

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



Assessing Future Scenarios for Sustainable Lifestyles and Green Economy in Europe

Finalised project

SUMMARY

Objectives of the research

For the past three years, the EU-InnovatE project has investigated the prospects and obstacles for Europe to achieve sustainable lifestyles and a green economy by 2050. This Policy Brief focuses on one of its major empirical research themes, namely: to augment and assess the SPREAD 2050 scenarios through the lens of citizen innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship as potential drivers of systemic change.

Scientific approach / methodology

EU-InnovatE has been delivered through an innovative mixed-methodology research design. The research findings presented here draw from a stakeholder-oriented and inclusive approach to qualitative scenarios development, quantitative analysis of future sustainable lifestyle indicators, international workshops, and application of the “Multi-Level Perspective” to sustainable lifestyle transitions.

New knowledge and/or European added value

The scenarios highlight future shifts that could fundamentally reconfigure the culture and dominant paradigm of European lifestyles. They also underline an increasingly important role for citizen innovators and sustainable entrepreneurs to influence transitions towards sustainable systems, as well as key conditions for paradigm innovation and the innovation of governance and social structures to occur.

Key messages for policy-makers, businesses, trade unions and civil society actors

Current measures for sustainable lifestyles are inadequate for describing and managing the transitions required in the future. Various cultural shifts are required in society for sustainable lifestyles to materialize. Policy and management have vital roles to play in systemic transition, both as innovation enablers and hosts, but several long-term shifts are required to make this a reality.

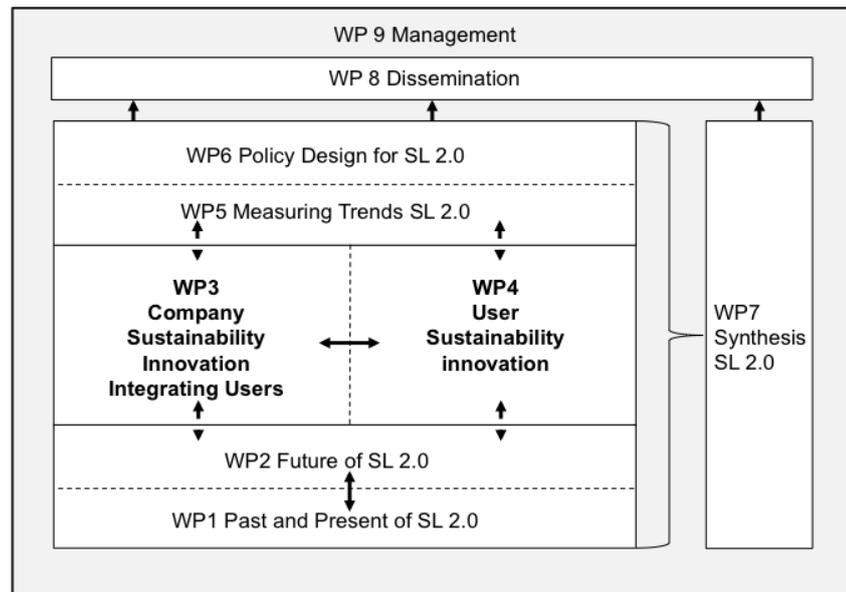
<p>Objectives of the research</p>	<p>In the second of our six empirical work packages (WP2), the central objective was to assess the short- and long-term obstacles and opportunities associated with the transition to European sustainable lifestyles and green economy through citizen innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship.</p> <p>At the heart of WP2's investigation were the outputs of the SPREAD 2050 Social Platform (convened by the EU in 2011-2012). This created four diverse futures in which European lifestyles are sustainable in 2050, developed around four domains which collectively have the largest footprint on lifestyles in Europe: energy, food, living and mobility.</p> <p>These futures are normative, and thus desirable, but are all defined by a measure of sustainability where the mass of annual <i>per capita</i> resource consumption is on average under 8,000Kg (versus a 28,000-40,000Kg level in 2010). The related challenge is to understand how the transition to any one of these futures may occur.</p> <p>Against this backdrop, the WP2 research team set out to achieve several defined objectives within the overall research design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recruit a consultation cohort of 200 individuals (user innovators, entrepreneurs, and representatives from industry, government and civil society); ✓ Augment the SPREAD 2050 scenarios with the cohort group employing the “Multi-Level Perspective (MLP)”, and attempt to define the role citizen innovators and sustainable entrepreneurs may play in driving progress; ✓ Quantify key indicators in the short- and long-term scenarios; ✓ Identify opportunities and obstructions for transition employing the MLP; ✓ Formulate key implications for policy-makers and practitioners.
<p>Scientific approach / methodology</p>	<p>As a reflection of the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary complexity of our central theme and key objectives, the EU-InnovatE project featured an innovative mixed-methodology design applied across all work packages (WPs). The full project framework is shown below.</p> <p>The WP2 research team's approach was mostly qualitative, given the holistic nature of stakeholder-driven scenarios development. As a starting point, a contact group of approximately 200 individuals (“Future Shapers”) were recruited based on either being able to provide insight (user sustainability innovation, lifestyles, future trends) and/or being prospective users of the outputs of the overall project (policy-makers at both European and national levels, business people, and institutions that support entrepreneurs, including venture capitalists and universities).</p>

