

# Narratives in Sustainability Transformations

## Case Study: Your Balkony Network

### Project Description

“Your Balkony Network – Energy Creates Community” is a transition experiment conducted as part of the real-world lab “District Future – Urban Lab”<sup>1</sup> at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), in which a heterogenous group of 22 households in Karlsruhe was provided with free balcony solar modules. The experiment addresses a key challenge in the implementation of a more just energy transition: Energy transition is currently (still) mainly male, technically focused and academic, while participation in it is favoured by time and ownership (Radtke & Drewing 2020; Sovacool et al. 2022). This results in an underrepresentation in the involvement of different citizen groups, e.g. women, citizens without an academic degree, low-income communities and citizens with migrant backgrounds (Bögel et al. 2023).

To support more inclusive settings in the energy transition that are open for all, the experiment is embedded in the social psychological identity theory and the Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM) (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2011). The CIIM describes an approach to uniting people with different social identities under a common umbrella identity, with the goal of uniting previously separated and, in some cases, divided groups. Within the experiment this was pursued by various means.

For one, the sample deliberately included participants of underrepresented groups of the energy transition, especially women, tenants (instead of homeowners) and non-academics - all with very different motivations to participate: from a high interest in sustainability, to technology enthusiasm and motivation for financial gain. As a result of this diverse spectrum of participants, several different social groups came together within the project.

To unite these various groups, the goal within the first year, was for the participants to test the balcony modules together and to build a common group identity, by supporting and learning from each other and by developing further common goals (Bögel et al. 2023).

This process was supported by five group workshops within the first year, in which participants got to know each other and worked in small groups. Using a variety of interactive formats, they allowed personal experiences to be shared to facilitate group building. These workshops were particularly important for building a common identity among the participants. In addition, the group was accompanied by an online forum and individual counselling during the process.

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver Parodi, Marius Albiez, Sarah Meyer-Soylu, Colette Waitz. 2016. “District Future – Urban Lab”. A real urban transition lab (Hg.). In: Albiez et al. (Eds.), *Designing Sustainable Urban Futures*, KIT Scientific Publishing, Karlsruhe. <https://books.openedition.org/ksp/4183>.

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Looking back at the first year of the project, empirical research confirms that both a shared group identity and common goals were built up. Participants confirmed that they had developed a strong sense of belonging within the group, despite coming from very different backgrounds. Furthermore, a role change has taken place: in relation to group identity, participants feel encouraged to engage in energy transition and that they can make a difference (Trenks & Bögel, under review).

As a result, 20 of the 22 households are participating in the second round of the research project and are still meeting on a regular basis to exchange information on their balcony modules, as well as private endeavours (Interview Helena Trenks).

### Tasks

1. Read the following article:
  - Bögel, P.M.; Trenks, H.; Upham, P.; Sauter, H.; Albiez, M.; Stelzer, V.; Laborgne, P. (2023): Diversifying power in action: A socio-psychological approach to inclusive energy transition experiments, *Energy Research & Social Science*, 100, 103070, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2023.103070>.
  - OR (if you are low on time): Blog entry, Paula Bögel: Gemeinschaft schafft Energie – Energie schafft Gemeinschaft (Community creates energy - energy creates community), <https://www.paulaboegel.de/gemeinschaft-schafft-energie-energie-schafft-gemeinschaft/> (German)
2. Answer the following questions:
  - Which narratives are used in order to apply the CIIM in the transition experiment?
  - Identify Master- and Counter narratives in the energy transition which are challenged or applied within this case study.

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### Further Information

#### Read...

- Augenstein, K.; Bögel, P.M.; Levin-Keitel, M.; Trenks, H. (2022): Wie entfalten Reallabore Wirkung für die Transformation? Eine *Embedded Agency Perspective* zur Analyse von Wirkmechanismen in Reallaboren, *GAIA – Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society*, 31(4), 207-214, <https://doi.org/10.14512/gaia.31.4.4>.

#### Browse...

- Webpage, Dialog Energie: Dein BalkonNetz – Energie schafft Gemeinschaft (Your BalkonyNetwork – Energy Creates Community)
  - <https://www.dialog-energie.de/formate/realexperimente/dein-balkonnetz> (German)
- Webpage, Quartier Zukunft: Dein Balkonnetz – Energie schafft Gemeinschaft (Your BalkonyNetwork – Energy Creates Community)
  - <https://www.quartierzukunft.de/forschung/dein-balkonnetz/> (German)

#### Listen...

- Podcast Episode, Labor Zukunft: Warum Reallabore inklusiv sein müssen
  - <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1pQ8WDO6NlmB9h7jBxaG29?si=bd982bcb486d4344&nd=1>
  - 22min, German
- Podcast Episode, Labor Zukunft: Diversifying Power – revisited
  - Inclusive energy transition
  - <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1GeDCw4LzHpdCdZMgzXftF?si=2bd3970638a348a4&nd=1>
  - 25min, German

#### Watch...

- Presentation, ITAS: Beyond Technology: Von der Idee zum Realexperiment - Dein BalkonNetz
  - Introduction of the project, underlying theories, and initial research results
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsP15qH\\_0d0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsP15qH_0d0)
  - 45min, German, subtitle translation available
- Video, ITAS: Dein BalkonNetz (Your BalkonyNetwork):
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkVWb6\\_Bpjl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkVWb6_Bpjl)
  - 4min, German, subtitle translation available

## Narratives in Sustainability Transformations

### Case Study: Your Balkony Network

- Video, KIT: Balkonmodul – Solarenergie zu Hause (Balkony Module – Solar Energy at Home):
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6zMzB\\_0uqU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6zMzB_0uqU)
  - 7min, German, subtitle translation available
- Presentation, ITAS, Marius Albiez: Saubere und bezahlbare Energie – für alle? | Themenabend technik.kontrovers ([#Energiewende](#))
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jabs7sAwka0>
  - 18min, 34:30-52:30
  - German, subtitle translation available

#### Act...

- How to Get a Balkony Solar Module (informational videos & lottery)
  - <https://www.duh.de/balkonkraftwerke/> (German)
- Introduction to Plug-In Solar or Plug-PV
  - <https://balkon.solar/news/2022/12/11/introduction-to-plug-in-solar-or-plug-pv/>