

HANDBOOK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY SCENARIOS WORKSHOPS SUPPORTING ENERGY TRANSITIONS



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WHAT ARE POLICY SCENARIO WORKSHOPS

Policy scenarios are **descriptions of alternative visions** that put the focus on **processes and decision-points**, aiming at understanding the obstacles and challenges to energy transitions, through a **reflexive exercise on past, present and future policy alternatives**.

Policy scenarios support policy action. They aid to **overcome knowledge and experiential limitations** by elucidating multiple realistic futures, which becomes extremely **useful in times of uncertainty and complexity**. Policy scenarios are not predictive tools. They do not elaborate forecasts but **provide insightful alternative images of future development** that contribute to design the **best strategies to engage citizens in sustainable transitions**.

MULTISTAKEHOLDER DELIBERATIVE POLICY SCENARIO WORKSHOPS

The multistakeholder deliberative policy scenarios workshops encourage **creative strategic thinking, engaging a diversity of actors**, e.g. social innovations practitioners, policymakers and experts, in **deliberative activities** oriented to **collectively explore alternative approaches and solutions** to increase citizen's involvement in local energy social innovations and wider adoption of sustainable energy-related behaviours.

DEFINING ALTERNATIVE POLICY SCENARIO TO FOSTER ADOPTION OF ENERGY-RELATED SOCIAL INNOVATIONS AND SUPPORT ENERGY TRANSITIONS

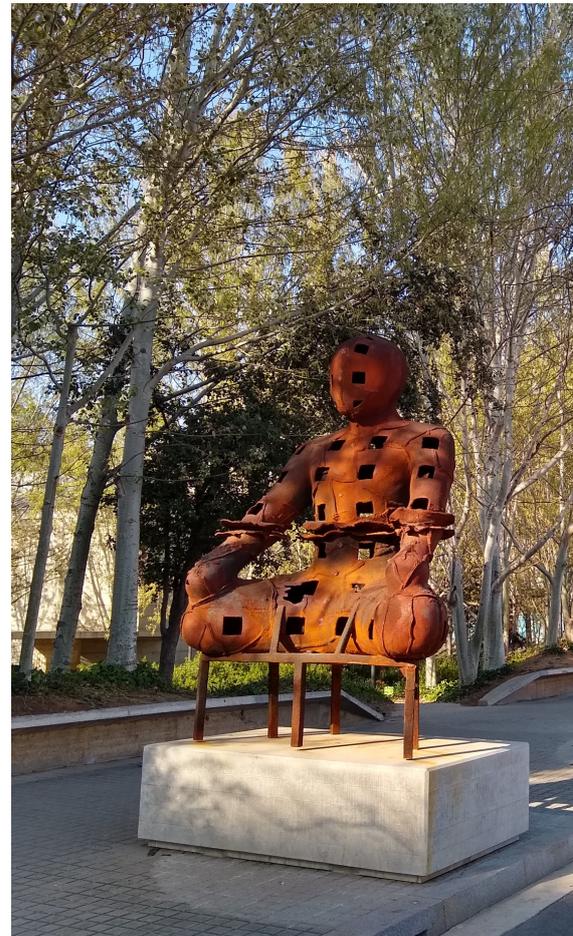
The SMARTEES project focuses on the **human factor in energy transitions** achieving a profound understanding of the **individual and social factors influencing the social acceptability of energy-related social innovations**. In this endeavour, SMARTEES has mobilized SI practitioners' creativity to **develop new alternative policy solutions**, fostering processes of knowledge co-production in the frame of deliberative policy scenarios workshops.

Social innovations are defined in SMARTEES as “**processes of change** in social relationships, interactions, and/or the sharing of knowledge that broadens/deepens the **engagement of individual stakeholders with energy topics** and leads to, or is based on, **new environmentally sustainable ways of producing, managing and consuming energy** to meet societal challenges”.

WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

This handbook is intended for social innovation practitioners and policymakers and a growing number of people who are interested in enhancing reflexive and learning processes relating to public governance.

This practical guide aims to stimulate creative and reflexive learning processes, engaging workshop participants in the facilitated debate around the processes and the outcomes of implementing innovative policies as well as the co-definition of alternative policy pathways.



FIRST STEPS

The policy scenarios workshop is structured as a deliberative workshop for the exploration of alternative policy scenarios. It will support experts and stakeholders' involvement in a visioning exercise that would first identify the main elements characterizing the process of socially innovative measures, strategies and solutions, to further apply the lessons learned from successful interventions to inform future implementations of the social innovation.

