

LAMARTRA

Bridging decarbonization and labour market in sustainability transitions

DURATION
 15/12/2020-15/03/2025

BUDGET
 1.063.029 €

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Context

LAMARTRA addresses the interlinkages between transition processes of decarbonisation and work & employment. The low-carbon transition has progressed beyond its initial stages. Much uncertainty remains however regarding the balanced handling of climate policy objectives, and societal challenges of economic development, social inclusion, and work and employment. The increasing political weight of the “just transition” discourse reflects the urgency of this issue. The scientific starting point for the project is the as yet still fragmented analysis - and also the governance - of these interlinked ‘labour’/‘decarbonisation’ transitions. We need a more operational understanding of how to ensure ‘just’ transition processes, and reach beyond scientifically outdated and politically undermining ‘climate vs jobs’ framings. It is therefore important to anticipate mixed developments of growing and decreasing economic activities, and their multiple implications for vulnerable sectors, enterprises and workers.

Research question and research objectives

Our main research question: How to understand the ongoing and future developments of the low-carbon and labour transitions, and which governance strategies are available in Belgium to ensure the joint pursuit of climate targets and ‘just’ work and employment? Associated research objectives are

- **Map** the profile of workers (in carbon-intensive industrial companies and in other salient sectors). The analysis will be particularly attentive to ‘vulnerable workers’ (e.g. low-skilled, women, migrants) and will evaluate regional variation in worker profiles.
- **Elaborate** foresight scenarios and organize associated backcasting with key stakeholders. This will disclose the range of possible and desirable futures regarding low-carbon/labour transition in the salient sectors.
- **Engage with and analyse** the workplace politics of the low-carbon transition in the salient sectors.
- **Identify** dynamics, challenges and strategies of transitions governance in the salient sectors. This also involves comparison against reference cases in other countries.
- **Design** appropriate policy mixes for the bridging between the ‘two transitions’. This is informed by an interdisciplinary analysis of new empirical evidence and integrative discussion of governance implications.

Theoretical framework and methodology

The “bridging two transitions” approach is scientifically ambitious. Much on this front is yet to be elaborated beyond pioneering empirical studies, literature reviews and conceptual debates. Studies of sustainability transitions tend to neglect labour implications, and labour studies rarely engage with transitions-theoretical insights on system innovation processes. Combining cutting-edge expertise on sustainability transitions, foresight/future-of-work studies, labour economics and sociology of work, this interdisciplinary research project will assess quantitative and qualitative sectoral and organisational changes in work and employment. The methodology involves in-depth and comparative analysis of four salient economic sectors in Belgium, also comparing against reference cases abroad. The analysis builds on literature-based conceptual integration, qualitative analysis of transitions governance and sociology of work aspects, quantitative methods from labour economy, and participative backcasting.



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Potential impact of the research and expected results

The main result of LAMARTRA will take the form of guidelines for dedicated transition 'policy mixes', i.e. policy packages addressing the specific challenges of decarbonisation/labour transitioning. The project foresees strong impacts on the strategic areas of economy, environment, health and quality of life, and also on civil society. LAMARTRA researchers are well aware of the 'implementation gap' associated with the main research question: Research on transition (governance) processes is often 'out of sync' with day-to-day decision making in political and enterprise contexts. Our striving for systemic transition strategies is therefore steering clear from easy critiques and calls to 'break through the silos'. On the contrary, the work towards comprehensive 'policy mixes' acknowledges the difficulty to translate ambitions and visions of transition into appropriate governance and policy. Important reality checks and practical grounding are provided through continuous valorisation activities (workshops and symposia), through ethnographic and transitions governance analysis of transition processes, through transdisciplinary foresight study, and through regular exchanges with the diverse and experienced follow-up committee.

The LAMARTRA 'policy mixes' for transitions governance will build on work streams that also generate results that are valuable in their own right: Other key results are the generation of qualitative and quantitative evidence on the impacts on sectors, enterprises and workers, and the disclosure of the range of possible and desirable futures. This evidence will support informed societal debate and political decision-making on 'just' and sustainable transition.

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LINKS

<https://lamartra.be/>

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/LAMARTRA-Bridging-decarbonization-and-LABour-MARKet-in-sustainability-TRANSitions>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/74675008/admin/>