

Sustainable materials management and NGOs

A horizontal analysis of international non-governmental initiatives

Aim

Within the cluster on system analysis, RL2 focuses on the global and European context of sustainable materials management (SMM). Similar to any transformation of socio-technical systems, a transition towards SMM is strongly embedded in international dynamics. Materials are particularly rooted within global patterns of production and consumption, and linked to various international rule systems. We therefore focus on different international processes that frame and govern the transition towards SMM, both at the European and at the global level, in order to gain a full understanding of the transnational context of the Flemish ambitions regarding the transition.

Essential aspects of the global context of this transition are steering initiatives by intergovernmental organizations ([first work package](#)), some of which are overtly inspired by the transitions paradigm ([second work package](#)). In this third work package, we turn to the efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), motivated by the observation that there is little systematic knowledge about the significance of civil society efforts in the global transition towards SMM. That stands in contrast with the broad acceptance among policy-makers that non-governmental initiatives must be included in a transitions approach.

To increase our understanding of the role of NGOs in the global transition towards SMM, we need to know the international efforts that those actors are initiating towards managing natural resources more sustainably. In a first step, we therefore conduct a broad screening of international non-governmental SMM initiatives and present a horizontal analysis of the features of the initiatives that we identified (e.g. activities, target group, intended phases of the life-cycle). At a later stage, some of those features will form the object of deeper analysis.

Timeframe and output

This study is the first phase of work package 2C of the SuMMa multi-annual plan. It is executed by Dr Sander Happaerts (HIVA – KU Leuven) between 2013 and 2014, with brief assistance by Sarah Van Eynde (HIVA – KU Leuven) in 2013. The study will result in a SuMMa research paper towards mid-2014.