Preparing for the workshop, several steps may be needed to be taken, referring to the identification of the workshop's participants, strategies to mobilize them as well as the practical workshop organization details:

01

Identifying expert participants

04

Choose workshop's format

02

Mobilizing and motivating participants

05

Setting the agenda

03

Choosing a facilitator

06

Materials, resources, venue and costs



IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS	Identification of a plurality of participants: policy actors, promoters and pioneers, relevant social actors involved in the project, and external experts.
MOBILIZING PARTICIPANTS	The goal is to get 8-16 participants in the workshop. To ensure a diverse group of participants, at least 20 participants should confirm their participation.
CHOOSING A FACILITATOR	To conduct a deliberative workshop with eight to sixteen participants, it is sufficient to have one moderator and one co-moderator, who is responsible for facilitating the group processes when needed and making sure that the participants are supplied with all materials required. The facilitators should be familiar with the topics of discussion, and suitably skilled in guiding and moderating the debates. Thus, they should be flexible, unbiased, empathetic, be respectful and enthusiastic.
WORKSHOP FORMAT	Policy scenario workshops can be held face-to-face or online (video-conferencing), depending on the availability of participants to meet in the same place. A combination of offline and online activities is also a good option when presence is not possible.

In SMARTEES, the following profiles of participants were relevant in the chosen cases of energy-related social innovations:

- 1. Promoters/pioneers:** those championed the social innovation at different stages; often members of the city council or civil society actors directly involved with the implementation of the social innovation.
- 2. Policy actors:** those in charge of and involved with the implementation of the energy-related social innovation.
- 3. Supporters:** key persons or institutions who actively endorsed the policy
- 4. Beneficiaries:** those who experienced a benefit from the SI (for example, resident's, households' tenants, neighbourhood associations)
- 5. External experts with profound knowledge on the SI.** Scientists, researchers, technology developers, etc.

SETTING THE AGENDA

A policy scenario workshop is scheduled to last one day to provide enough time to develop the alternative scenarios. However, the format is flexible, and the organizers can decide to schedule the workshop across multiple days. It would depend on the preference and ability of participants to attend a workshop for a whole day.

MATERIALS, RESOURCES, VENUE AND COSTS

Planning and organizing a deliberative workshop includes covering human resources to design and run the workshop as well as renting the venue, catering and covering supporting arrangements.

It is important that the **location** allows both for the plenary sessions and for working in small groups. Group work can be both in separate rooms (if available) or in the main room. It is recommended to settle the room four or eight weeks before the meeting and check that it has all the **resources** that you will need: Internet connection, computer/projector, air conditioning/heating, tables and chairs for everyone.

Work material: Flipchart, tape to hang sheets, recording equipment, laptop and projector, post-its, markers, printed versions of presentations, name tags, feedback form.

Other costs can be also considered, such as a reimbursement of travel costs or paying participants a small fee for their time and contribution.

DEALING WITH UNEXPECTED ISSUES

The development of the SMARTEES Policy Scenario workshops was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to restrictions for large group meetings, the workshops had to be adapted. In some cases, they were held partially face-to-face and in other cases and partially online (video-conferencing). If an online workshop is planned, it is recommended to customize the agenda and split the workshop into two or three sessions. The willingness to attend an online meeting could be scarcer and keeping people engaged in online discussions is challenging.

POLICY SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT PROTOCOL



A policy scenario workshop is a structured iterative process of deliberation, involving small group and plenary discussions, individual reflexive work and visioning exercises.

