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TOMORROW

STADTMANNHEIM<sup>3</sup>



# Securing food systems via multilevel cooperation

**Strengthening municipal capacities to regenerate  
biosystems between cities and their regions**

**Documentation of the 10x100 Cities Lab at the European Forum Alpbach 2023**

# Contributors of the 10x100 Cities Lab @EFA23



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The 10x100 cities lab was convened by Peter Kurz, former mayor of the City of Mannheim & chair of the Global Parliament of Mayors, Caroline Paulick-Thiel, director at Politics for Tomorrow, Indy Johar, mission holder at Dark Matter Labs and Winfried Kneip, board member of the European Forum Alpbach as well as co-founder of Love Politics.

Thanks to the personal dedication of our colleagues Mirta Surlina (European Forum Alpbach), Jennifer Jiang, Henrike Artl, Dr. Philip Hector, Blasius Walch (Politics for Tomorrow), Aleksander Nowak, Gurden Batra (Dark Matter Labs), Florian Schwendinger (former European Commission / Love Politics) in cooperation with Judith Geiser, Frida Brett-Smith (City of Mannheim), Claus Peinemann, Kristine Clev (Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar), the lab concept was turned into a remarkable experience.

This discussion paper is based on our exchange and insights generated during the 10x100 Cities Lab during the European Forum Alpbach in August 2023 with contributions from (in alphabetical order):

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This paper synthesises collaborative workshop results and aims to translate them into a conceptual framework. It uses a rather technical language and does not include examples for prompting further exploration. This initial version is meant to invite diverse stakeholders to refine and discuss further how the transformation of cities and their bioregion can be locally empowered. The ideas presented are preliminary, ready for constructive criticism and valuable input that furthers their improvement.

**Concept:** Caroline Paulick-Thiel, Indy Johar, Peter Kurz

**Authors:** Caroline Paulick-Thiel, Indy Johar, Aleksander Nowak, and all lab participants

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Berlin & London, February 2024

# Adaptation Context for Terrestrial Food Systems

## The interconnected nature of the polycrisis

- Interlinked challenges: Environmental, social, economic with consequences of interconnectedness: climate change → resource scarcity → social inequalities
- Biodiversity loss and highly volatile weather extremes (jet stream)
- Need for (bio)systemic approaches due to structural problems

## The optimisation of industrial food systems as a security risk

- Contributors and victims of the crisis: Industrial agriculture  
→ Climate change, loss of biodiversity, land use conflicts, soil erosion, water pollution
- Food system at the centre of conflicting goals between health, justice, sustainability and resilience: urgent need for comprehensive transformation in terms of production, distribution, consumption, waste management
- Shared responsibility and cooperation as key elements for change

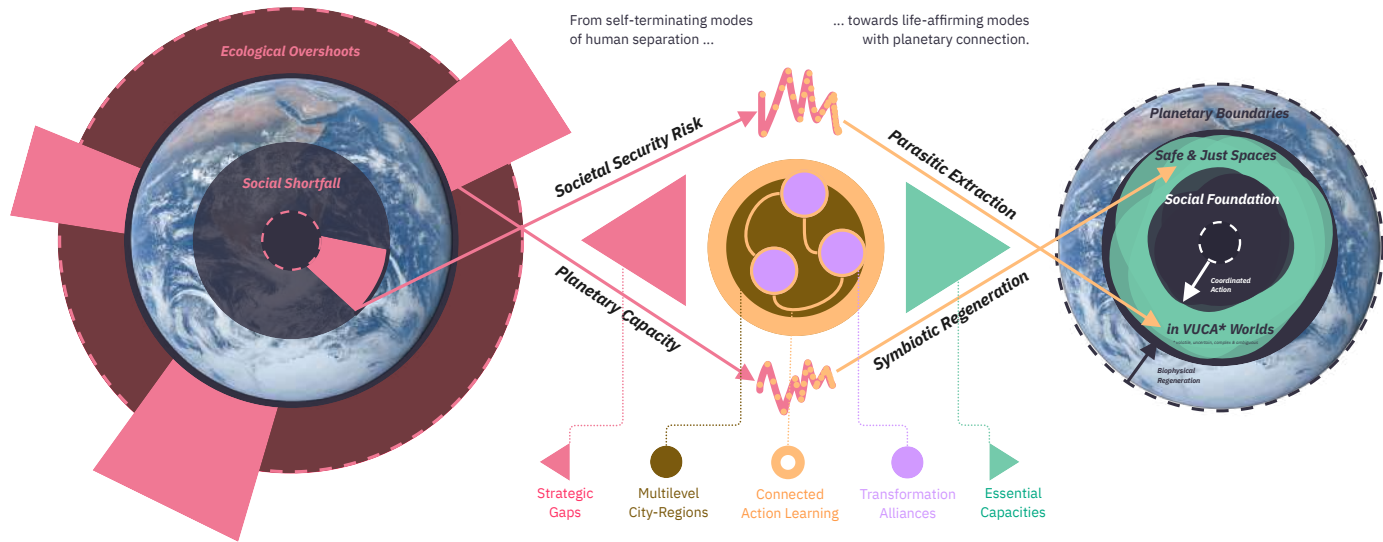
## Europe-wide farmer protests as a sign of systemic decline

