

How to collectively develop, debate and ex- periment solutions towards a more resilient, circular and meaningful brussels biowaste collection and treatment system?

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towards a more resilient, circular
and meaningful brussels biowaste
collection and treatment system?

- > The current Brussels bio-waste collection and treatment system is linear, industrial, technocratic and polluting. The local (micro) scale of treatment is anecdotal and the intermediate (meso) scale is blocked on all sides.
- > Circularisation of the brussels biowaste flows is possible but could be largely optimised by removal/adaptation of european and brussels regulations & policies and by activating the meso scale.

How to collectively develop, debate and experiment solutions towards a more resilient, circular and meaningful brussels biowaste collection and treatment system?

- > The innovative actors need to be accompanied and assisted in their efforts by (bridging-) actors with a global understanding of the system in order to remove the many barriers revealed by their innovative activities.
- > In terms of “democratic governance”, the (political) institutions inscribed in the current modes of representative democracy have neither the culture nor the tools to imagine the pragmatic forms of the living laboratories that we call upon. We believe that institutions have an important role to play in these situations, as long as they are transparent and controversy can arise from them – in order to avoid post-political tensions we faced during our action-research.

Key messages

Currently, the Brussels-Capital Region incinerates the vast majority (90%) of the food waste it produces and still exports large quantities of green waste. The nutrients contained in these elements are therefore not returned to the soil, which is problematic in the context of an expected peak in phosphorus production and increasingly ambitious European (and Brussels) recycling objectives. PHOSPHORE has developed, debated and collectively experimented with possible solutions for the transformation and implementation of a more resilient, circular and sensible biowaste management system for all Brussels residents.

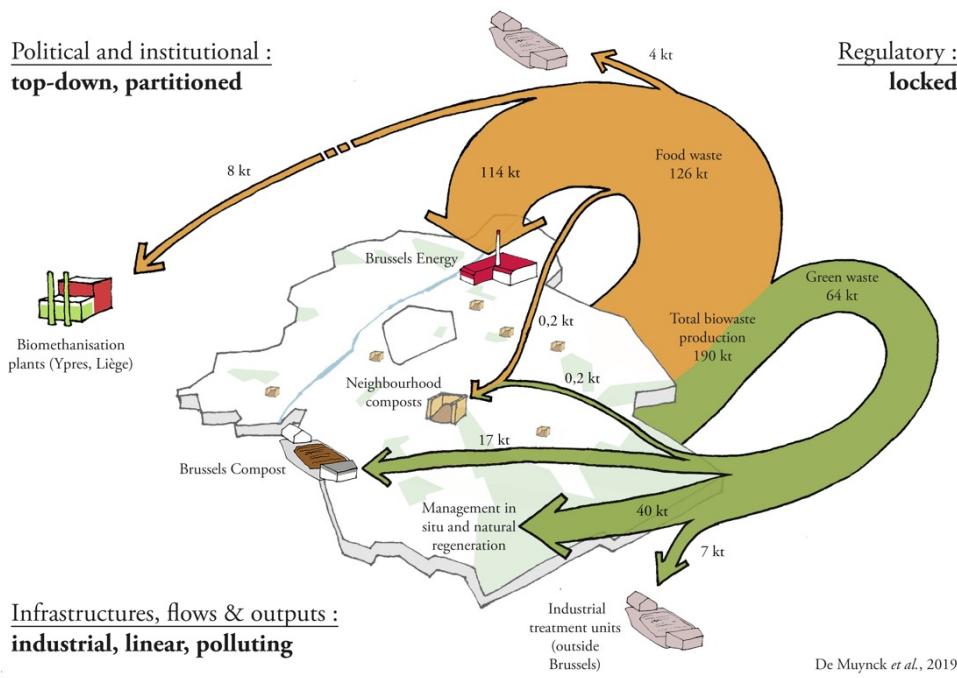
PHOSPHORE highlighted the issue of Brussels green waste, which gave rise to the Carbone project (Innoviris Experimental Platform - 2021-2023).

Introduction Summary of the problem

Our methodology was carried out, on the basis of six strategic action research activities:

1. Understand the current regime and the challenges of its transformation (fig.1)

Political and institutional :
top-down, partitioned



Methods, approaches and results/body

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We characterised the system in a new and systemic way by calculating the flows of food waste produced (126 kt/year) and collectable (between 25kt/year and 50kt/year) in the Brussels-Capital Region and by highlighting the current treatment infrastructures and the systemic challenges of transformation of the system (fig. 1.).