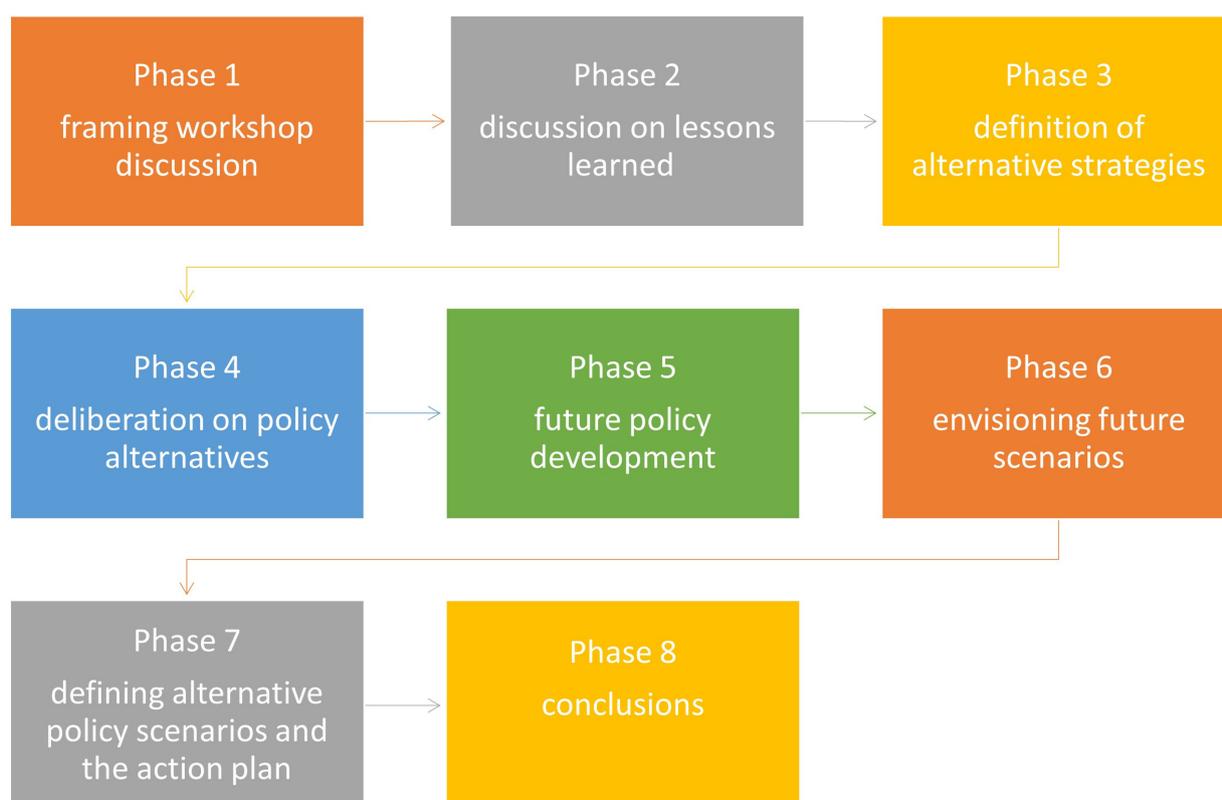
PHASES IN DEVELOPING THE POLICY SCENARIO WORKSHOP

Workshop organizers need to **set an agenda for the deliberative workshop**. They should keep in mind the goal of the workshop: learning from experience and developing a series of alternative policies based on the diverse perspectives and backgrounds involved in the workshops.

In the SMARTEES project, the workshops were built around the following goals:

- Identifying the **main lessons learned** in the design and implementation of a SI
- Identifying **alternative pathways**
- **Envisioning the future**: setting the goals, identifying barriers and drivers, and co-define future policy strategies.

The figure below presents an **overview of the protocol** for organizing the policy workshop. It is structured in **eight phases** that need to be covered in the workshop. This structure is defined for a workshop that combines plenary sessions and small group sessions.



FRAMING WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS

The objective of **phase 1** is to define the context of discussions and to have a mutual **understanding of the relevant dimensions for the SI**. The goals of the workshop are presented, the agenda, and what is expected from expert participants. Participants are offered valuable information related to the **current state of affairs and the results of the past policy implementation**.

IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT DIMENSIONS OF THE CASE

- In the SMARTEES policy workshops the researchers presented the **relevant dimensions for the SI** identified in the different research activities conducted in the case study.
- An **analysis of the storyline of the project**, the principal milestones and the **main actors** involved (both supporters and opponents) was done in advance.
- A table synthesizing the relevant dimensions and lesson learned was presented, and information related to each element was detailed by case responsible researchers. For example, the **strategies, tools and solutions** commonly used in the local energy social innovations to **ensure social acceptability SIs** were briefly introduced.



DISCUSSION ON LESSONS LEARNED



Phase 2 corresponds to the **discussion on lessons learned from the pilot implementations of energy-related social innovations**. The facilitators should first ask participants to identify the drivers, it is said, the key factors that were relevant for the development of the SI, including policy and social actors relevant for social acceptability.

SMARTTEES workshops focused on the obstacles and drivers and how they did/would overcome them. The following questions were addressed:



(1) What are the main dimensions that should be considered when planning the process of policy design?

(2) What are the factors/actors that did help to gain social acceptability?

(3) What were the obstacles you found in the implementation of this policy? How did you overcome them? What other barriers are you likely to encounter?

DEFINITION OF ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

The goal of phase 3 is to deliberate on promising interventions that could have been implemented. The following questions can be addressed:

(1) What is missing? (Other strategies, solutions, tools and instruments that could have been implemented or that are complementary to the policies already implemented).

(2) What would you do differently? (counterfactual scenario).

(3) What other strategies can you figure out how to sort out the obstacles and barriers?