- Due to lacking transformation, especially small farms face low product prices, high costs, and financial instability
- Environmental and regulatory challenges: struggle with burdensome bureaucracy without adequate support → scaling back important ecological regulation instead of securing longterm production conditions
- Market domination of few large corporations → damaging profit distribution and reduced bargaining power for farmers

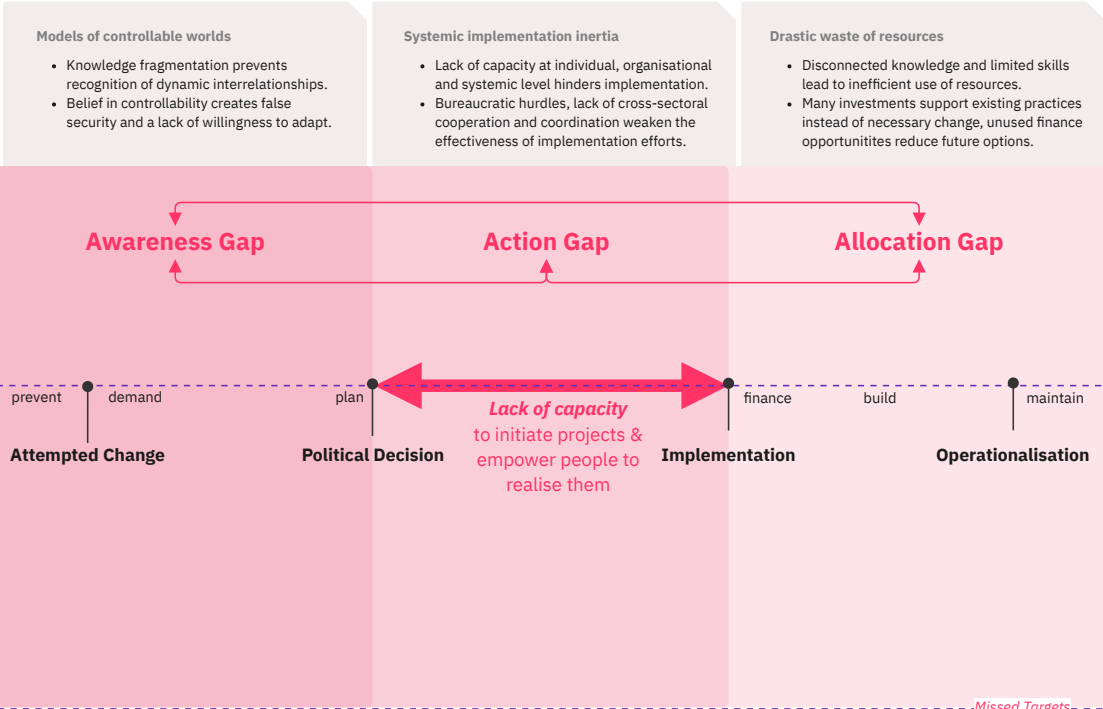
## The role of cities and their regions for the transition

- Cities and regions as drivers of innovation in (bio)systemic contexts
- Prosumer real-world laboratories for new food systems e.g. Local Green Deal
- Linking global and local action e.g. green industry clusters
- Urban-rural dynamics and participatory multi-level governance as an opportunity for a "major upgrade" and corresponding decision-making processes

# Planetary Boundaries and Strategic Framing



# Strategic Gaps for Implementing Urgent Change



**European & National Level**

*Lack of institutional urgency for accelerating local implementation*

- Examples:
- Local Green Deal
  - Climate-Neutral & Smart Cities

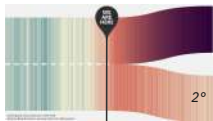
**Cities & their Bioregions**

*Lack of resources & people to implement measures or restructure responsibilities*