The future roles of citizen innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship in the domains of food, living, mobility and energy were tested with this group using the MLP – both short-term and through to 2050. Additional data were collected through additional desk research (including examples from outside the EU like ‘frugal innovation’ and the latest quantitative forecasts for economic growth in Europe) and in workshops with various members of the contact group.

The changes in wealth and health of European citizens were estimated for each scenario. Key quantifiable variables were identified as indicators for each scenario and then plausible values for each estimated. These variables covered the range of social, environmental and economic indicators, and applied along each pathway to a SPREAD scenario for ten years’ time and 2050. These results were cross-checked with economic forecasts for the next ten years and agreed collectively.

Finally, short- and long-term obstacles and opportunities associated with the transition to European sustainable lifestyles were identified by considering the pathways and niche-regime-landscape interactions framed by the MLP. The preferred plausible outcome for sustainable lifestyles in different domains were thus identified, and aligned with the quantified outputs.

EU-InnovatE Research Design



New knowledge and European added value

Headline findings

The scenarios highlight a few key future shifts that (when combined) could fundamentally reconfigure the culture and dominant paradigm of Europe:

- 1) Sustainability is a dynamic state of continual transition that's best described by the social conditions in society.
- 2) Sustainable lifestyles are interdependent, nested systems within a sustainable society – and are also dynamic by extension.
- 3) Achieving and sustaining dramatic resource efficiencies transforms capitalism.
- 4) Change takes place at an uneven pace along scenario pathways to 2050.

The scenarios also highlight that there is an increasingly important role for citizen innovators and sustainable entrepreneurs to influence the transition to sustainable lifestyles. Specifically, these can be described and defined as follows:

- i. the significance of their contribution to sites for innovation for transition
- ii. their contribution to processes of innovation for social change:
- iii. whether they play an active, passive or resisting roles in innovation for transition and or are operating at an individual or collective level in relation to (i) and (ii) above.

