

CONSENTSUS

CONstruction of ScENarios and exploration of Transition pathways for SUStainable consumption patterns

DURATION OF THE PROJECT

Phase 1: 15/12/2006 – 31/01/2009
Phase 2: 01/02/2009 – 31/01/2011

BUDGET

790.035 €

KEYWORDS

Sustainable consumption, scenario building and analysis, backcasting, transition management

CONTEXT

Internationally, scenarios are being promoted as tools with a lot of potential for thinking about sustainable development policies. Scenarios are plausible, challenging, and relevant sets of stories about how the future might unfold. The goal of developing scenarios is to support more informed and rational decision-making, and its use is typically recommended in situations where complexity, uncertainty, cross-scale and cross-sector interactions, and long-time horizons are the rule. Sustainable development has exactly these kind of characteristics. Within the field of sustainable development policy in Belgium, there have been expressions of interest in explorations of the future. But the use of scenarios as well as the use of new concepts to guide policies towards desired futures – such as the concept of transition management – is largely unknown in Belgian sustainable development policy.

tion, by choosing consumption patterns – one of the most important drivers of development patterns in the industrialised world – as case study for scenarios and transition management.

- to confront the interim and final results of the project with decision-makers (including stakeholders) and a wider public, amongst others through an internet forum and conferences.
- To foster capacity building on the strengths and weaknesses of innovative tools for decision-making in the Belgian scientific community and among decision-makers.

Methodology

During the first two years, the research will concentrate on scenarios for sustainable consumption, while in year 3 and 4 the focus shifts to transition management for sustainable consumption. Apart from literature review and analysis, methodologically, several tasks in the research project use interaction with experts, decision-makers and stakeholders to provide input. E.g. during the second year, a participatory expert process is planned for drafting scenarios, with feedback calculated in, and an open conference to present and discuss draft scenarios. This methodology immediately also provides for dissemination of results to potential user groups. The research on transition management uses similar forms of interaction.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Objectives

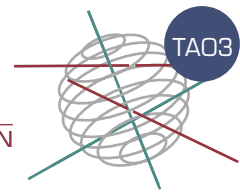
The main objectives of the CONSENTSUS project are:

- to appraise from a scientific point of view the characteristics of scenarios and transition management, amongst others through an analysis from a substantive point of view (what futures do they show us, which driving forces...), a methodological (what methods and tools were used) and a political point of view (what consequences for policy-making).
- to evaluate their usefulness as tools for decision-making, and assess how the Belgian political community welcomes such approaches.
- to develop validated sketches of scenarios and transitions for Belgium in the field of sustainable consumption, relying amongst others on a panel of experts to help develop scenarios; the time horizon, chosen will be 2050.
- contribute to the study of the field of sustainable consumption,

INTERACTION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT PARTNERS

The research teams will cooperate closely in the different tasks of the project. But for organisational purposes, the coordination of the work within the different work packages has been divided among the different teams. For example, IDD will coordinate tasks on the analysis of consumption patterns and lifestyles, and on the modelling of transitions; CDO (UGent) will coordinate work packages on analysis and con-





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struction of scenarios, and on transition paths towards sustainable consumption; IGEAT-CEDD (ULB) will coordinate work on scenario demand and utilization, and on the applicability of transition management in the Belgian policy-making context.

LINK WITH INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Several research groups from different European countries (Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Austria, and Switzerland) have started to exchange knowledge on transitions and system innovations. Others have gained extensive expertise in working with scenarios, e.g. for IPCC scenarios or scenarios for the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The CONSENTSUS research teams aim at linking up with this growing European research in the field of scenario development and transition

management for sustainable development.

EXPECTED RESULTS AND/OR PRODUCTS

Most of the work packages of the project will result in working papers, amongst other things on niches for sustainable consumption, on substantive and methodological analysis of scenarios, on the demand for and expectations of scenarios and transition management in the Belgian policy context. Furthermore, the project aims at developing scenario sketches for sustainable consumption in Belgium, with potential transition paths. Two conferences (on scenarios and on transition paths) are planned. The results of the different work packages should allow for the publication of articles in national and international journals and/or at national and international conferences.

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Follow-up Committee

For the complete and most up-to-date composition of the Follow-up Committee, please consult our Federal Research Actions Database (FEDRA) by visiting <http://www.belspo.be/fedra> or <http://www.belspo.be/ssd>