**Local Transformation Gap**

**Local Communities**

# Essential Capacities for Moving at Speed and Scale



Symbiotic outcomes

## Acknowledging biophysical limits

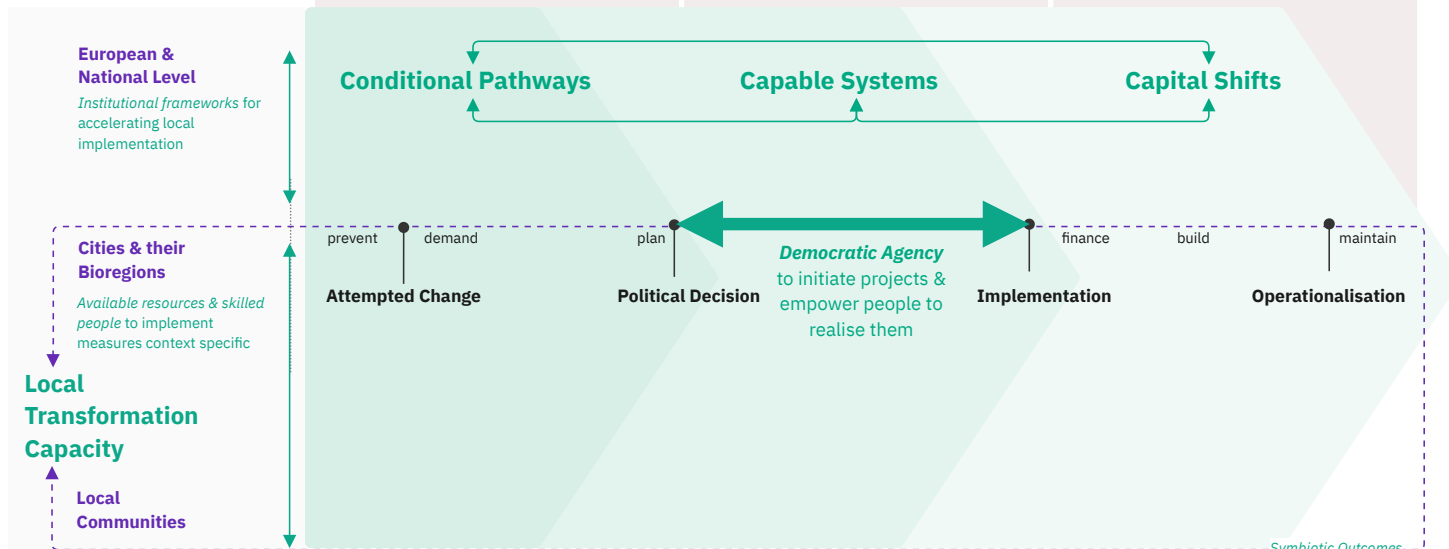
- Systemic transformation requires massive, well-coordinated capital investment.
- Address misalignments in capital allocation through cross-sectoral investments.

## Increasing systemic capabilities

- Collaborate across systems to accelerate transformative decision-making.
- Build "democratic talent" through learning governance and regulation at nexus of carbon budgets, labour shortages, mineral deficits etc.

## Coordination of multi-capital shifts

- Facilitate phasing out of practices that are no longer valid, introduce new ones in parallel.
- Develop new financial mechanism and institutions that incorporate short- and long-term biophysical limits in all decisions.



Conditional Pathways

Capable Systems

Capital Shifts

# Hard trends as serious conditions for the transformation of food systems

1

We are hitting the biophysical limits of modern food production and could hit 'peak food' within one generation;

2

Our current food production systems are actively destroying the very resource base upon which they rely, so that the Earth's capacity to produce food is going down, not up;

3

The majority of our food production and all its storage and distribution is critically dependent upon fossil fuels, not only making our food supply vulnerable to price and supply instability, but also presenting us with an impossible choice between food security and reducing greenhouse gas emissions;

4

Climate change is already negatively impacting our food supply and will do so with increasing intensity as the Earth continues to warm and weather destabilises, further eroding our ability to produce food;

5

Despite these limits, we are locked into a trajectory of increasing food demand that cannot easily be reversed;

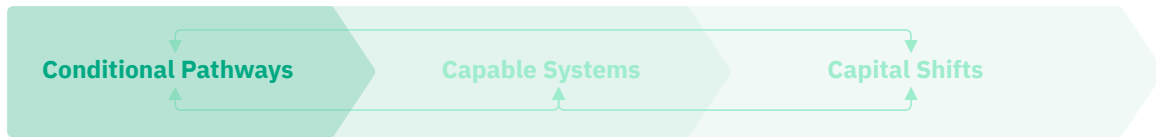
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The prioritisation of economic efficiency and profit in world trade has undermined food sovereignty and the resilience of food production at multiple scales, making both production and distribution highly vulnerable to disruptive shocks.

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## Logics for approaching bold regulation with accessible narratives

### Duty vs. Choice

In the past, food industries increased societal divisions, leading to debates about lifestyle and choice. Transitioning away from destructive practices is not merely a choice but a fundamental duty. Related responsibilities cannot stay optional but have to be taken serious and prioritised for communal collective well-being.

e.g. obligatory food system resilience plans at city levels and mandatory sustainability reporting underscore the necessity for a deliberate effort in this duty-driven transition. The contrast between voluntary carbon offset markets and mandatory carbon reduction further emphasises the commitment required for lasting change.

### Radical Honesty

Moving from acceptable honesty to radical honesty is imperative for fearlessly acknowledging problems, transparently communicating urgency, and advocating for an empathic transformation that includes various scientific and indigenous evidence – as well as addressing what people feel, fear and hope for.

e.g. during the pandemic, some politicians communicated openly about uncertainties, changing constellations or facts based on science and measurable results. Short-term interventions and volatile situations were communicated regularly with explanations why and what is being done, asking civil society for help and cooperation if necessary.

