AGENDA FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE DECADE

20
30

ENERGY**CITIES**

AGENDA FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE DECADE

20
30

After decades shaping energy and climate policies for a decentralised, democratic and decarbonised energy system, the next steps for cities is to transform their entire metabolism with a climate-neutral approach. Building resilient communities means fostering interdependence between sectors, between territories, between economic, social and cultural players and city leaders in order to share wealth and well-being at the local scale.

VISION

Our vision is that, by 2050, we will all be living in decarbonised and resilient cities with access to affordable, secure and sustainable energy. We strive to deliver LIVING SPACES that are accessible to everyone, through vibrant local economies and maximising resource regeneration.

Over the last decade, we have seen the rise of environmental and economic concerns, hand in hand with escalating social tensions. A new generation of urban policy-making has leveraged cities' ability to self-organise. Increased citizen participation in local policy design and the booming of local transition initiatives in many sectors have re-shaped the way local leaders act, defined new "alliances" and new alternative models of cooperation that are rooted in the social fabric. New business models lead to flourishing new alternative economies built around networks and resilience structures that are embedded and connected to local ecosystems. They involve new socio-economic models based on more participative and closed-loop processes, short circuit supply chains and redefined links between citizens and their local environment.

MISSION: EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO DECIDE ON THEIR OWN FUTURE

Energy Cities is a learning community for cities engaged in future proofing their economies, built around a "local & sustainable first" approach. Our members are diverse cities. There are no conditions to join other than the ambition and the commitment to share experiences. Our strength lies in our members' strong commitment to reach climate neutrality in their territories by 2050 and to align their local strategic development with the Paris Agreement.

Building a learning community is a tool that helps each of our members feel more confident in their own transition journey, because other cities have done it before, or because cities can test new solutions together. We foster an atmosphere of mutual trust in the dialogue between citizens, local leaders and EU & national institutions in order to accelerate the transformation towards a climate-neutral Europe. Energy Cities will energise and ensure the visibility of its vibrant community.

We will write
our stories
together, not
just tell them.

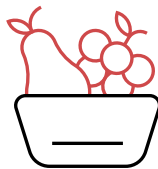# "INTERDEPENDENCE" IN PRACTICE: DEFINING ENERGY CITIES PRIORITY "SYSTEMS"

In the 2020s, empowering local players, optimising resource utilisation and not overextending our planet's resources requires using a democratic process for decision-making on **resource systems.**

We focus our work on four main resources based (sub-)systems, which are essential to the thriving of local communities to ensure their well-being and accelerate the transition to climate neutrality. Each (sub-) system has its own purpose and function and is closely interlinked with the Energy and Climate objectives, which is our primary focus and where we have built our expertise and legitimacy over the years. They work in harmony to support the overall purpose of the city system, and interact with external systems through city boundaries.
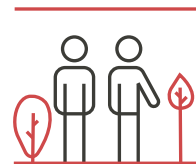
Our 4 (sub-)systems are