2. Identify and supporting innovative initiatives within the socio-technical niches.

We showed that the current socio-technical innovations for decentralised treatment of organic matter are numerous but still quantitatively too weak to treat all the organic waste produced (0,4 kt treated out of 190kt produced/year).

3. Experiment with the most promising initiatives with a view to their development.

We have shown that it is possible to experiment with new ways of collecting/treating Brussels' organic waste at different scales (Roots collector, hybrid compost plant, etc.).

4. To remove the barriers related to this rise in power.

We revealed that miscalibrated European and Brussels regulations and policies were blocking the emergence of decentralised alternatives and that the latter were subject to many other barriers of different types (investment costs, treatment capacities, maturity, administrative obligations, lack of space, etc.). The removal of these barriers seems to be facilitated by co-creative dynamics.

Bridging actors (Urban Ecology Center for the Roots collector, WORMS for the hybrid compost plant of Schaerbeek and BE for the local composting decree) also facilitated the removal of barriers, as well as the intermediation and negotiation with the political stakeholders involved.

5. Co-construct a transition narrative.

We co-coproduced a narrative of change of the biowaste collection and treatment system based on multi-actor co-creation seminars including hundreds of Brussels stakeholders (households, green space managers, schools, offices and health care institutions but also markets, Horeca and food shops). The prospective narratives were then converted into a quantitative prospective scenario by 2025 capable of collecting and treating biowaste in a more coherent and circular way (fig. 2.) The first scenario we proposed was not retained - we were asked to integrate the biomethanisation plant project that had just been noted in the government agreement. We have therefore included the industrial unit in the PHOSPHORE's final scenario. We have faced reductive injunctions that have led to moments of post-politics that generate tensions and posed democratic questions.

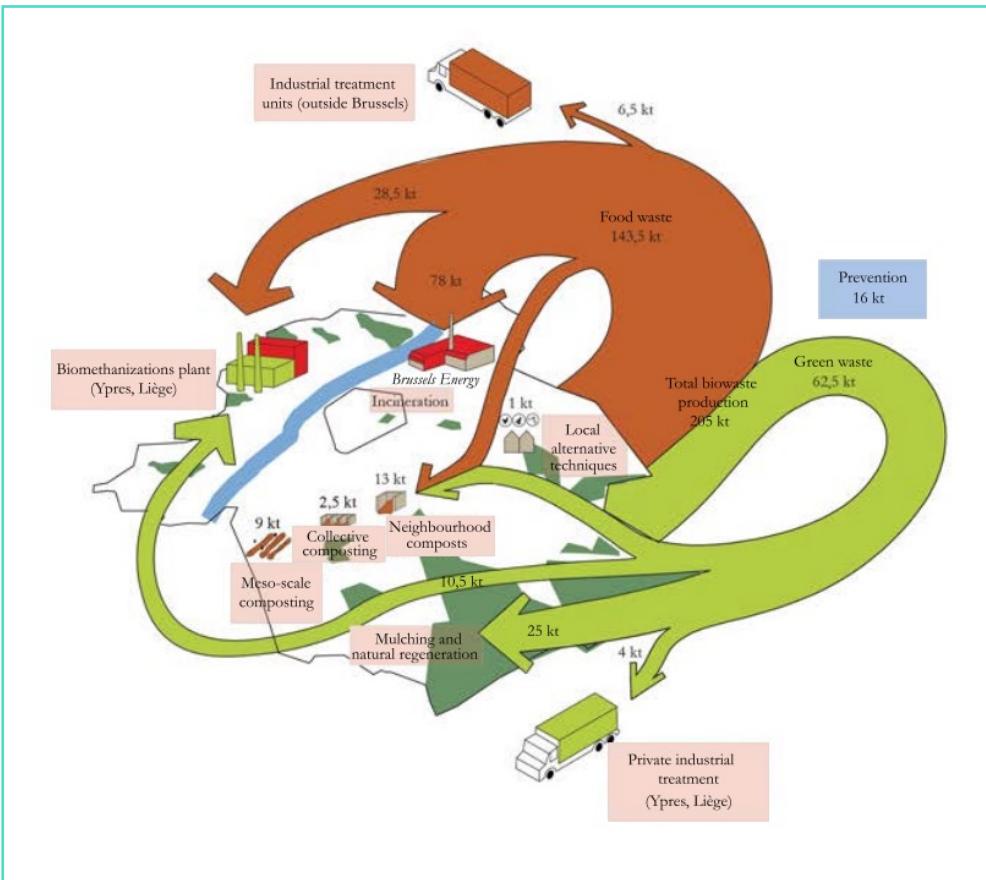


Figure 2. Sources, flows and treatment infrastructures for food and green waste in the Brussels Region in 2025 (PHOSPHORE's scenario)