(4) What other policies would you implement to take advantage of the drivers and positive outcomes of the policy so far?



DELIBERATION ON POLICY ALTERNATIVES

During **phase 4**, the presentation of the results of each group takes place. The discussion stimulates **mutual understanding** and the participants have a more nuanced picture of what would be the **most important dimensions to be considered in the definition of alternative scenarios**.

FUTURE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Phase 5 consists of the **presentation of the future policy implementation**. The objective is to develop alternative routes for the design and implementation of social innovation. **Scenario thinking** is contextualized as a (hypothetical) new development of the SI.

ENVISIONING FUTURE SCENARIOS

The purpose of phase 6 is to **generate the first ideas for the alternative scenarios**. The discussion will start with the **identification of the potential obstacles for future implementations**, and discuss **possible solutions to overcome them**.

DEFINING ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS

Phase 7 opens **prospects for concerted action**, cogenerates viable ways of implementation, and advances a **strategic action plan**.

Phase 7 in the SMARTEES policy scenarios revolved around the following issues:

- **Designing an action plan:** How to translate the alternative scenarios into an action plan for the start-up and implementation of the new alternative policy?
- **Defining implementation strategies:** Schedule the actions. What strategies would correspond to each time phase?
- **Orienting the action plan to the realization of specific interventions:** targeted communication and awareness-raising strategies, activation of social norms, addressing satisfaction of social and experiential needs, etc.

AGENT-BASED SIMULATIONS AS EXPERT TOOLS IN THE SERVICE OF DECISION-MAKING

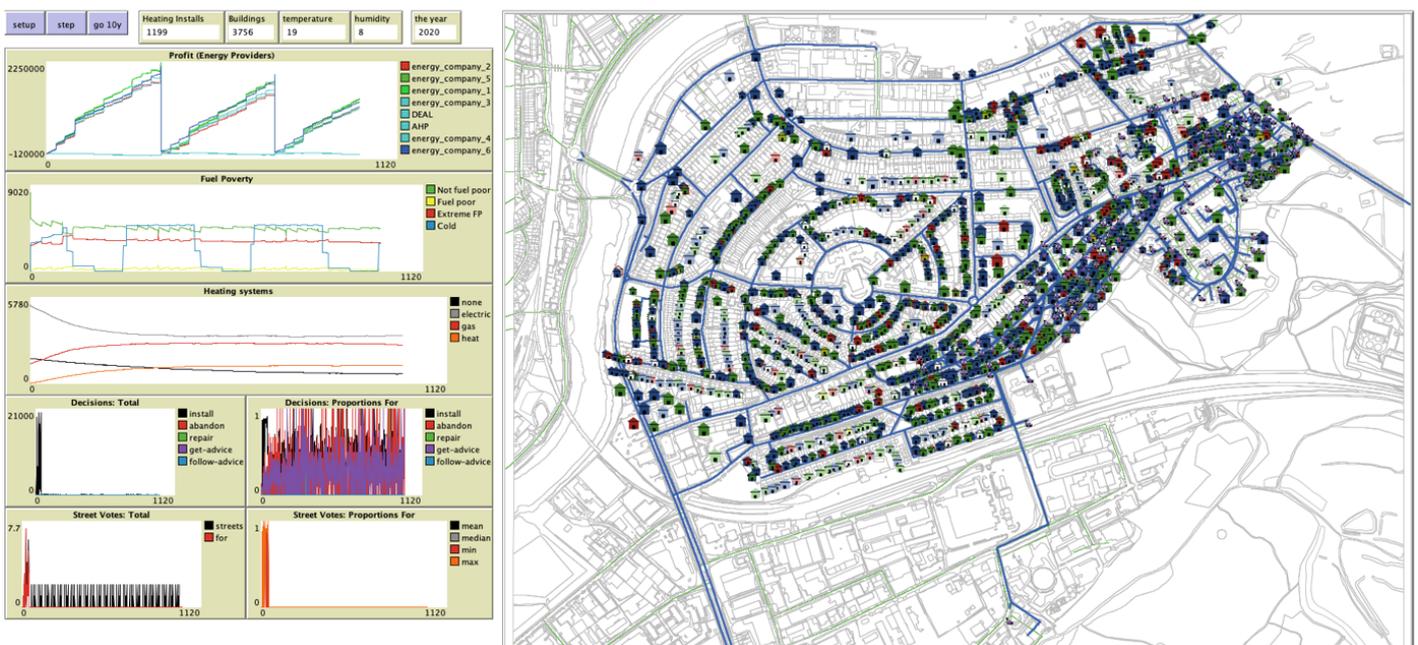
SMARTEES Policy scenario workshops aimed to define a series of alternative policy scenarios to be tested in agent-based simulations as expert tools in the service of decision-making.