Energy systems
renewable, democratic and fair energy systems, from generation to consumption
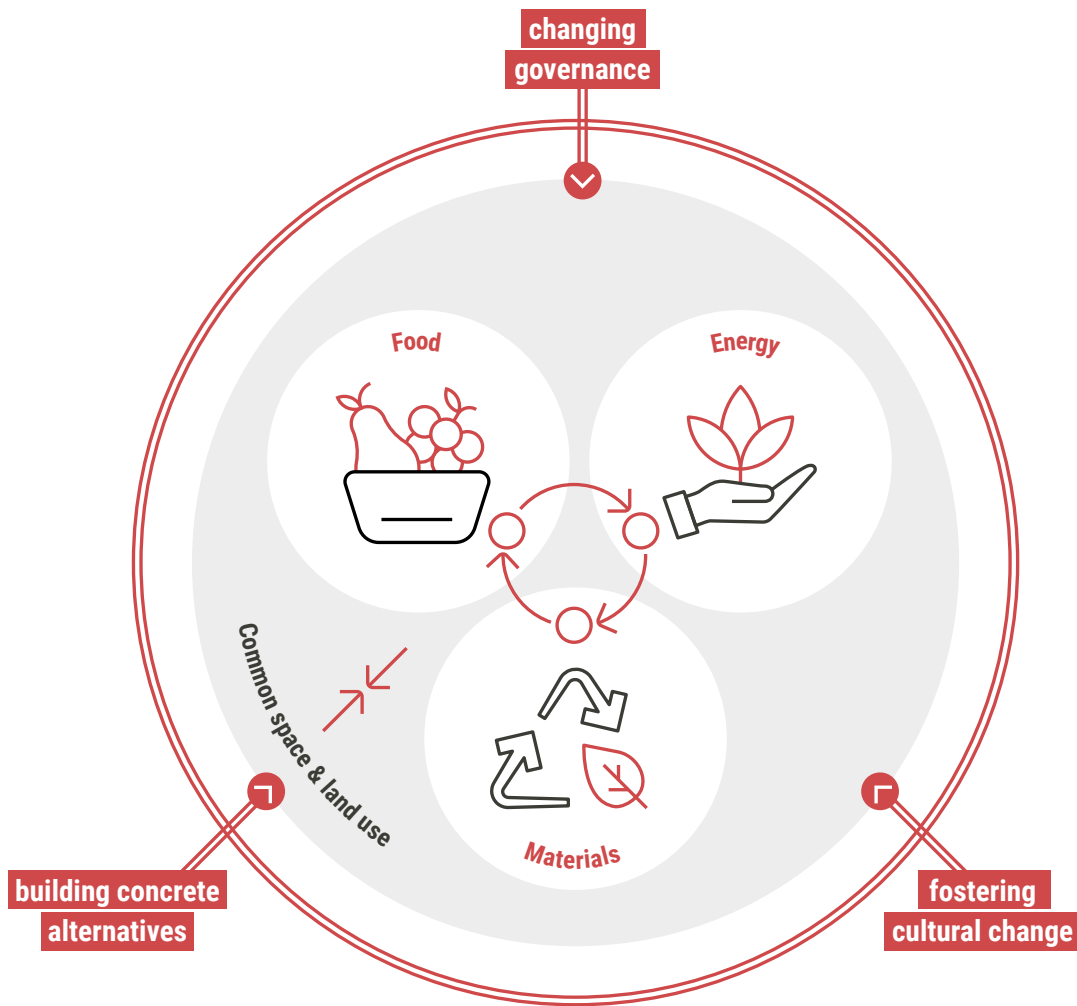
Food systems
sustainable, healthy, fair and local food systems from rooftops or farms to fork, from sea to plate

Materials systems
circular, prosperous and inclusive materials systems, from external to local production, from waste to resources

Shared space systems
beautiful and people-centred shared spaces, from planning and design to use

changing
governance

Food

Energy

Common space & land use

Materials

building concrete
alternatives

fostering
cultural change

Interlinked challenges,
intertwined opportunities,
from negative externalities
to positive internalities.
Acting on these systems
empowers local authorities
to design their own future.

System change levers

Our agenda is built around **three system-change levers** which constitute the foundations for defining an action agenda for cities transformative action.

These levers represent the operational axes where we design actions, create interventions and experiment in each and across the different city (sub-)systems.

✓ **Building concrete alternatives**
Using the circular economy approach to address the intertwined social, democratic and resource crises.

✓ **Changing governance**
Revising economic rules and adapting legal frameworks to best meet the needs of a system transition, at all governance levels: from EU to local.

✓ **Fostering cultural change**
Co-developing solutions with local players and broad mobilisation within local administrations and communities. Building long-term partnerships to nurture new cultural movements.

Rationale

Celebrating our 30th anniversary, taking stock of what we have achieved, on how much the world has changed since our very first action, the time has come to translate our mission of **empowering local communities to decide on their own future** to the current political landscape. Our core mission remains unchanged, but now we should deepen our agenda for wider systemic change.

From energy transition to systemic change

For the first time in history, our well-being and democracy are conditional: we may not even have a future, our resources are finite and our lifestyle model overshoots the Earth's capacity. We have reached the consensus that our economy's sectoral approach is too narrow to address climate change and to rebalance the ecological ceiling under which humanity can thrive.

As echoed in many cities' climate emergency statements, fundamental changes in societal **structures, cultures** and **practices** – transitions – need to happen simultaneously, which requires a **systemic change.**

Cities are the places
where by nature different
transitions happen,
interact, influence and
shape one another.

Looking at wider interactions between sectors with energy to deepen our action

Systems comprise multiple parts of different types, both tangible and intangible. They include people, resources and services, as well as **relationships**, values, routines and policies. **Systems are all around us.** They are embedded in wider systems and include other (sub-) systems that react to each other, which are regulated by the rules of cause-and-effect. The different parts of a system are coherently organised to achieve something – **a function or a purpose.** Applying a systemic approach is about looking at every single action as part of a wider system, and how it may improve the function/purpose of the system.

The first decade of the 2000s was marked by pioneering cities' initial climate and energy action plans. Reaching their objectives for the 2020s simply involved reducing GHG emissions in buildings, transport, and energy sectors. To reach climate neutrality, these sectors are no longer sufficient. A broader, deeper set of actions in all sectors is needed to ensure that no human activity negatively impacts the overarching climate neutrality goal. The energy sector remains the cornerstone.

