

NIDO/KSI Appendix E - Evaluation and Monitoring Project (EMP)

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1. Introduction

NIDO was set up as a 'learning organization.' This manifests itself in the approach that shaped the core task: knowledge of the realization of transitions is generated based on experiences with active encouragement of 'leaps towards sustainability' in actual practice. Furthermore it manifests itself in the method of working that is used: the various leap projects are based on a continuous interaction with public and private parties. The program and process managers are given quite a free hand indeed. The interactive working method and the enormous diversity in program design have turned NIDO into an testing ground for knowledge development on system innovation and transition management. Thirdly, the learning aspect of the organization manifests itself in the structural attention to systematic reflection on an individual's own experiences with transition management. In the ICES/2 period, the Evaluation and Monitoring Project (EMP) was set up in view of the feeling that reflection on one's own activities was needed.

The EMP started in October 2001 and will last for 5 years. During this period, NIDO's activities will not only be monitored on line, but can also be evaluated in retrospect. The EMP was set up, based on the experience gained by the Political Science Department of the University of Amsterdam and on the theoretical insights concerning transformation processes on the interface between social and technological development, which was developed there.¹ The so-called 'leap projects' of NIDO are projects that focus on transformation processes based on a striving for sustainable development. Applied² on the NIDO projects, this approach will lead to the following presentation of the question:

What is the course of the definition and the execution of NIDO programs and their leap projects; how do programs and/or projects relate to theoretical and methodological insights (based on practical experience elsewhere) where managing transitions is concerned; and what can be learned from these projects when it comes to the actual realization of leaps towards sustainable development?

The presentation of this question puts the focus in monitoring and evaluation of the recording of the gained experience in transition management and its related reflection.³ Aside from scientific reflection, the EMP also aims at the effectuation of reflection on part of the NIDO employees from a managerial point of view.

This double aim will be achieved via two routes within the EMP, which are formed parallel to each other, i.e. an evaluation route, and an advisory route, each of which with its own product. These products are a publication (book) in which NIDO's experiences form the empirical basis for a discussion about transition management and system innovation from a political managerial

¹ Within the Political Science Department (University of Amsterdam) the EMP is embedded in the research program *Rethinking Politics – democratic governance*. At the focus are new knowledge practices (like NIDO), which try to contribute to social innovation next to, and instead of, the traditional political institutions.

² See Grin (2001) *Springend leren springen; lerend springen leren*, for a justification of setup and presentation of the question. Research proposition for the NIDO evaluation project.

³ Measuring project progress and monitoring spending means are outside the scope of the EMP.

point of view, and a so-called Practical Guidebook, which opens up the NIDO approach regarding transition management for third parties respectively.

Although both projects result in separate products, the evaluation assessment and the advisory activities are closely connected. In order to stay close to the NIDO practice, and to do justice to the diversity in program design and approach method of the themes selected by NIDO, the researches are not deducting their advice directly and unequivocally from the findings of the evaluation. Instead, the researchers are using a method of advice to assist NIDO staff members in i) making learning experiences of program and process managers in setting up and carrying out NIDO programs available to others within NIDO, and furthermore in ii) stimulating program and process managers to reflect on their own actions.

The idea of interaction between the research and advisory route was inspired by the nature of the subject (transition management) and based on the “constructivistic” approach of evaluation⁴ (cf. Guba & Lincoln, 1989) as elaborated by Loeber (to be published in 2003; see also Loeber, 1998) for issues on ‘sustainable development’. The relationship between the subject of evaluation and the methodical approach (learning histories approach) in the EMP will be further amplified in paragraph 3, along with a discussion of planned activities within the scope of the project. EMP's method, which results from the methodical approach that was opted for, will be discussed in paragraph 2, along with the description of the products so far.

2. EMP-1 Products

The EMP has started by conducting a case research, namely the program ‘From Financial to Sustainable Profit’ (FDR). The program aims at initiating and supporting transformation processes within the business community and it focuses on establishing a link between shareholders’ and stakeholders’ values. The program consists of two leap projects. The research was conducted by Loeber based on document analysis, interviews and participating observation during meetings that were set up as part of the leap projects. The study resulted in two substantive products with regard to the FDR program:

- Casusbeschrijving Programma ‘Van Financieel naar Duurzaam Rendement.’ Ervaringen en lessen, University of Amsterdam, internal working paper, June, 2002.
- Learning processes at group level. First and second order reflection among participants in the NIDO program ‘From Financial to Sustainable Profit.’ In: J. Cramer, From Financial to sustainable profit (preliminary title) Greenleaf Publications. To be published in 2003.

