

# Allemaal Winnen



**Martin Bakker & Frank van Empel**

# Allemaal Winnen

Duurzame regionale ontwikkeling (Ecolutie)

# Only Winners

Sustainable regional development (Ecolution)

Proefschrift

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ALLEMAAL WINNEN

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## Summary

The inability in society, and more specific the powerlessness of a regional government, here represented by the Province of Noord-Brabant, to create change and stimulate its' community to join forces and aim at a collective goal for the better of all, sustainable development, led the two authors to write this thesis. After working for ten years with and for the province of Noord Brabant to help to stimulate regional sustainable development, very little has changed. The regional system seems to be unwilling or unable to be effective in changing peoples' behaviour and attitudes. It continues to rely upon worn-out systems, structures and policies. Decision-making continues to follow the old routines.

Regional experimental projects were basically ineffective in opening the minds and operations of the inner, closed sub-cultures, or to adequately create the mental space for innovation. The activities mainly resulted in the production of minutes of meetings, project reports, notes of things to do and good intentions.

What can a regional government, such as the province of Noord-Brabant, do to improve on this business as usual pattern, especially within the context of growing problems such as climate change, increasing income disparity and rising unemployment? This is the central question of this thesis.

Based upon extensive literature research and field experiments, the thesis authors developed ways for integrating theory and practice. This led to the development of a working method, a toolbox and a new conceptual framework that may help the Province of Noord-Brabant and other, similar governmental entities to make more efficient and effective progress in anticipating, preventing and/or in solving the challenges to make the transition to more sustainable societal patterns. These new approaches are presented as follows:

1. **Only Winners** (the goal), is the flawless society, the sustainable society. A community in which people do not try to get ahead at the cost of somebody else, nature, environment or economy, but in which each individual contributes to the extent of his or her ability to the whole and reaps from the whole. It is a world that develops in balance. It is a world comprised only of winners.
2. **The Matrix** (the compass), mirrors the current as well as the desired development of 29 concepts in three phases (*destruction, deconstruction and construction*) and in three problem-solving directions (*behaviour change, technology and decision-making*). The matrix can be understood to be a dynamic route planner. In order to achieve sustainable development, it is necessary for individuals to be more directly involved in the decision-making processes concerning their environment and livelihood and in the issues that touch their personal lives in other ways. The matrix concretises the abstract. Each of the concepts can be applied within the three phases.
3. **Ecolution** is the lost track to 'Only Winners', the highest goal: a flawless society.

To reach such a world, a transition towards a higher level of economic, ecological and social-cultural integration is required. How high? That is unsure. It seems that members of all societies must look for the lost track and seek to follow it. The matrix contains the clues. One could envision that Ecolution is an expedition into the future, in search of behaviours, technologies and governance approaches that will help to ensure that we have a liveable planet for thousands and thousands of years.

4. **Wild** implies the pure, uncultivated, untamed, disordered, free, spontaneous, unaffected, in humans and animals. Sustainable development is not to be constructed, due to the complexity of systems, structures, processes and cultures. One can't possibly oversee the consequences of all intentional or un-intentional interventions in nature or in society. However the only way forward is to learn how to deal with uncertainties, insecurities, complexity and chaos while learning to adapt to changing challenges such as nursing an ecological garden, where space is preserved for the 'wild' in nature. This is a natural process of adapting, bottom up, to a game of power and counter power, which is organic, flexible, dynamic, cyclical and evolving. Everything but mechanical and linear. Straight lines do not exist in nature.
5. **The Toolbox** contains concepts for regional political leaders and their stakeholders that are designed to help them to travel jointly on the Ecolution journey. The concepts in the toolbox are built upon seven criteria to ensure they support Ecolution. The concepts can be changed for new, other concepts provided these meet the seven requirements.
6. **The Ecolution process:** Can one or more of the concepts and tools help societal leaders break through existing situations and help them and their stakeholder to initiate the healing changes that are needed? In this integrated approach, it is important to decide the starting point for interventions. Working with the matrix as a guide can help the societal members to determine their current location on the journey of Ecolution. The searcher thereby obtains feedback, which clarifies, provides the answer to the question in what phase is it now? Is it, for example, as evidenced by the fact that disorder and disorganization of structures, processes, systems and cultures are already occurring? Or is it poised and ready to create space for something new and better in the construction phase?
7. **Deconstruction** is evident when existing systems are being purposefully disordered, in order to create space for innovation on a human scale.
8. **The region** is the appropriate scale for an Ecolution policy.

In practice there is a lot of talking about sustainable development in beautiful places like Rio de Janeiro and Seville, but what is lacking are results on global scale. Politicians may represent citizens in the political arenas, but cannot take over their personal, very own responsibility. In the end only the individual can be held accountable for his or her own acts. The problem

is how to get a substantial group of people behind solutions and make them act on it. If and how individuals form a movement to make a change may be more a question of ethics and morality than of politics.

Exploring, experimenting and up-scaling are the keywords for regional governments to stimulate and underpin the desired changes in their area.

The vision of a community that is capable of creating solutions together is referred to as '*Governance Capacity*.' When a region or municipality has such a capacity and continuously uses and applies it, it is called a '*Joint Effort Society*' (JES). Within such a framework ample space can be created for the Method Holistic Participation and the Mutual Gains Approach as decision-making instruments.

To conclude the research, the complete method is tested and validated in two cases: a. the Brabant Fresh Schools and b. The Brabant House during August 2011.

Overall motto for the proposed way forward:

“Be the Change You Want to See in the World.” Mahatma Gandhi