

System innovation for sustainable materials use in Flanders (Belgium)

The case study looks closely at the evolution of the waste and recycles system in Flanders since the 1970s. Using a ‘learning history’ trajectory-based approach, several historical systems and a desired future system have been identified. The 2050s ideal-type system should optimally go beyond “recycling”, including addressing human behaviour for fulfilling needs and re-designing a linear process of take-make-use-discharge into a more networked and circular setting, amongst others. In order to establish the desirable/desired circular system, policy-makers in Flanders established policy mechanisms, including i) the ‘Sustainable Materials’ strategy as a spearhead policy as well as ii) the Flemish Materials Programme as a unique approach that connects policy, industry, science and civil society to steer a coherent programme. Although there is no single silver bullet solution/methodology, a coherent combination of multiple strategies/attitudes/roles seems indispensable.

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