### Planetary 'We'

The concept of "We & Planetary We" represents a departure from conventional jurisdictional boundaries. As long as considering external effects is politically unrewarding, all plans and strategies should be extended beyond municipal borders in order to foster collaboration across jurisdictions, areas and sectors.

e.g. a broader perspective promotes ecological awareness and encourages actions and policies that benefit planet Earth and therefore humanity as a whole. [Place-based Data Portraits](#) are a tool for connecting the needs of all people within the means of the living planet, especially when taking 'silent groups' and more-than-human-citizens into account.

### Mutual Winning

Shifting the logic of 'winners and losers' to one of 'mutual winning' is based on acknowledging that as humans, we are at a deep structural revolution of our relationship to the planet, to each other, to ourselves, and to the future. Food has the ability to make this philosophical transformation very tangible.

e.g. The book "[Being Salmon, Being Human](#): Encountering the Wild in Us and Us in the Wild" analyses our linked destinies. Martin Luther King argued "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in single garment of destiny." And the term UBUNTU – I am, because we are – describes the deep interdependence of 'me' and 'other'.

Conditional Pathways

Capable Systems

Capital Shifts

## Political framing for transformative measures

### Support for politicians

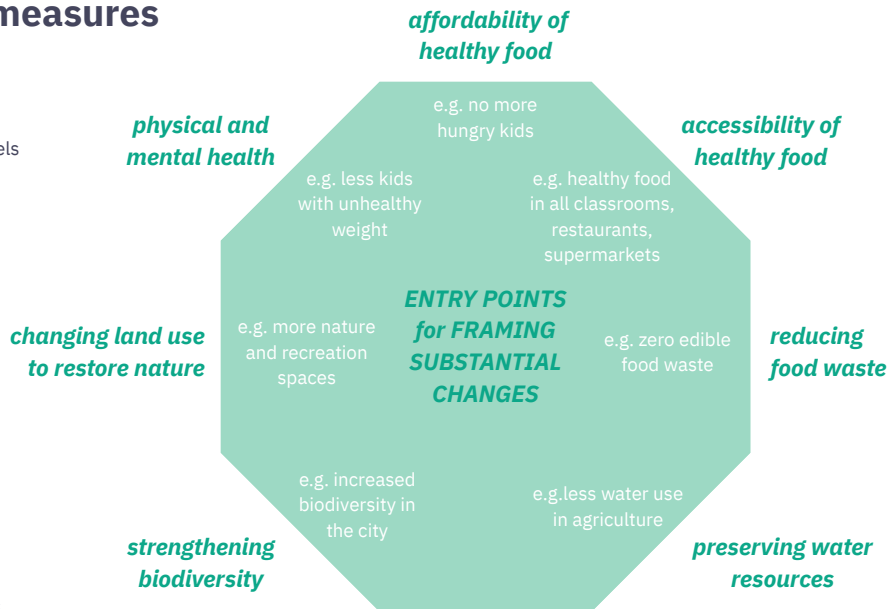
- Providing starting points for politicians to address urgent changes in the food system e.g. mirroring the Local Green Deal at different political levels
- Strategic framing of system change.
- Advocating for wide-ranging support.

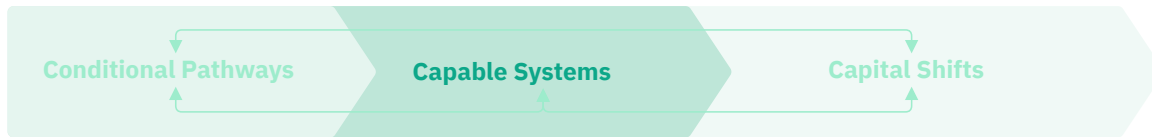
### Dealing with trade-offs

- Substantive change involves trade-offs.
- Phasing out vs. introducing existing routines.
- Addressing people's concerns and fears.
- Clarifying the limits of populist approaches.

### Discourse leadership through clarity

- Empowering politicians through clear, accessible narratives.
- Mandate for mayors to lead change.
- Effective collaboration with farmers and civil society e.g. producer-consumer dialogues MRN
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders.
- Promote a holistic network approach.
- Aligning health with ecological regeneration.
- Emphasise coordinated change at policy, narrative and regulatory levels.





## Levers for increasing the capability of social systems in VUCA\* environments

\* volatile, uncertain, complex & ambiguous

### Thorough analysis and commitment

- Allocate resources to thoroughly understand the problem and its context.
- Commit to problem identification and definition.
- Ensure that initial plans are consistent with the evolving understanding of the problem.

### Adaptability and flexibility

- Dynamic response to unpredictable conditions.
- Dealing with uncertainty and rapid change.
- Overcoming fear and uncertainty.

### Strategic governance and mandates

- Secure a mandate for change or claim it through consensus building and innovative approaches such as "Humble Governance".
- Use inclusive and participatory methods to take responsibility, clarify responsibilities.
- Combination of regulatory and institutional learning.

