

MAXIMIZING WELL-BEING MINIMIZING EMISSIONS - WIN-WIN PATHWAYS TO IMPROVE WELL-BEING AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION IN THE EU TO 2050 (MAXWELL) 2015-2017 Finland Futures Research Centre

Location of the action: Finland

Funded by: European Union Horizon2020 research and innovation programme

Length of the project: 9/2015-9/2017

The MAXWELL project addresses a pivotal issue in the attempts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with EU legal commitments and intergovernmental treaties. The link between material consumption and climate change is well accepted, increasing material consumption globally is continuing to drive up the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change and impacts on sustainability. Approaches to climate change mitigation policy tend to focus on technology and efficiency, both on the supply and demand side, but the problem of rising material consumption can often overwhelm these attempts causing absolute increases in emissions. A debate on the place of reducing material consumption as a means of decreasing emissions and achieving sustainability has been unresolved since the first attempts to implement intergovernmental climate treaties in the 1990's. A perception exists that mitigating climate change, through the deep reductions in emissions required by 2050, involves cost and loss. Where living standards might be impacted this is an unpopular perception both with the public and within politics.



Turun yliopisto
University of Turku



FINLAND FUTURES
RESEARCH CENTRE



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT SDFUTURES-INFO@UTU.FI OR WWW.SDFUTURES.FI

However, some researchers have begun to explore the theory of a win-win in mitigation, where overall well-being can be maintained or even advanced as emissions are reduced, through a decoupling of human well-being from consumption. This has been a controversial topic, and while the theory appears sound, there has been insufficient theoretical or empirical study. There has also been essentially no policy implemented towards reduced material consumption beyond 'sustainable consumption and production' which returns to technology and efficiency. MAXWELL engages with this prominent gap in the understanding of the well-being/ climate win-win. Different conceptions of well-being will be explored, alternative scenarios of well-being in the EU 28 to 2050 will be developed, and modelling will seek to quantify the changes in energy and emissions that arise. Particular attention will be paid to pathways that balance overall well-being rather than prioritise material consumption. The implementation of policies that could lead to these win-win outcomes will be explored with policymakers from the EU. The MAXWELL project has involved research stays at the University of Lancaster's DEMAND centre and Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Princeton Environmental Institute.

As this is the first study of its kind, on a priority development and mitigation issue, the outcomes of the research could have significant impact in catalysing further research and policy for low carbon development pathways and transition that meets multiple goals. This project is funded by the European Commission as part of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie individual postdoctoral fellowship for the development of promising researchers and the contribution of research to society.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 657865

Contributors to the project:

Senior researcher Tadhg O' Mahony,
FFRC
tadhg.omahony@utu.fi

Research director Jyrki Luukkanen,
FFRC
jyrki.luukkanen@utu.fi

