# GasErop! LEARNING COMMUNITIES TO ACCELERATE THE ENERGY TRANSITION

**Impact Case by Britt Wiefferink and Maaike Endedijk, July 2024**
Contributors: University of Twente, Saxion Hogeschool, ROC van Twente, Hogeschool Windesheim, Alferink Installatietechniek, Brusche Elektrotechniek, De Groot Installatiegroep, Engberink Technische Installaties, Loohuis Installatiegroep, Nijhof Installatietechniek, Pactum Installatietechniek, Van Dam Groep, Winkels Techniek, Stichting ISSO, Stichting Pioneering, Techniek Nederland

## ABSTRACT
GasErop! (2020-2025) is a research project from the University of Twente, Saxion Hogeschool, ROC van Twente, Hogeschool Windesheim, Stichting ISSO, Stichting Pioneering and seven installation companies from the Eastern region of the Netherlands. Based on the needs from the installation sector and academic insights, we have designed, continuously improved, and evaluated a Learning Community (LC) prototype. In these LCs, employees from one installation company but from different functions work together with an expert from a knowledge institution and a facilitator around a shared challenge during a period of 10 weeks. As such, LCs promote working, learning and innovating together with several stakeholders to accelerate the energy transition. The impact generated directly by the actual learning communities (>30) and the resulting (academic and practical) knowledge such as articles, workshops, guidelines, tools, interviews, a website, etc. can be summarized as capacity building impact, technological impact, environmental impact and educational impact.

## DISCUSSION OF THE IMPACT
***Topic.*** GasErop! (Hit the Gas!) is a research project from the University of Twente, Saxion Hogeschool, ROC van Twente, Hogeschool Windesheim, Stichting ISSO, Stichting Pioneering and seven installation companies from the Eastern region of the Netherlands. The project started in 2020 and is running until 2025.

***Uniqueness.*** During the project we set up more than 30 Learning Communities (LCs) with the goal to accelerate the energy transition. A LC is a relatively new but promising concept to describe public-private partnerships between several stakeholders such as companies, governmental institutions, and knowledge institutions, which are aimed at working, learning, and innovating together. The concept has increasingly been used over the past years by Dutch policy agendas (e.g. Human Capital Roadmap[1]) as an umbrella term for various forms of inter-organizational collaboration such as living labs, field labs, and centers of expertise.

In the project, we have worked together intensively with our partners to design a 'LC prototype', based on both the needs from the installation sector and the available academic knowledge, and we have continuously improved the design during several rounds of LCs. As a result, we have built practical experience as well as academic knowledge in order to set the stage for new work-learn arrangements to cope with the grand challenges of today.

***Problem identification.*** Specifically, LCs in the GasErop! Project were targeted at the energy transition which is considered one of the greatest grand challenges that we face as a society. In order to solve this challenge, it is required that all kinds of stakeholders work together towards a sustainable future. Our GasErop! LCs have proven a means to do so.

[1] https://www.topsectoren.nl/human-capital/documenten/kamerstukken/2019/november/12-11-19/roadmap-hc-topsectoren

***Output.*** By setting up and studying over 30 LCs, we have gained a lot of insight into the set-up of an effective LC. Consequently, we have come up with a concrete design and 5 more general design principles for LCs. Our *challenge-based, micro* LCs are designed to bring together 6-8 employees from one company but from different functions and backgrounds, an employee of a knowledge institution (teacher as expert), and a facilitator, to work on a shared challenge regarding the energy transition (therefore: *challenge-based*) during a period of ±10 weeks (therefore: *micro*). As such, learning is situated in participants' daily work (1); learning in the LC has a shared goal but it is intertwined with individual goals (2); learning, working, and innovating is an iterative process and increasingly self-directed (3); learning within the LC is being sustained afterwards by implementation of the learning outcomes (4); and progress is stimulated by a facilitator who provides a positive learning climate (5).

***Impact for who?*** Stakeholders that were directly affected by our research project were partners from the installation industry. Because we set up at least one but oftentimes multiple LC(s) at these installation companies, they were directly enabled to work on a practical challenge that they were facing (e.g. implementation of a new technology, new way of working, etc.) together with partners from knowledge institutions and a facilitator. After each LC, these companies were one step closer towards being sustainable.

Others that benefited from the research project were the knowledge institutions, whose teachers (and students) were invited to participate in the LC. As such, they gained insight in the topics that are currently central in practice, and check whether the knowledge institution has cared for these topics in their current way of teaching. If not, it provides them an opportunity to adapt their teaching (topics and/ or methods).

As such, the impact that was made by the project cannot only be described as environmental, technological, and educational, but mostly it has generated capacity building impact[2], as we have contributed to building the capacities of others to be equipped to deal with challenges in their own context.

## EVIDENCE

Based on our practical and academic insights we have developed several practical tools. Multiple guidelines, among which one for setting up LCs (as a company), one for guiding the LCs (as a facilitator), and one with practical tools that can be used during the LC (for both companies and facilitators). In addition, we have developed a training for facilitators to effectively guide LCs.

We have also generated impact interviews. In these interviews, participants of the LCs elaborate on their experiences within the LC, and how the LCs have exactly benefitted their daily work practices.

The above mentioned evidence can be found on our website:
https://www.utwente.nl/nl/bms/gas-erop/ for everyone to find and use.

Next to that, multiple follow up projects have been identified where our concept of LCs is used as a means to implement new research ideas (NWO KIC Top-Up project) and where the concept will be expanded to include an even more inter-organizational character (Power-Up project).

Finally, we have also been invited to speak about the project on several events, and we have collaborated with partners on providing several workshops. For example, at the Human Capital Festival (2023) in Nijmegen and an online workshop for the NWO Top-Up grant (2023).

[2] BMS position paper on impact, 2024, p.4

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