### Time management and future anticipation

- Utilise time as a critical resource.
- Flexibilise time frames and responsiveness.
- Develop the ability to anticipate and assess ripple effects, unintended consequences.
- Adapt resource and capacity planning to emergent goals and factor in regular learning.

### Effective communication and engagement

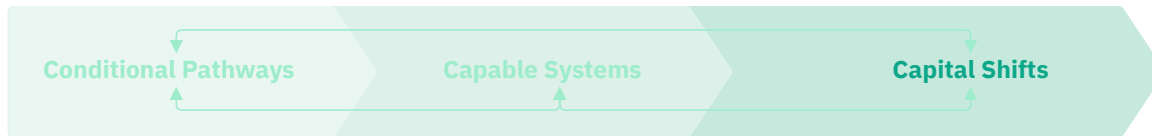
- Invite conversations and build networks with stakeholders e.g. network meetings or exhibitions
- Emphasise personal interaction e.g. site visits
- Generate opportunities and promote understanding.

### Opportunity-seeking and self-reflection

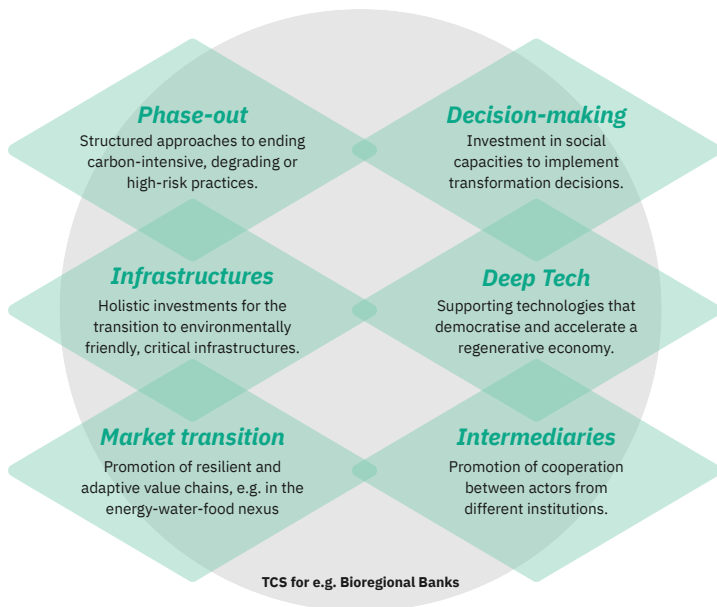
- Promote a proactive approach in the system.
- Continuous improvement through self-reflection and the search for opportunities.
- Actively seek opportunities and reflect on actions to improve results.
- Training to increase nutritional competence.

### Strategic sense-making and alignment

- Recognising windows of opportunity and aligning stakeholder strategies with common missions.
- Responding to changing scenarios or assumptions.
- System capability to create meaning in a dynamic environment.



## Components for "Transformative Capital Stacks" (TCS)



## Challenges of urban financing

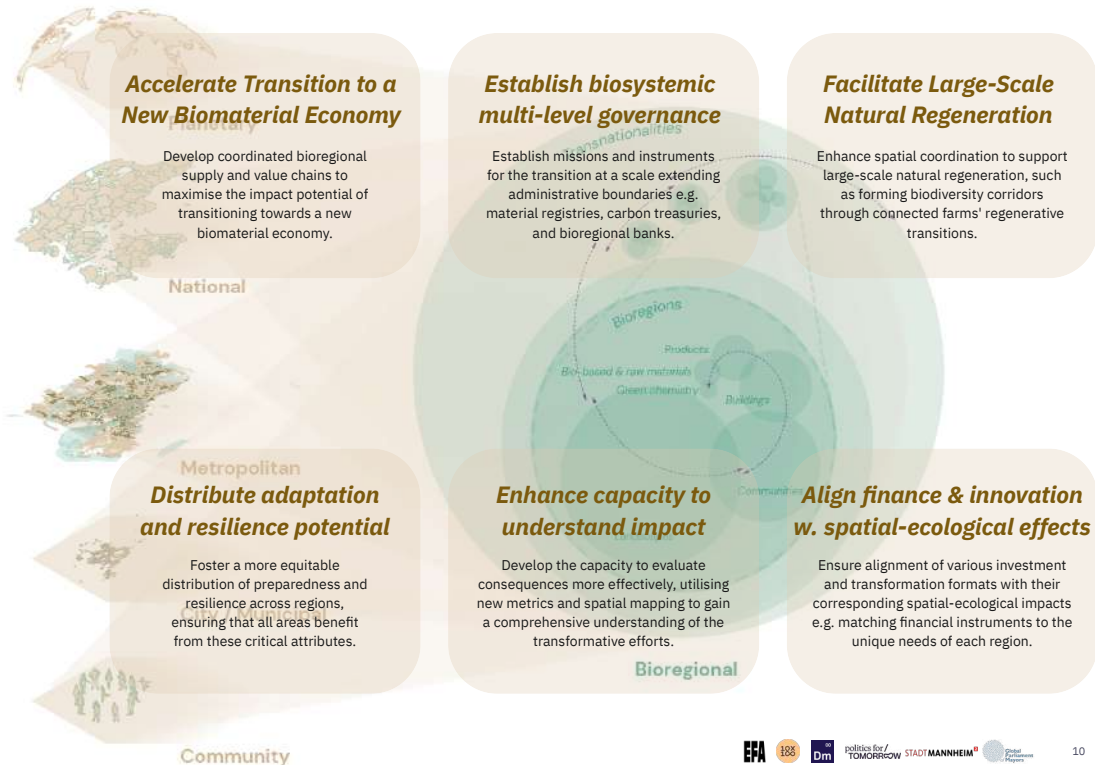
- City budgets face bottlenecks in the financing of transformation infrastructure, e.g. funding gaps in climate protection action plans
- Investments in the necessary infrastructure, e.g. electrification of lorries for transporting food, require considerable funding.