The latter paper is a contribution, in the form of a chapter in the book, to the final product of the FDR program.

Aside from these substantive products, the conclusions of the pilot case study were used in the advisory route. Loeber and Grin presented previous versions of the former product at various theme meetings of the NIDO staff members. During these meetings a systematic reflection took place on the experiences and lessons that could be drawn from the entire body of NIDO programs based on the order of points of interest Loeber made in her analysis. This way the objectives from the advisory route were shaped during the first phase of the EMP (in this case: encouragement of mutual exchange and reflection on one’s own actions by NIDO employees). A total of four meetings were convened with regard to the number of different categories of points of interest.

⁴ The constructivistic approach of evaluation is based on the hermeneutical and epistemological tradition in scientific research. Characteristic of it is the idea that reality cannot be perceived objectively, but can only be seen “through the eye of the beholder.” The observer and what is observed are inseparable. Logically this has consequences for the research method.

This joint reflection resulted in an ex-ante evaluation of the NIDO approach:

- Practices of transition management: NIDO's approach to encouraging change towards a more sustainable society. Paper presented at the International Workshop "Transition to Sustainability through System Innovation", University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands, July 4-6, 2002. With John Grin, Colette Alma and Jacqueline Cramer.

Moreover, a further orientation was carried out regarding the literature relevant to transition management from a macro sociological and political perspective as part of the evaluation route. This resulted in, among other things, a first product in order to realize the scientific objective of the EMP;

- The search for new institutional arrangements to deal with the Risk Society: NIDO's experiment in facilitating the implementation of 'corporate social responsibility.' Paper accepted for presentation at the annual Joint Sessions Conference of the European Centre for Political Research, Edinburgh, UK, March, 28 - April 2, 2003.

Aside from these four products, which each contribute to the realization of the objectives of both the evaluation and advisory route in the EMP, the pilot (case-study FDR) resulted in the intended format for the evaluation of the NIDO activities in the next phase of the project:

- Thema's en kernperspectieven: een 'viewmaster' voor NIDO verhalen. Proposition for a further elaboration of the evaluation and advisory route; resulting in a Practical Guidebook for the 'NIDO approach.' University of Amsterdam, internal working paper, September / November 2002.

In this product the 'ordering principle' is set out according to which the evaluation activities are leading towards the intended final product (a Practical Guidebook for transition management based on NIDO's learning experiences; "The NIDO approach"). The developed system is a so-called 'search design (heuristics) and results from what has been researched (the case study and the reflection as a result of it from the other programs) in relationship to the theoretical insights in transition management and interactive 'multi-actor' processes as they were developed and tested by the supervisors of the EMP. The experiences and insights gained by the executors during the monitoring of such processes in practice were also used.⁵

The 'search design' is the basis for further information collection and arranging for the purpose of the evaluation, and for structuring the discussion on NIDO activities and learning experiences in the further course of the advisory route. The system arranges the information on various activities in the NIDO programs based on four perspectives: *i*) identifying and defining the central problem, *ii*) defining the system involved, *iii*) safeguarding ambitions, and *iv*) shifting the generated dynamics (compare the afore-mentioned competences 2-5 in paragraph 3.4.2). A perspective is understood to be the rationale for carrying out certain activities by a NIDO program manager or process manager.⁶ Aside from the program objective with regard to content that is linked to the various perspectives, each activity also serves a more generic interest. This interest

⁵ Grin was one of the executives in the Rathenau project regarding sustainable crop protection (GIDEON), which was evaluated by Loeber in the scope of her thesis (1999-a; to be published in 2003). Insights from this and based on the evaluation of DTO programs (Loeber, 1997, 1999-b; Aarts, 1997 a,b) as well as the supervision of projects regarding sustainable development and system innovation –as an advisor Grin was, among other things, involved in the GAVE project (NOVEM), the program Nieuwe Veehouderijsystemen (ID-Lelystad) and a project on multiple use of space (Habiforum)– can be found in, among other things, a post academic course where Grin and Loeber (and others) supervise professionals in defining project in the fields of sustainable development (see Grin et al. 1997; Grin & Loeber, 2000; Geldof et al. 2000, and others).