6. Defend the narrative and institutionalise innovative actors and practices

The conclusions of the projet Phosphore have directly contributed to:

- The Government's Biowaste Roadmap which will soon integrate the regional Resources and Wastes Management Plan ;
- The Brudalex 2.0 – Regional decree concerning waste regulation.

The PHOSPHORE research confirmed and clarified the linearity of the current system of collection and treatment as well as its corollary pollution (CO2, microplastics). Current socio-technical innovations for decentralised treatment of organic matter are numerous but still quantitatively too weak to treat all the organic waste produced.

PHOSPHORE revealed that miscalibrated European (R142 et 1069) and Brussels regulations/policies (Brudalex) were blocking the emergence of decentralised alternatives and that the latter were subject to many other barriers of different types.

The removal of these barriers seems to be facilitated by co-creative dynamics and bridging actors. At the political and institutional level, the choices concerning infrastructures remain dictated by European (Directives) and national (Burden sharing etc.) policies calibrated on an energy paradigm and carried by technocratic actors with a non-systemic vision.

Mobilising participative sciences, agonism and new “hybrid parliaments” is the very condition for restoring meaning to the necessary links between science, research and society, and for attempting to construct a semblance of political ecology.

Conclusions

How to collectively develop, debate and experiment solutions towards a more resilient, circular and meaningful brussels biowaste collection and treatment system?

1.

Modify the Brussels regulation and policies in favour of the emergence of local (micro) and intermediate (meso) biowaste treatment actors. This can be done on the basis of the French experience and on the collaborations between the Facilitateur biodéchets des professionnels, the Cirède (Circular regulation Deal)/HSP and decision making authorities (Brussels Environment and political cabinets).

- modify the thresholds for the quantities of biowaste to be treated locally without an environmental permit ;
- define an end of waste status for shredded material (broyat) to make it easier to use as a common ;
- clarify/simplify the conversion/ hygienisation parameters for biowaste containing Animal by-products (SPA) ;
- abolish the laboratory permit for small-scale composting (- 1000t/year) and impose simple technical constraints in small-scale composting environment permits .

¹ Latour, B. (2018). Esquisse d'un Parlement des choses, Ecologie et politique, Editions du bord de l'eau, N° 56, 47-64. <https://doi.org/10.3917/ecopol.056.0047>

² This recommendation was born out of dynamics after PHOSPHORE (Carbone, etc.).

³ This a recommandation after PHOSPHORE (FAC PRO etc.)

Policy recommendations

2.

Adopt a systemic/multiscale and multi-stakeholder vision for the arbitration/balancing of organic waste flows (food and green waste) and consider other parameters than energy/industrial digestate production - in particular the circular ecological policies to be pursued with communal green resources (fallen leaves, shredded materials, woods).

3.

Continue to fund participatory science which helps to empower many Brussels actors and generate new types of knowledge and conduct fundamental/ agronomic research on several aspects of recovery (valorisation techniques, hygienisation, agronomic quality of the output etc.) which will provide decisive elements for the establishment of the meso scale/dynamics.

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Enseignements

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Co-organisation d'évènements

2016 : *Formation en recherche-action participative pour tous les partenaires de l'Action Co-create 2015*, J. Chevalier et M. Bourassa, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

2019 : « *La recherche-action participative au cœur des sciences en société. Bilans – enjeux et perspectives* ». Ecole Thématique. GDR PARCS, Mèze. France.

Formations

2018 : « *Espaces verts circulaires* ». Centre de compétence en gestion écologique urbaine. Cycle de conférence-formation Nature. Bruxelles Environnement-Apis Bruoc Sella.

2019 : « *Les grands enjeux liés à la gestion des biodéchets bruxellois* ». CERIA.