## Targeted financing strategies

- Transformation of food systems in urban-bioregions requires targeted financing strategies and innovative bundles of capital, e.g. local-regional budgets
- Development of a financial portfolio that includes various key components e.g. incentives through start-up/partial financing, e.g. balcony solar power plant, premium for replacing old electrical appliances

# Multilevel Governance across City-Bioregions

- **Biophysical Demand Recognition:** Effective nutrient, water, and energy management requires acknowledging biophysical demands.
- **Bioregional Extension:** Bioregions in Europe typically extend beyond urban political boundaries, suggesting a need for a new governance scale.
- **City-Bioregion Proposal:** City-bioregions proposed as a solution to bridge extensive bioregions with limited municipal boundaries.
- **Mismatch Challenge:** The city-bioregional level reveals a significant mismatch between natural systems and departmentalised institutions.
- **Governance Misalignment:** Current governance systems are misaligned with city-bioregional landscape needs, leading to predictable conflicts that must be managed.
- **Multi-Level Governance:** A multi-level and multi-term governance approach is necessary, capable of addressing immediate emergencies and long-term challenges like ecosystem health.
- **Resilience and Connection:** A city-bioregional approach aims to enhance resilience in urban and rural areas and redefine socio-cultural connections to support thriving communities.



# Transformative Implementation Alliances

@EFA24 the 10x100 lab will convene stakeholders from three different citybioregions to amplify multi-level alliance building

## Joint responses to overarching challenges

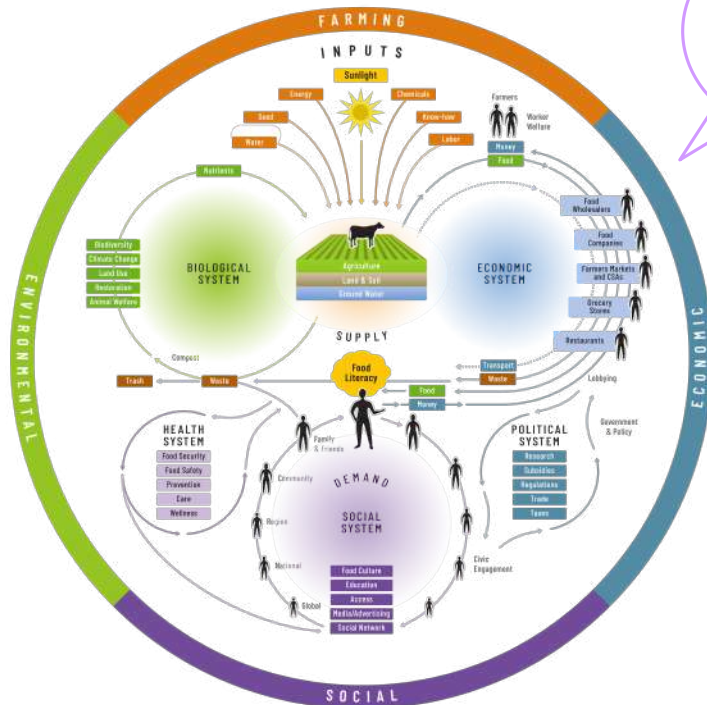
- Establishment of an action-orientated process
- Tests in specific areas of transformation
- Knowledge exchange with other cities in the network (e.g. Local Green Deal as an implementation initiator)