With this "interdependency charter", Energy Cities is blazing a trail for the new generation of urban strategic planning. While we focus on the most structural sector (energy) fuelling all others, the metabolism of a city needs to be better described in order to identify untapped potentials and where there is an urgent call to action.

In this new decade, there will be no more "one size-fits-all" solutions, instead, we will see differentiated paths and new emerging resources partnerships between players, sectors and territories.

ENERGY CITIES 2021–2022 IMPACT TARGETS

Impact targets are defined to guide our operational work and to ensure our activities are aligned with our mission and vision. Impact targets are "translated" into innovative projects, policy activities and services to members. For the 2021–2022 our impact targets are:

Target 1
To translate the climate neutrality objective into local strategies & foster wide adoption of **science-based targets** and **carbon budgeting** by cities

Target 2
To change the way climate change is perceived, to foster circularity and break silos, thus promoting multi-actor partnerships for **locally based** & **resource-wise** economies (circular and inclusive)

Target 3
To empower citizens and local actors to become real players i**n the energy market and beyond**

Target 4
To considerably increase the production rate of local sustainable energy, through **energy communities** and **fossil-free heat** neighbourhoods

Target 5
To put the *"unspoken, unthought"* **sufficiency** objective at the centre of all debates & foster a dialogue to support policy design with the aim to reduce our consumption needs without compromising a good quality of life for all
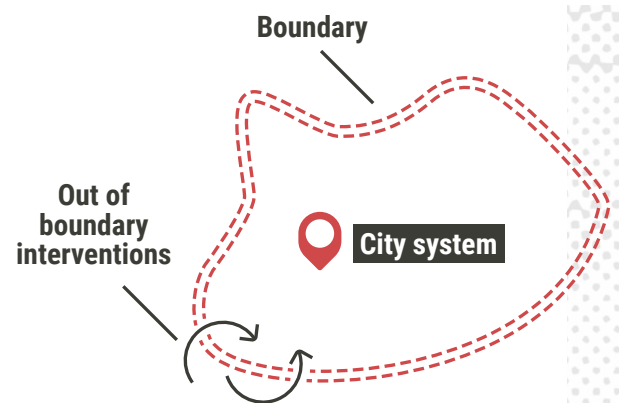
Target 6
To advocate for adequate **EU rules & criteria** into the EU budget for local governance

ENERGY CITIES SYSTEM CHANGE OPERATIONS: PROJECT PRIORITIES

Defining the boundaries of the system

As complex adaptive systems, cities are embedded in broader territorial and economic systems and systems of governance. Understanding this interconnected network is challenging. By setting system boundaries, we define the main system in which we operate. City boundaries can be drawn in many different ways. Working with local governments, our system change agenda applies to administrative-based boundaries, defined by the area delineated for the purpose of local administration. Our system boundaries are depicted with a dotted line along the city administrative borders, to help us remember that our own city system does not operate in isolation from other (city) systems.

Boundary

Out of boundary interventions

City system

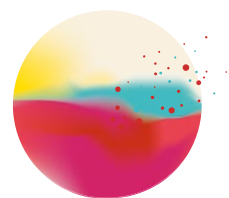## Defining intervention areas for 2021 and 2022

In-boundaries interventions
This intervention area includes the processes, dynamics, tools, new urban functions driving flourishing local econ- omies and accelerating locally anchored transitions. This intervention area mainly focuses on **individual city systems.**

This intervention area includes all our support to cities to: (i) engage citizens, (ii) set-up co-development processes and platforms, (iii) access financing, (iv) increase capacities and skills.

Out-of-boundaries interventions
This intervention area includes the processes, mechanisms and tools needed to translate system change policies and actions across different places and levels. This intervention area focuses on Energy Cities as a **network of city systems.**

This intervention area includes all our activities: (i) to foster **cooperation between cities** for learning and shaping each other's actions by connecting with like-minded cities from other countries and regions, (ii) to strengthen **multi-level governance,** creating favourable policy environments at all levels of governance by fostering policy dialogue and multi-level cooperation.

Energy Cities' mission is to empower cities and citizens to shape and transition to futureproof cities. We showcase concrete alternatives deployed by cities, we advocate to change politic and economic governance at all levels and we foster a wide cultural change leading to a futureproofed society. Energy Cities community is composed by local leaders of thousands of cities in 30 European countries.

BESANCON
2 chemin de Palente
25000 Besancon, France

BRUSSELS
Mundo Madou
Avenue des Arts 7-8
1210 Brussels, Belgium

April 2021

ENERGY**CITIES**

www.energy-cities.eu

🐦 *@energycities*

f *@energycities.eu*