?

A final discussion point could be:

What in your opinion were the 2 most important events or themes relating to the development of this transformative innovation and why do you think it was important?

Please consider: An event or theme that you were involved in directly, and / or an event or theme that you were not directly involved in but on reflection was important in the development of this transformative innovation

The transformative innovation timeline and actor network maps are early outputs that:

- a) Sequentially list (possibly with the support of graphics) the key events and any effects on the relationships between stakeholders
- b) Show the links between stakeholders (actor networks)
- c) Show transformative potential and/or impact

Both will develop and change as the process unfolds and new accounts are heard.

Step 3 – Write up

The case study when written up should be a maximum of 15 pages and should be based on the following structure (a template for write up will be provided, and this will be done with the involvement of a communications specialist with the final version professionally laid out):

One page:

Introduction (about 150 words max)

Key insights – in detailed bullet points

One page:

Time line on page to be a mix of graphic and text

Remaining pages:

A discussion of main events and transformative elements, how and why they happened, barriers, failures, inclusions and exclusions, learning etc.

On each of these pages, one of each of the graphic elements should be used to distinguish the voices of:

Participant quotes

Researcher reflections

Participant reflections

Theoretical insights

Please also use photographs, images of influential artefacts such as books, papers

Final page:

Final reflections on transformative potential of [name of case study]

Important:

During the writing up all quotes should be checked with individuals as well as any interpretations made by the researcher.

We aspire to work within a co-creation process and are therefore not engaged in a research process in a traditional sense. The aim is mutual learning and reflection on the idea and practice of transformative change of all participants including the researchers. This means that we have meetings and engagements but are not conducting standard interviews. Researchers are also actors in the process, they are not simply getting information from participants. All actors involved are experts, they have resources and are not in any sense vulnerable people. We will treat all actors in a symmetrical way.

We will prepare a number of bullet points for discussion in one to one engagements which serves as guidance for the type of issues to be discussed.

We will also prepare a general form with the principles for the engagement which will be handed out at each workshop and in each encounter.

We do not expect transcriptions of discussions, but brief summaries/reports. Conversations with stakeholders have to be seen as engagements for mutual learning.

We also expect workshop reports and other material collected during the workshop to be stored. The transformative innovation history case study write-up will not use names of individuals and will make comments anonymous. Instead the report contains a list of the types of participants but not their names. E.g. 3 representatives from the coffee association, 2 representatives from the funding council. So to ensure anonymity we are clear that in the report we do not identify either explicitly or implicitly who said what. On top of that the case study reports are internal documents accessible by full members of the Transformative Innovation Consortium only.

From the case study material we may produce blogs and scientific publications. We have a sign off process for this and do not refer to individual participants. If we ever did, and even in the case where an affiliation is given in place of a name, we check the quote and obtain consent from the individual.

Further reading:

This note was informed by two documents that will be provided to members as further reading. Please note that these documents apply to innovation in general, but we have to adapt for transformative innovation:

1. Boru Douthwaite and Jacqueline Ashby: Innovation Histories: A method for learning from experience
2. Tom Hargreaves (2012) – Carbon Conversations: an innovation history (prepared on behalf of the Community Innovation for Sustainable Energy research team)
3. For more examples of written Innovation Histories at <https://grassrootsinnovations.org/category/publications/innovation-history/>
4. On Transformative Innovation Policy: Johan Schot and Ed Steinmueller