## Pilot projects for system change processes

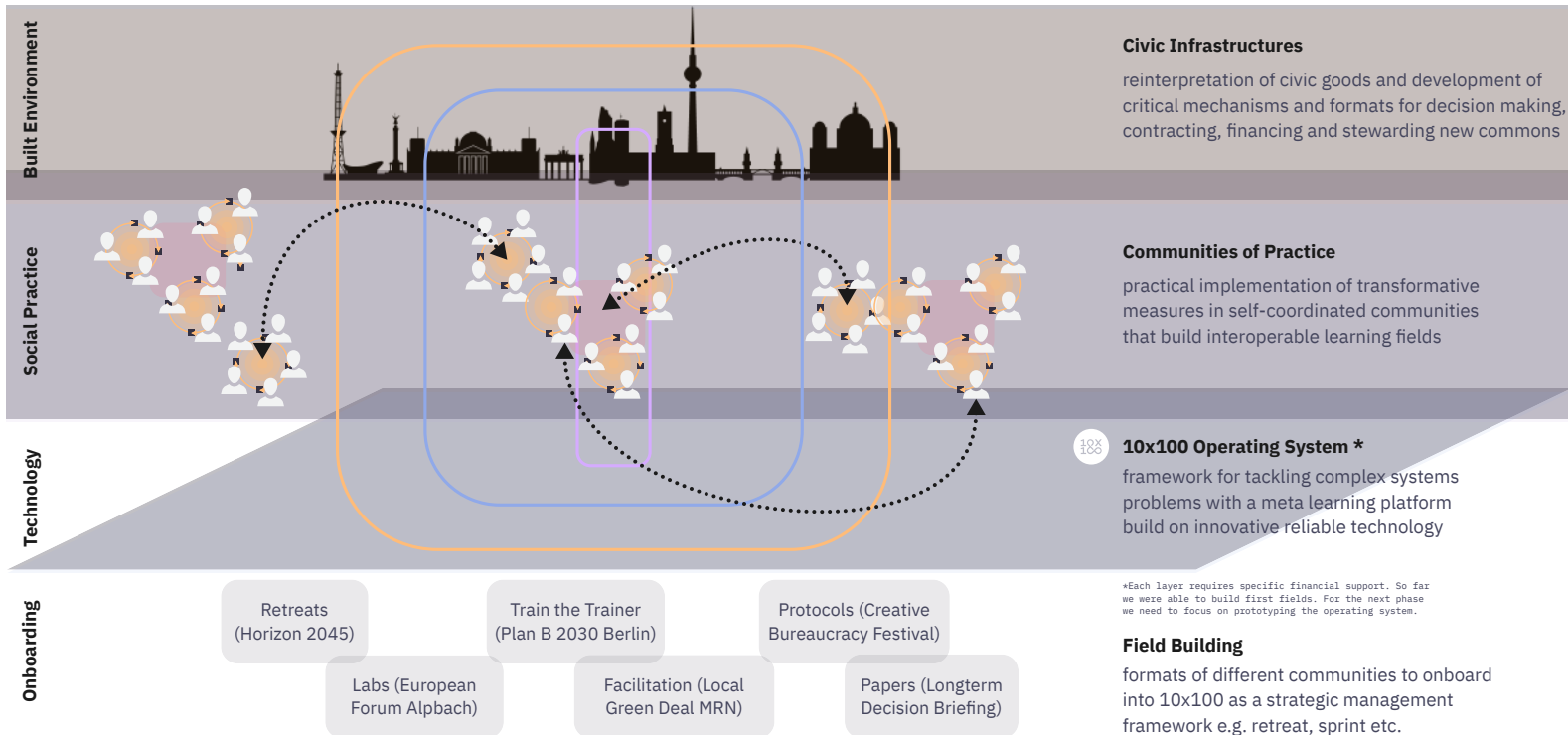
- Implementation in networked transformation areas
- Focus on resilient and regenerative infrastructures
- Multi-level governance models for public-civic commons (public-civic commoning)

## Removing barriers and adapting structures

- Identification of structural and bureaucratic obstacles
- Development of adaptive regulatory and strategic processes
- Acceleration of solutions through e.g. regulatory real-world laboratories, special authorisations, transformation funds



# Networked Learning & Action Cycles



# Staking the European Green Deal

## EU Missions in Horizon Europe

- **Adaptation to Climate Change:** ca. 150 climate resilient European regions by 2030
- **Cancer:** improve the lives of more than 3 million people by 2030 to live longer and better
- **Restore our Ocean and Waters** by 2030
- **100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities 2030**
- **A Soil Deal for Europe:** 100 living labs towards healthy soils by 2030

## Priorities of the Commission

Missions are a novelty of the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme for 2021-2027 to support priorities like the [European Green Deal](#), [Europe fit for the Digital Age](#), [Beating Cancer](#), [New European Bauhaus](#)

- e.g. Mission Climate is a concrete element of the new [Climate Adaptation Strategy](#).
- Mission Cancer of the Europe's [Beating Cancer Plan](#)
- Mission Soil is a flagship initiative of the [Long-Term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas](#)

## Accelerated Depletion

World behind on almost every policy required to cut carbon emissions, increase biodiversity and planetary health

## Status Quo Optimisation

Resources and labour occupied by stabilising efforts instead of connecting disaster response to transformative innovation by design

## Technological Fixes

Path dependencies through industrial misconception of technologies that extract more biomaterial than they regenerate

## Strategic Gaps

### Awareness Gap

- Reliance on outdated "stable world models" that ignore complex interdependencies.
- False sense of controlled manageability leads to inadequate preparation.
- Lack of urgency to adapt to dynamic real-world conditions.