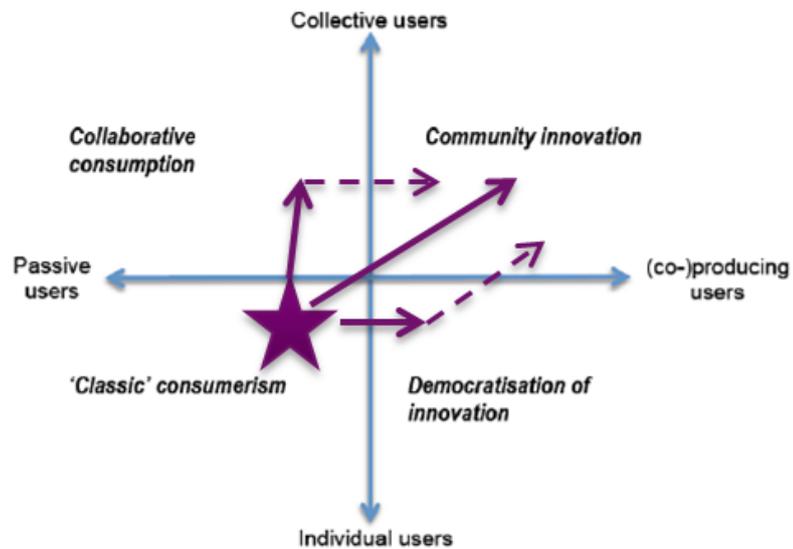
They are more likely to result in paradigm innovation and the innovation of governance and social structures if:

- ✓ the mind-set, values, skills and aptitudes of innovators enables system innovation and is aligned with sustainability (e.g. self-transcendent values, personal resilience);
- ✓ processes of innovation / ways of working transcend traditional boundaries, flows and power structures as this has greater potential to forge new cultural practices;
- ✓ the way we frame and conceptualize users is expanded to take a large view on the meaning – one that reflects where power and agency to influence change is acknowledged.

The shifting nature of users, from passive and individual to collective action

The nature of 'users' may change in the future from an individual level and a passive role towards a collective level and a more active/innovative role, as shown in the figure below. This suggests a shift in the regime from product and service innovations to 'system' innovations, which enable sustainable lifestyles.

Destination quadrant for future user/ citizen innovation



Users and entrepreneurs innovate across many sites and fields of activity

When exploring indicators, one of the major findings was that many of the future sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship (“SIE”) innovations required span across domains. Not only this, but the innovations themselves will vary in nature and influence.

Based on these insights, the WP2 research team formulated the following table to explain how specific types of innovation can be categorized: by products & services; by places & networks; by governance, decision-making and societal participation; and by paradigm shifts. In parallel, it explains in brief how their potential contribution to transitions and systems change can be understood.

<p>Product and service innovations</p>	<p>What: New products, services and experience systems – both virtual and real – help to de-materialize consumption, affecting brand communications, marketing, retail and more.</p> <p>How: They improve resource efficiency and improve the social and environmental impacts of the economy, while furthering consumption and growth.</p>
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	<p><i>Place and network-related innovation</i></p>	<p>What: A diverse range of activities shape how places develop and how people and organizations within them behave – including ways of working, organizational forms; value networks, visions and strategies; and infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>How: These activities reconfigure the design of energy, food, mobility, housing and materials systems in a geography. A whole system approach unlocks extra material efficiencies by altering patterns of resource use, lifestyles and commerce and the cultural norms that go with them. They are a comprehensive, area-based response to challenges like climate change.</p>
	<p><i>Governance, decision-making and participation in society</i></p>	<p>What: A broad and diverse range of activities that relate to the overall governance – or management – of society: its constitution, legislature, executive and judiciary functions.</p> <p>How: The key commonality between these activities is that they affect how collective decision-making happens, as well as the trust, empathy, accountability, ways of thinking and other social qualities that are wrapped up in how we relate to one another and the world around us. They include education, civil society and finance as these domains intrinsically shape how individuals manage themselves and their participation, their identity, how they deal with conflict, exchange value, and so on.</p>
	<p><i>Paradigm innovation</i></p>	<p>What: Activities that have an intangible yet profound effect on culture and everything we do and how we do it.</p> <p>How: They do this by reforming our most fundamental beliefs, accepted wisdoms and assumptions and the language we use to understand the world - includes our perception of 'self', of humanity and our attitudes towards the future.</p>

Key messages for policy-makers, businesses, trade unions and civil society actors

Findings and implications for policy and management

1/ Current measures for sustainable lifestyles are inadequate for describing and managing the transitions required in the future. Specifically:

- Economic measures do not describe the nature of the change that occurs in the 2050 scenarios;
- Social conditions of society play a vital role in enabling sustainable lifestyles;
- User innovation and entrepreneurship for sustainable lifestyles are shaped by these conditions, and can also influence them;
- Change takes place at an uneven pace along scenario pathways to 2050;
- Prospective, quantitative measures are insufficient for learning and managing transition.

