



# EVALUATING FLEMISH SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS MANAGEMENT FROM A MULTI-ACTOR GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE



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# TABLE OF CONTENT

- A few words on the Flemish policy context
- Reasons to ask for a policy evaluation
- The researchers' perspective on the evaluation research
- Analytical perspective used in our report
  - Some results
- Analytical perspective used in an academic article
  - Some results
- Lessons for evaluation practice?

# FROM WASTE POLICY OVER SMM TO CE POLICY

Flanders, champion in collecting and processing well-separated waste streams

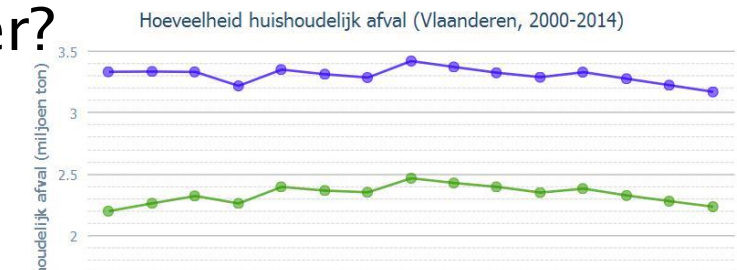
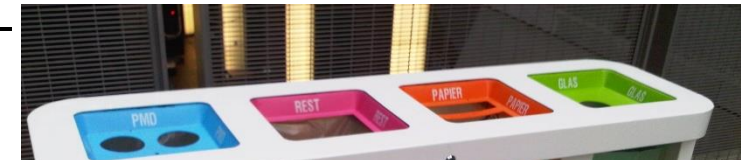
Shortly after turn of the century, how can we do better?

Weak points:

- Avoiding waste
- Eco-design

Upcoming discourse on (sustainability) transitions inspired the Flemish Waste Agency to install “plan C”, a multi-actor network of visionary people

Making a transition from waste policies to sustainable materials management, closing loops, via the Flemish Materials Programme  
Now: shifting from a discourse on SMM to circular economy ambitions



TRANSITIENETWERK  
SUSTAIN



# THE STARTING POINT FOR THE EVALUATION

How are we doing?

- How do participants to the VMP perceive the network, the programme, the outcomes? What can we **learn** from that?
- How can we motivate that the VMP is worth the effort (and the money)? What are its merits?

However...

- Soon after the start of the project: refraining from too much open discussion about the VMP. At the end of the project: dislike to communicate openly on the results, while the evaluation wasn't even that negative

# RESEARCHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Doing a programme evaluation, focussing on process and organization, more than on outcome (too soon)

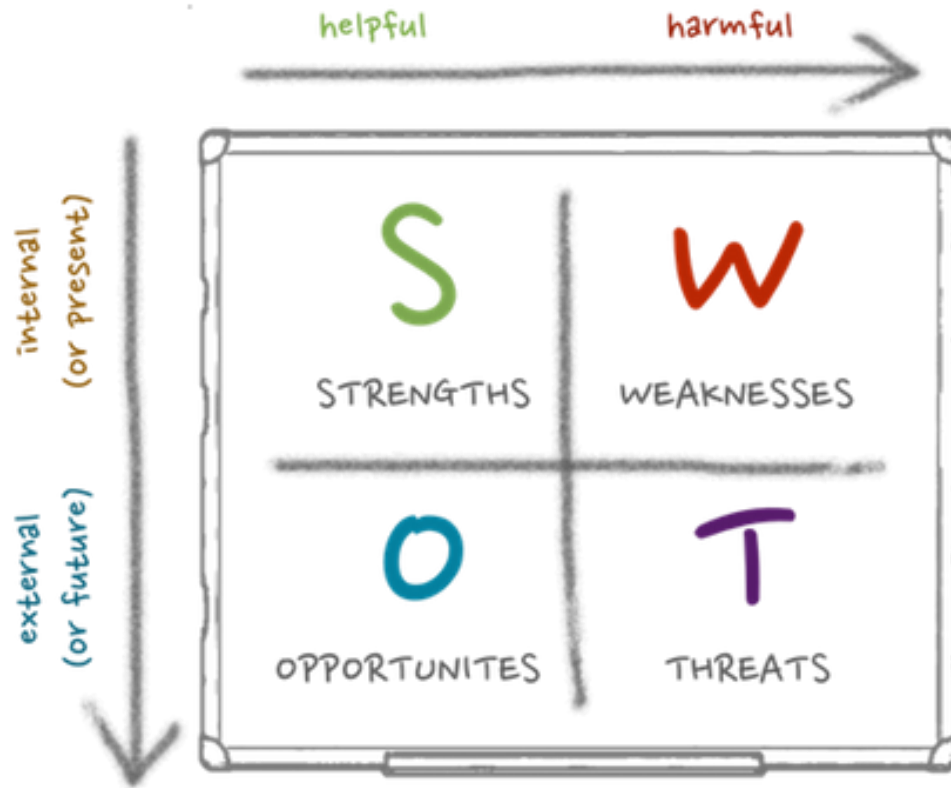
- Political and social sciences perspective

Appreciative inquiry: instead of substantiating that VMP 'works', finding out how it can work better in the future

- Organizational psychology perspective

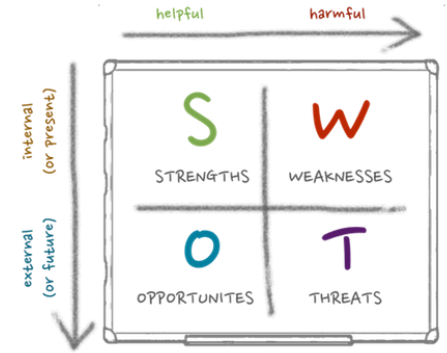
# ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR OUR RESEARCH REPORT

## SWOT-analysis



SOAR-  
approach

# RESULTS



Only highlighting some important ones...

- Strength: distributing responsibility over sector federations, governments from different sectors, NGOs, knowledge institutes and possibilities to productively cooperate in concrete actions
- Weakness: action programmes need to be accountable while learning from experiments is crucial to learn about what works (not)
- Threat: the governments will to institutionalize VMP (via rules and structures), while resources remain scarce
- Opportunity: increasing attention from EC to support circular economy

# ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR AN ACADEMIC ARTICLE

Ambition: evaluate VMP from a transition governance perspective

# RESULTS

Transition governance 'criteria'	VMP results
Tailor-made solutions	Monitoring is important for accountability reasons. Top-down steering is preferred, more than experimentation and finding
Sustainable production and consumption	Focus more on sustainable waste management than on closing the loop. Focus more on production than on
Enabling, facilitating... government : government as one actor besides others	Government opting for 'stakeholder management' more than horizontal coordination
Break through policy silos	Ambition to have transversal policy-making, but 'own goals' have priority

# LESSONS FOR EVALUATION PRACTICE

Importance of a system perspective: if we want a transition towards sustainable production and consumption, it is important to focus not on evaluation of sustainable WASTE management

Embrace complexity, also in evaluation by actively learning from multi-actor governance, not to judge but to improve practice

Support governments in their 'transition' from a hierarchic role to a multitude of roles in complex settings

- adaptive leadership (initiating change initiatives)
- enabling leadership (making things possible)
- administrative leadership (hierarchic role)

# Thank You!