### Action Gap

- Decision-making impaired by insufficient individual, organisational and systemic capabilities.
- Bureaucratic inefficiencies, conflicting priorities and a lack of cross-sector collaboration hinder systemic responses.
- Uncoordinated actions lead to ineffective and potentially harmful outcomes.

### Allocation Gap

- Misallocation of resources and capital due to disconnected knowledge and skills.
- Investments in ineffective solutions maintain the status quo and prevent transformative change.
- Missed investment opportunities to address uncertain and volatile futures.

## Essential Capacities

### Conditional Pathways

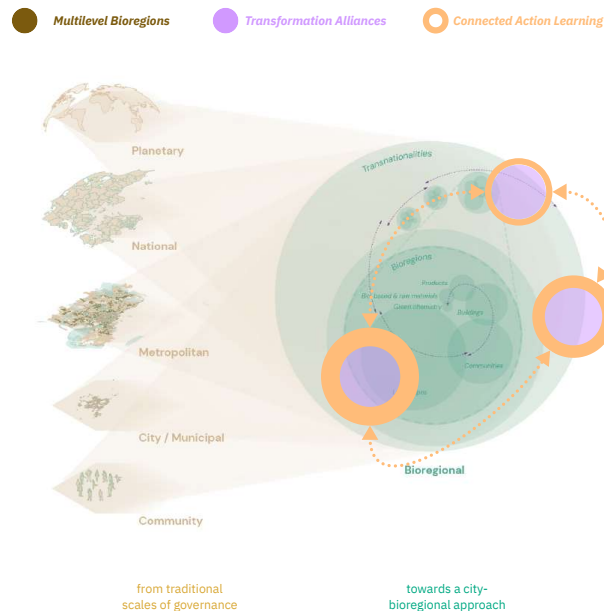
- Systemic responses recognise short and long-term limits.
- Change agents actively work with biophysical constraints such as national carbon budgets, labour shortages, mineral deficits and environmental degradation from climate change to effectively transform the status quo.

### Capable Systems

- Accelerating the implementation of transformative decisions requires the ability of different systems to work together across planned intervention portfolios.
- Building this "democratic muscle" relies on learning management and regulation to facilitate parallel exit and entry processes.

### Capital Shifts

- Systemic transformation requires not only massive amounts of capital, but above all the coordination of investments across different sectors to address the current misalignment in capital allocation.
- Innovative financial institutions, targeted financing and new fund typologies can act as bridges to a new status quo.



**Missions, policies & current strategies ... are not addressing ... therefore ... are needed to transform lived realities at scale & speed.**



# Securing Viable Food Futures: 10x100 Lab @EFA24

Europe is confronted with a comprehensive structural gap across multiple layers – legal, financial, data, and political – that hinders our ability to effectively address the transition to a more sustainable or regenerative operational model. This "full stack structural gap" requires us to develop essential capabilities to align different systems in the next decisive years.

In this paper, we have initiated discussions focusing on the food sector to identify and address the institutional and structural deficiencies hindering the urgent transition in the food economy. Our approach has been to pinpoint these gaps, understanding that possible answers have broader implications.

The gained insights are not limited to the food sector alone but are also relevant to the more extensive transition we are experiencing, viewed through a localised, place-based perspective.

In outlining the next steps for our initiative, we've identified four key components:

- invite an **alliance between political and civic leaders**, fostering a new everyday politics of change, demanding novel behaviours and collaborative public-civic leadership partnerships.
- design the **institutional frameworks for effective public-civic partnerships**, determining the best institutional arrangements and practices to shape the daily dynamics of politics.
- partner with three **pilot cities for establishing transformation alliances** in specific areas i.e. food transition in Zurich and Mannheim, or potentially Linz or Berlin.
- conduct a **comprehensive analysis of strategic gaps and essential capabilities**, examining the requirements for transformative public-civic partnership, institutional frameworks, data infrastructures, and financial systems.

In 2022, 10x100 was able to validate the idea of more coordinated approach for large-scale transformations at scale, scope and speed. In 2023, we understood that mayors have a mandate to enable multi-actor alliances for bridging capacity gaps and realising change on the ground. In 2024, political and civic leaders could be part of designing a service that connects different levels of government to support their local transformation initiatives (Communal Transformation Interface).

**Area:** Deepening the knowledge on food system transformation through facets of financing, governing and democratising this tangible topic.

**Focus:** Localising the food system transformation within city-bioregions across Germany, Switzerland and Austria prototyping a Transformation Portal & Service with legal implications.

**People:** Political and civic leaders from city-bioregions as well as state, national and EU level of govt, communal insurers, farmers and civic networks e.g. Mannheim, Zürich, Linz a.o.



This document has been developed based on the inputs, conversations, divergences and dialogic intelligences across and between many excellent people. If you would like to join the conversation, please reach out to: [Caroline Paulick-Thiel, cpt@politicsfortomorrow.de](mailto:Caroline.Paulick-Thiel@cpt@politicsfortomorrow.de) and [Indy Johar, indy@darkmatterlabs.org](mailto:Indy.Johar@darkmatterlabs.org)