SOCIAL TRANSITION

The social transition is about people. When industrial legacy cities re-structure their social and economic systems, a key concern is that no person or social group is excluded or left behind in the transition to a more sustainable future. Instead of playing environmental, social and economic aspects of the transition off against each other, local governments can leverage their synergies to increase social inclusion and equity. Cities across the Urban Transitions Alliance are continually exploring new ways to engage their citizens and create opportunities for them to thrive.

KEY MESSAGES

- Industrial legacy cities should place their citizen's needs at the center of their transition strategies. In order to improve opportunities for all social groups across the cities, equity and inclusion should be defined as the principal values that guide their policies.

- The social transition of industrial legacy cities provides a great opportunity to re-shape their urban identities and create a new sense of place and belonging for citizens. Shared visions that reconcile industrial legacies with new sustainable pathways are essential to building identification, cohesion and trust across the cities.

- To ensure that public investments meet citizens' needs, local governments need to proactively engage their local communities. The Urban Transitions Alliance cities are exploring innovative ways to ensure that their policies are informed by the diverse concerns and visions of their citizens, especially of those whose voices are often not heard.

- Industrial legacy cities need the support of local stakeholders and strong partners in order to build more sustainable, diverse and resilient local economies and provide support for citizens who have yet to fully benefit from sustainable transition actions.

Social transition is about people. Tied to the overall well-being and equity in cities, social transitions are the core of the fundamental restructuring currently underway in many industrial legacy cities around the globe. Often simplified dichotomies, like framing job creation and climate protection as mutually exclusive, play environmental, social and economic transition aspects off against each other. To counter this, cities in the Urban Transitions Alliance proactively seek to find synergies that will lead to more inclusive policies, fairer opportunities and stronger communities.

Four key elements are crucial for a successful social transition towards inclusivity and equitability. **Citizen engagement** practices help to incorporate diverse voices in the decision-making process and thus support social inclusion through consistent representation and participation for all demographic groups. To understand the different needs within the city, local governments need to interact with their citizens and provide meaningful access to governance processes. **Shared visions** that reconcile industrial legacies with new sustainable pathways are essential to building community identification with common goals, social cohesion and trust across the cities. Positive narratives help to increase the feeling of ownership in communities and attract investment. **Education and social capacity development** strategies empower citizens and enable them to participate in community life in a meaningful way. Targeted subsidies can release financial burdens and create space for creativity and innovation. **Social protection** schemes provide a safety net for those who are the least able to access and seize new opportunities. Additionally, anticipating future employment trends can help to calculate for financial stressors as well as identify new economic growth pathways at an early stage.

FACING SOCIAL TRANSITION CHALLENGES

The decline of fossil-fuel powered industries in developed countries has had a significant impact on cities that relied on industrial growth for their overall economic and social development. Many industrial cities have been confronted with surging unemployment and rapid population loss in relatively short periods of time, following a previous era of economic boom and urban expansion. With the loss of their economic engine, like the closing of mines or steel mills as major employers, often came a loss of local identity for the city as well. The remaining negative images of pollution and rising poverty reinforced trends of little investment prospectus and population decline in some cities. Loss in tax revenue often further diminished the cities' resources for social protection for those staying behind. In legacy sectors, prospects of job loss often come along with endangered company pensions. Already vulnerable social groups often faced the biggest hurdles when adapting to the new conditions. Following years of divestment, former workers' neighborhoods may still suffer from poverty, social exclusion and deterioration. Global trends of rising income inequalities and gentrification further add to the burden on the most vulnerable social groups.

Recognizing the need to re-structure their social and economic systems, the Urban Transitions Alliance cities have developed distinct measures and policies to navigate their transition.

ASKING THE CITIZENS – AND LISTENING TO THEIR ANSWERS

The Urban Transitions Alliance cities are implementing citizen engagement strategies to ensure that their policies reflect their communities' needs and conditions. Ideally, citizen conversations entail honest, eye-level exchange without predetermined conclusions that create space for criticism, new perspectives and unconventional ideas. A number of cities have successfully worked with community leaders and persons of trust as ambassadors or "contact brokers" to create opportunities for open conversations that give a voice to underrepresented social groups. Multi-stakeholder workshops that inform the cities' transition strategies are another valuable tool for more inclusive decision-making. New ways of outreach should be explored in consideration of their limitations. For example, social media tools can contribute to more direct and convenient communication but may exclude certain social groups who aren't familiar with social platforms and new media.