2020 : « *L'économie circulaire: une transition incontournable. Module 5: Comment mettre en œuvre l'économie circulaire à l'échelle d'un territoire?* » MOOC Institut EDDEC. HEC Montréal.

Congrès, colloques et séminaires

2016 : « *Opération Phosphore : du déchet à l'engrais. Un projet de recherche action participative* ». Première école d'été d'agriculture urbaine, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

2016 : « *Co-create : genèse d'une action publique de soutien à la recherche participative* » avec X. Hulhoven (Innoviris) et P. Stassart (Ulg). Master 1 en Agroécologie, Université de Liège.

2017 : « *La ville comme écosystème : les cycles des nutriments dans le système ville-campagne : l'Opération Phosphore à Bruxelles* », Cours-séminaire Ville et écosystème. Maison des cultures de Molenbeek. Brussels Academy

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2017 : « *Des solutions innovantes de gestion décentralisée des déchets organiques* ». Bruxelles. Lunch BECI.

2018 : « *Organic Matters - Composer avec les matières organiques bruxelloises : flux, acteurs et techniques* » (De Muynck, S. et Kohlbrenner, A.). CIVA Talk. Fondation CIVA.

2018 : « *Deux dilemmes pour la démocratie. Débats « consensus ou conflits » et « experts ou citoyens ?* » (avec D. Morel de Westgaver et W. De Meuter). BRAL. Brussels. Crosstalks. BOZAR.

2018 : « *Quelle gouvernance pour une société urbaine bas-carbone à l'horizon 2050 ?* » (avec O. De Schutter, E. Grosdhomme, A. Brunson, M. Balestrini et E. de Nictolis). Bruxelles Environnement & Civic Innovation Network.

2018 : « *Co-créer un nouveau système de ressources organiques* ». Vert Pop - Rencontres Ecologiques d'Eté. Liège. TED Talk Etopia.

2018 : « *Vers une approche territoriale des matières végétales de Bruxelles* », Centre de compétences en gestion écologique de Bruxelles, Bruxelles Environnement.

2018 : « *Gestion des biodéchets : quantification et analyse des acteurs - cas de la ZAC Parc-Centrale - Châtenay-Malabry* » (avec S. Kampelmann et E. Lehec). Cours-séminaire. Master développement urbain durable. Département génie urbain de l'Université Paris-Est-Marne-La-Vallée.

2018 : « *Opération Phosphore - Une recherche-action participative pour une meilleure gestion des matières organiques à Bruxelles* ». Rencontres wallonnes d'échanges sur la gestion de proximité des biodéchets 28 septembre 201. Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-La-Neuve. Comité Jean Pain.

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2018: “*Food waste prevention and bio-waste management best practices in collective catering, hospitals, schools and retail*”. Zero Waste cities, Bruxelles Environnement.

2018 : « *Opération Phosphore* ». Conseil économique et social de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale.

2019: « *Opération Tournesol (2013-2015). Dépolluer les sols bruxellois avec des plantes : petite histoire d'une recherche-action bruxelloise* ». Aper'eaux Brusseau. Etats Généraux de l'Eau à Bruxelles.

2019 : « *Perspective d'un coordinateur de projet sur les déchets organiques*. Ecole d'été d'économie circulaire Paris-Montréal-Bruxelles. Chaire en économie circulaire.

2019 : « *Métaréflexions de projets bruxellois en co-création* », La recherche-action participative au cœur des sciences en société. Bilans – enjeux et perspectives. Ecole Thématique de Mèze, France. . GDR PARCS.

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2018 : « *Natural Born dépollueurs* ». Homo Detritus. Confessions d'un échec. N°11- Printemps. 24h01.

2018 : « *La gestion de la poubelle bruxelloise* » (De Muynck, S. et Saebi, A.). Dot-to-dot magazine.

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2018 : « *La convergence des luttes écologiques et sociales vers de nouvelles gouvernances* ». (avec Pelenc, J.). Radio Campus.

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2018 : « *Repenser la digestion du déchet organique* » - Le Soir.

2018 : « *Les composts collectifs, maillon de la transition vers une économie des déchets* ». Rtbf.be

2019 : « *Biométhanisation à Bruxelles: le dossier rebondit avec un projet de Véolia* » - Rtbf.be.

2019 : « *Pour produire 30% de légumes à Bruxelles, il faudra compter sur la périphérie flamande* », Rtbf.be.

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List of publications

The author & project

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