⁶ The *four core perspectives* correspond more or less with the different phases in the elaboration of programs that can be distinguished in the NIDO setup. Arranging various activities according to the rationale *why* these are being developed instead of the moment in time *on which* they are undertaken has the advantage that a linear succession or the logic of a 'step-by-step plan' is assumed.

consists of developing the identity and competences of the program and, thus, of NIDO as an organization. The search design distinguishes various strategic functions: i) positioning NIDO and/or a program, ii) formulating the 'added value of NIDO and/or the program, iii) creating knowledge with regard to the program design (object knowledge) as well as the organization of program related networks and the exploration and utilization of learning ability within (process knowledge), and iv) developing strength by means of mobilizing human resources and means, and the embedment and transfer of insights generated by the program.

If set off against each other, the afore mentioned perspectives and strategic functions form a lattice that, as it were, is spread 'across' the experiences gained from the NIDO programs. The result of it is that the gained learning experiences in transition management are presented in an overview of lessons and necessary competences according to subject, rather than an account on NIDO experiences in a narrative sequence.

The search design, as based on the pilot case, gives direction to the further elaboration of both the evaluation as advisory route. The execution of this phase of the EMP has already begun.

3. Notes, elaboration and intended EMP-2 products

The 'step-by-step' elaboration of the EMP, whereby the results from previous research (the pilot case) are the basis for further lay-out of the process of data collection and (joint) reflection is, as has already been mentioned, based on a "constructivistic" approach of evaluation. A distinctive feature, compared to the more traditional evaluation approaches, of this approach is that it does not put the vision of the evaluator at the center of the design of the evaluation research, and the focus is not on testing of what has been researched by a preset format that was set up alongside.

There are two reasons why such an evaluation is the appropriate form for NIDO. The first reason is related to the subject of NIDO's core business. Initiating "leaps towards sustainability" is a relative new area. Despite the many attempts, in the past and elsewhere, to flesh out the concept of sustainable development, there is no blue print for transition managers who can use this as a tool for measuring NIDO's experiences and performances. The second reason in this context stems from the approach NIDO uses. The NIDO programs are designed as a search for possibilities for system innovation, in which a multitude of parties gradually shape the concept of 'sustainable development' into its specific context. That is why the programs have an emergent design at their basis. An evaluation, which assumes a standardized process course and preset objectives, does not do justice to the specific nature of what has been researched and, moreover, misses the essence: understanding of how learning takes place during the process by the program management and the involved parties in the given situation, and how what has been learned affects the program setup and one's own actions.

The elaboration of constructivistic research the EMP uses is based on the method of Fourth Generation Evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) in combination with the Learning histories approach, which was developed by MIT's Center for Organizational Learning (Kleiner & Roth, 1997). Both methods make the insight that there are several visions on reality, which can indisputably be called "true", into their starting point of how to collect data. A difference between the two is that in the first method the observations of the researcher form the basis for arranging the results (the so-called etic view) and in the second approach these are the observations of the persons involved (de emic view)⁷. A combination of both views leads to the above mentioned

⁷ The concepts "emic" and "etic" were developed by the linguist Kenneth Pike in 1954 (*Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*. 2nd ed. 1967, The Hague: Mouton) to express the difference between the analysis of a speech act in terms of the speaker's own culture and inner logic (the *emic* interpretation, derived from the Greek concept *phonemica*), and the descriptive explanation of that speech act in

evaluation method, which is appropriate for the objectives of the EMP, and results in an accessible final product.⁸

During the ICES/2 period, three 'steps' in the evaluation and advisory route will be completed: the pilot case study, the development of the 'search design', and the drawing up of the 'learning histories' for the 7 NIDO programs, which started in the period 2000-2002. The results from this last activity will be reported as of 1 January 2004.

The academic reflection in this period is intended to bring both the 'NIDO approach' and the evaluation process in view. This will result in two articles and an outline for integrated scientific publication (in English), on the subject of 'Transition management in the Netherlands. The NIDO experience', at the end of this period.

Both product types will be the starting point for a follow up on the project in the ICES/3 period. Due to the 'step-by-step' approach of the EMP, which has been developed during the first project period, the extraction of relevant knowledge and competences from experiences within NIDO during the next phase can take place much more efficiently than the usual (and at first anticipated) approach of comparative case study. In the EMP-2, the different PPDO programs, and no longer two cases, are the sources for the intended products that will be illustrated below. This broadening compared with the previously anticipated approach in the EMP was made possible because of the development of the structured framework (the search design) during the first project period and makes it thus possible to discuss several programs in the evaluation within the agreed period of time.