2/ Various cultural shifts are required in society for sustainable lifestyles to exist, and to enable transition to happen. Specifically:

- Innovation that's required for transition towards sustainable lifestyles takes the form of governance, structural & paradigm innovations;
- To achieve this, we see an expanding role of users and entrepreneurs;
- To achieve this, we see a declining role for business acting alone, but an increasing role acting as part of new forms of collaboration with users, communities and entrepreneurs.

3/ Policy and management have a vital role to play in systemic transition, both as an enabler of innovation and as a site for innovation itself. Specifically:

- The purpose/function/role of policy and government undergoes radical transformation in each of the SPREAD 2050 scenarios as an outcome of transition towards sustainable lifestyles;
- The analysis of socio-technical change and innovation along the scenario pathways identifies a vital role for policy and management in enabling the staged transition to sustainability;
- The governance, structural and paradigm innovations required for sustainability are both the means for transition along the scenario pathways and the outcome of transition in 2050;
- This is because sustainability and sustainable lifestyles are a continuous state of dynamic equilibrium, transition & evolution;
- For policy and management to enable long-term transition through user innovation and entrepreneurship, it must embody and enact a new paradigm itself.

4/ For this role to be realized, several long-term shifts are required. The following specific recommendations are made to those in policy and management to build momentum in the short-term:

- To operate with a new mode, mind-set and with skills and capabilities that allow a systemic approach and that embrace a new cultural context which is consistent with sustainable lifestyles;
- To design and support interventions that lay the path for these elements to flourish in the longer term;
- To underpin these interventions with the need to constructively question and challenge the role of policy and management in society.

Provocations about the enabling roles different actors could play

Our best chance of furthering a sustainable society is for diverse people and organizations to act within their own sphere of influence and to find new ways of collaborating with others to leverage this for impact. All these actors play a role in the transition to a sustainable society. The scale of complexity in moving the change agenda forward can seem daunting, however. In the short-term, therefore, the following questions may help different actors to determine first steps:

Civil society organizations: How could you help forge new ways of individuals to participate in society and relate with to another, beyond consumerist choices? Could you experiment with new forms of governance?

Citizen innovators: How could you be a maverick to bring about the cultural and social changes needed in society? As you follow your passions, how can you blaze a trail towards better lifestyles?

Policy-makers: How could you take a systemic approach to diagnosing, responding and understanding interventions? What untapped opportunities are there for you to collaborate with others to overcome the barriers?

Established businesses: How could you help to bring about a whole system approach to managing the efficiency and impacts of the materials economy? How can you use your scale and reach to bring about changes not just in the technologies that form our infrastructures, but to the design of these systems?

Small entrepreneurs: As you find new ways of creating and sharing value, how could you dematerialize markets? What opportunities are there for you to collaborate with others to grow markets that will help upgrade our infrastructures and improve the efficiency with which we use them?

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Further reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovating in Search of Sustainability: Citizens, Companies and Entrepreneurs • Practitioners Cookbook for Innovation with Stakeholders • Company-driven Open Sustainability Innovation (18 case studies) • Sustainable Enterprises (14 case studies) • International Webinar Series (6 presentations and audio recordings) <p>Available on the project website, plus links to all project deliverables.</p>
Related websites	<p>http://www.globescanforum.com/sustainability_innovation_exchange/ http://52.202.219.239:8080/user_guide (registration required) http://www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu</p>
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