Two rounds of policy workshops were organized. The first round followed the described protocol aiming at co-producing promising policy alternatives and counterfactual scenarios to be tested through **social simulations** exploring **what would have happened if alternative policy routes were taken**.

These scenarios were further refined with the participants in the second round, who concreted a series of alternative policies that, based on the ABM simulations, foster broad social acceptability of energy sustainability policies.

Alternative policy scenarios implemented in the agent-based models are presented in **deliverable 5.2. “Policy Recommendations for each cluster of case-studies. Insights from Policy Scenario Workshops”**. The results present a set of alternative policy interventions to experiment with in the implementation of future developments of the different energy-related social innovations.

As a result, a series of **policy recommendations to foster the co-design and social acceptability of energy-related social innovations** have been distilled, also highlighting the **best strategies to engage and empower citizens in energy transitions**.



KEY TAKE-AWAYS

01

Maximize time allocated to group discussions and keep presentations to a minimum.

02

Provide a safe environment in which participants can talk freely. Inform clearly about the goals of the workshop and guarantee the confidentiality and the anonymity of the discussions.

03

Provide enough time for everyone to share their views. Recognize the value of expertise from all participants, not just the 'experts'.

04

Be flexible both in timing and in adapting the workshop in case it takes an unexpected direction or unanticipated conflict arises.

05

Create a feedback form for the workshop. The evaluation of the workshop is useful for assessing what has been achieved and improve further similar initiatives.

06

Keep participants informed after the event. Provide them a summary of the workshop, recognize and clarify how participant's input has made a difference.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

MAXIMIZE FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

Physical meetings are the best choice for the workshop format, especially if participants do not know each other. Moreover, providing sufficient time for informal interaction is critical to bond and develop trust, which is essential to talk about past negative experiences in projects. When the online setting is needed, small break-out groups help to create a more comfortable environment that fosters free dialogue and reflexive thinking.

PREPARATORY TASKS

In the SMARTEES policy scenario workshops, some cases prepared individual homework activities to get feedback from the participants in advance. For this exercise to be successfully achieved, it is recommended that organizers provide participants personalized assistance to complete these tasks, facilitate the knowledge of the subject for the next phase, and follow up the accomplishment individually.

PROMOTE A CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT

Encouraging people to think creatively about what they might do differently can be challenging. Promoters, for example, usually tend to hold their roles and focus the discussions on real scenario approaches unless try to think "out-of-the-box".

You can deal with this issue by asking participants to think beyond current constraints ("if money, roads and planning were no obstacle"), and address broader concerns through radical actions.

A creative environment allows people to "move away" from the current situation to imagine alternative pathways and "come back" with new ideas to be further developed in the workshops.

Participants should feel free to express any ideas they want to put forward. This requires an **atmosphere of free expression** of all ideas that promote the creative process of the session.

TO LEARN MORE



[Handbook with guidelines for the co-production of future policy scenarios and interventions.](#) Deliverable 5.3, October 2021. SMARTEES project. Grant agreement No 763912.

[Policy Recommendations for each cluster of case-studies. Insights from Policy Scenario Workshops.](#) Deliverable 5.2, August 2021. SMARTEES project. Grant agreement No 763912.



[Theoretical framework for the definition of locally-embedded future policy scenarios.](#) Deliverable 5.1, October 2019. SMARTEES project. Grant agreement No 763912.



[SMARTEES Policy Sandbox Tool.](#) An online tool that introduces the history of a selection of SI cases and illustrates the outcomes of the policy scenario workshops through the ABM simulations.

[SMARTEES Videoblog.](#) An online resource that contains introductory videos on the five clusters of energy-related social innovations.



SMARTEES – Social Innovation Modelling Approaches to Realizing Transition to Energy Efficiency and Sustainability – is a transdisciplinary research project which aims to support the energy transition and improve policy design by developing alternative and robust policy pathways that foster citizen inclusion and take local peculiarities into account. To reach these objectives, SMARTEES examines five types of energy- and mobility-related local social innovation in ten front-runner cities and islands across Europe. SMARTEES aims to forecast the effects of policy measures and social innovation in similar local contexts, thereby supporting the improvement of policy design and decision-making. Through these means, the project will contribute to achieving a resilient, low-carbon and climate-friendly Energy Union that puts citizens at its core.

Coordinator: **Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)**

Duration: **2018 - 2021**

Project website: <https://local-social-innovation.eu/>

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