BUILDING A SHARED IDENTITY AND VISION ROOTED IN THE CITY'S LEGACY

The positive effects of strong narratives are multi-dimensional: Targeted campaigns can change the image of the city beyond its boundaries and thus spur investment and attract skilled professionals. Within the city, shared visions support social cohesion by creating identification and ownership. Industrial legacy cities have been creating new visions that redirect their urban development narrative and redefine their place identity. Together with their citizens, they re-tell their stories in a way that embraces their transition, using the reinvention process as an opportunity to question guiding imperatives and co-imagine more sustainable and just ways of living.

CREATING PROSPECTS FOR A BETTER LIFE

Investments in skills development and job creation empower citizens to define their own space within the city's transition. For the majority of Urban Transitions Alliance cities, the creation of a diversified employment landscape goes hand in hand with increased job quality and the provision of career education opportunities – taking into account diverse skill sets across the digital divide and other demographic differences. Needs for education and training usually vary in different communities, and these differences need to be taken into account when designing support measures that strengthen the value of education in different communities, equalize learning opportunities and increase social mobility. Thus, close cooperation with employers, schools and universities are essential to develop tailored education and re-training programs. To be even more effective, these interventions need to be addressed comprehensively throughout the education system with a cradle-to-career approach.

PROVIDING SOCIAL PROTECTION AND ANTICIPATING FUTURE STRESSORS

A fundamental aspect of safeguarding social transition progress is the anticipation of future social challenges and the creation of a safety net for those who fell behind during the transition. Schemes to provide social protection from hardships such as unemployment, disability, accidents, illness, old-age poverty and needs for care provide a base line for systemic social resilience as a foundation for social progress. Partnering with civil society organizations, trade unions and foundations can lead to more comprehensive strategies that cover diverse individual needs and may open the door to new funding and delivery models that increase the cities' social protection capacity. Social resilience also requires foresight and anticipation of future challenges, such as the aging of the urban population, value loss of specific skill sets for the future local economy or changes in family and household structures. Using research cooperation on demographic and economic trends and awareness on the future of work, some Urban Transitions Alliance cities are able to implement forward-thinking policies for future transition challenges.

ENSURING BALTIMORE'S VOICES ARE HEARD

Placing equity at the core of its sustainability efforts, the City of Baltimore applies distinct ways to ensure that different voices across the city are heard. Developed to inform Baltimore's 2018 Sustainability Plan update, the "Every Story Counts" campaign has sparked a city-wide conversation about developing a sustainable and resilient future. Stories from residents were collected and shared, especially focusing on the inclusion of those voices that have been marginalized or negatively impacted by the city's transition. Additionally, 125 sustainability ambassadors were engaged to interview their neighbors on challenges and ideas for their communities. The city supports the process with equity training, funding and evaluation measures. Through their stories and statements, the citizens' concerns and visions directly influence Baltimore's transition policies.

SOCIAL TRANSITION

ESSEN'S TRANSITION FROM GREY MOUSE TO GREEN CAPITAL

The city of Essen has long outgrown its legacy image as a "grey mouse", referring to the industrial pollution that used to characterize the city. The city's ambitious and ongoing environmental cleanup and restoration has recently been rewarded with the title of European Green Capital 2017. Throughout the 2017 year, 453 projects and events engaged residents and visitors in Essen's transition to a green and livable city. Public funding for citizen-led projects successfully enables communities to take ownership of their city and shape their own vision of a sustainable future. The industrial legacy remains a core element of Essen's identity, allowing citizens to take pride both in their past and in their city's transition achievements. A tangible example is the Zollverein: The former coal mine was redeveloped into a museum, park and cultural hub in a socially and environmentally sustainable way. Today, it attracts investment and boosts local job opportunities while increasing biodiversity and natural green spaces.

INSPIRING ENGAGEMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES IN BUFFALO

Buffalo's Willert Park neighborhood had suffered from long lasting disinvestment and high poverty rates. The city's "green streets" revitalization project has combined citizen engagement with education and career information. Community meetings held with residents, block clubs, neighborhood council members and churches sparked the idea to bring green infrastructure in the form of rain gardens to two community centers. The gardens were realized in the "Water Worx" summer school: Kindergarten and school children have been educated to execute the design and layout themselves and they were also introduced to sustainability related career opportunities. "Water Worx" shows a true holistic approach: The environmental benefits are augmented by increased community ownership and career inspiration opportunities.