Even in this EMP-2, the activities regarding research (evaluation; scientific deepening) and reflection (advice; joint reflection with NIDO employees) take turns in a reiterating and interactive evaluation process. During this period, the data collected in the EMP-1 will be elaborated into the following products:

Intended product: CD-ROM

Because of the amount of information and its complexity, the NIDO material is very suitable for a presentation on a CD ROM. In this form, the various parts of the text can be presented to the reader/user in a well-organized way. Based on the system, as mentioned in paragraph 2, the CD ROM is divided into the following parts:

Level 1: Page with an overview of the various elements from the NIDO approach (the above mentioned search design as lattice of perspectives with regard to strategic functions) as hyperlinks, and accompanying informative text. The hyperlinks give access to:

the light of the logic of the observer (the *etic* interpretation, derived from *phonetica*). In the sixties, the anthropologist, Marvin Harris, introduced the *emic/etic* concept in social sciences, whereupon it was used in numerous social scientific materials for various purposes. As a rule, and here, the concept is used to make a difference between the "outsider view" of the researcher, and the "insider view" of those who are involved in the case that is being researched.

⁸ A learning organization operates as context for a collection of learning individuals, and generates, thus, a kaleidoscope of stories. The *learning histories* approach glues them together to the collective story of the organization. A process of joint reflection results in findings that transcend the specific and the individual. By presenting these findings from the embedment in the context of the individual story, the conclusions are also imitable (and possibly (understandable) for third parties, who operate from a different background and context, and, thus, usable in their own situation. A drawback of this approach is that the focus is so much on promoting reflection on one's own actions that this is at the expense of the attention to the material final result. Instead of the described 'history' in a document of 50 to 150 pages, as meant in MIT's approach, the intended product (CD-ROM) is better suitable in the light of the EMP objective. This requires a more tightly structured approach, as realized when working with a search design that is based on empiricism and is theoretically informed.

Level 2: The lessons from the NIDO programs presented in short and informative terms. This 'layer' of information is the actual Practical Guidebook. A difference can be made between

- level 2a: Nuts & Bolts of transition management. At this level learning experiences and lessons that were learned by NIDO researcher and staff jointly during the EMP-1, are being opened up in the form of 'how-to-do' advice, supplemented with insights that arise in the ICES/3 period.
- level 2b: Scientifically reflected insights with regard to transition management. At this level there is room for a concise elaboration of the lessons that can be learned from scientific studies during the ICES/3 period in NIDO/KSI connection in different areas with references to further literature.

From these lessons a link is made to the program descriptions the advice is based upon, in other words, to:

Level 3: The 'learning histories' from the NIDO programs. The information from the final report of the EMP-1 is made available in digital form. It is done in such a way that the user of the CD ROM can place the lessons and the advice from level 2 within the context in which they have been formulated. In doing so, he/she has the opportunity to translate the generally formulated recommendations into the circumstances and aspects of his/her own project based on his/her own background. The learning histories are anecdotal descriptions in which process knowledge and object knowledge are brought together, accompanied by a short, informative paragraph that contains the most elementary information on the NIDO program concerned (subject; objective; duration, etc.). Additional information can be obtained by clicking through to:

Level 4: The NIDO library:

- Level 4a) Relevant project documents. At this level various NIDO documents can be added to the CD ROM and, if needed, selected on relevancy for the Practical Guidebook depending on capacity.
- Level 4b) the 'NIDO toolkit.' Various programs are using diverse methods and techniques. Some of these have been developed elsewhere and are sometimes adjusted or further developed. Others arise from the insights and previous work of the program and process managers themselves. An overview of such methods and techniques is a valuable addition to the Practical Guidebook. These 'tools' are described in brief. See relevant sources (literature/internet) for further information.

Target group: The CD-ROM (in Dutch) wants to provide persons and organizations (government, knowledge institutions, consultancy agencies, intermediary organizations), which make it their task to promote sustainable development in a certain field, with practical information on process management in order to perform this task and to give them an overview of the necessary competences and to provide access to relevant sources.

As in the EMP-1 also in this phase interaction and joint reflection on the NIDO activities and competences are at the center. The 'development process' of this product and the consequential instigated reflection on the individual's own actions is an adjacent goal of the project and as valuable as the final product itself. The target group of this process is i) the process and program managers who are responsible for the NIDO programs, which started in 2000-2003 (reflection on one's own actions), and ii) designers and executors of projects that will start in the ICES/3 period (knowledge transfer and 'transferred learning').

Apart from learning lessons through realizing 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (cf. Argyris, 1990; Schön, 1983) with the NIDO staff, the EMP wants to learn lessons from the NIDO experiences by connecting the method of working in the programs with their effect and with theoretical and methodological insights regarding projects to stimulate sustainable development. A start has been made in the EMP-1. The results of it have been laid down in two articles. In this period, the presentation of the question and the theoretical framework have been formulated

regarding an scientific reflection in which the intentions and experiences of NIDO with transition management are being discussed from a political administrative point of view.

Intended product: scientific publication

The central line of approach in the study is the tension that, on the one hand, arises from the deficit of the traditional, institutionalized politics in steering society (capacity deficit, legitimacy deficit; the phenomenon of 'sub-politics', enhanced by the tendency of the government to take a step back). On the other hand there is a wish to come to a 'sustainable development'. The latter requires a coherent reorientation of social actions and structure, with the need to avert or prevent (social and environmental) risks and negative side effects of modernization. Such a drastic reorientation would assume a 'strong' government (through regulatory top-down steering). When there is a lack of it or resistance against it, it is desirable to look for alternatives to put transitions towards sustainable development in motion.

A familiar problem when developing such alternatives is that concrete programs and projects that are intended to make the concept of sustainable development operational run the risk to be encapsulated in the existing institutional context (see also, among others, Fischer & Hajer, 1999). Such a 'reinforcement' of what already exists must be avoided and prevented in order to come to sustainable development. For that purpose 'system transformations' are needed that transcend the project level. The necessary changes do not only involve the object of the program (e.g. in the field of water management), but also the way we think about this object and deal with it in various networks and existing institutional arrangements. The study asks the question whether, in the light of the outlined theoretical background⁹, NIDO offers an alternative for existing institutional arrangements and in what way and to what extent a breakthrough has occurred towards 'leaps to sustainability' in the existing way of thinking and acting in the different fields NIDO covers in its programs as a result of its activities.

The study focuses on i) 'the NIDO approach' as expressed in the various programs (see the above described interactive aspect of EMP-2 for the method of study) and furthermore in the coordinating, 'NIDO wide' features (sources: interviews, document analysis), and ii) on how NIDO activities affect one or more fields the organization is active in. The central question is whether NIDO has realized an environment in which the intended system innovation can be developed in such a way that the intended reorientation in the way of thinking and acting actually takes place, and how it takes place. Methods of research are source analysis and semi structured interviews, on which basis the theory of acting of the involved actors are being reconstructed, as well as the institutional context in which they operate. Thirdly, the relationship between both aspects is elucidated to provide an answer to the question to what extent the involved NIDO program has contributed to 'reflection-on-action' on part of the participants and to the creation of preconditions for the actors involved to act according to new insights, if any.

Target group: the publication (in English) is intended to inform an international audience on recent insights in the field of system innovation and transition management in the Netherlands on the basis of NIDO's experiences. The publication and the underlying study contribute to the research program cluster Rethinking Politics – democratic governance by the Political Science

⁹ The supposition is that a 'social reorientation' requires a reorientation of various occupational groups according to their professional practice, as cause of and effect on a (knowledge infra-) structural change towards a sustainable development. On actor level, from an interpretative approach, such a reorientation on the professional practice is seen as a matter of learning (cf. Schön, 1983), in other words, as a modification of the theory of acting of an actor (cf. Grin en Van de Graaf, 1996). On structural level such a reorientation is seen as a modification of the dynamic context or the preconditions that lead to the acting of the involved actors in (cf. Giddens, 1984).

Department of the Amsterdamse School voor Sociaal Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek. As such it is embedded in the whole of research projects into 'political knowledge practices for the purpose of social innovation'. With regard to theory development and the generation of methodical knowledge regarding design practices, a close cooperation is established with David Law (MIT, on frame reflective policy analysis and related aspects) and with Ulrich Beck (Munich, on reflexive modernizing; cf. Beck, 1992, Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1997) in this connection. Aside from that, there is a regular intellectual exchange with representatives of European institutions for technology assessment (cf. Van Est et al., 2002; Hoppe & Grin, 2000). Furthermore, the results of this research are spread among professionals through post academic education with regard to sustainable development, which is offered under responsibility of Grin for the benefit of industry, knowledge institutions and governmental authorities.

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