

RESEARCH REPORT

# ACCIDENTLY ON PURPOSE

BRINGING RADICAL INNOVATION IN  
FLEMISH SMEs AT INDUSTRY LEVEL  
THROUGH LARGE GROUP MEETINGS

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# 1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

## 1.1. STARTING POINT: THE FLANDERS DC GPS BRAINSTORM KIT

To stimulate creativity on the work floor, brainstorming sessions are often the preferred tool to help employees generating ideas. Brainstorming is ideally suited when companies are facing a clear problem that can be translated in a well-defined “how”-question, such as “How can we increase sales?” or “How will our new product look like?”. One brainstorming method that has received considerable attention in Flanders the past few years is the GPS brainstorm kit designed by Flanders DC. The brainstorm kit helps companies to come up with up to 150 ideas per hour and action plans in a structured way. Since the launch of the tool in 2005, more than 7000 companies have made use of it to brainstorm about possible future evolutions.

In preparing the brainstorm session, GPS requires the organisation to define a clear question that will be the central topic and to come up with five trends that will serve as inspiration for new ideas and that shed a new light on the topic. Subsequently, the participants are selected. A GPS session ideally involves eight to 12 people from different departments and different functional levels. Next to people from inside the organisation, 1/3 of the group should consist of external participants: customers, suppliers, other organisations, etc. Often, external participants emphasize completely different areas than people from within the organisation.

Once the brainstorm session starts, participants are placed around a table in pairs, with the GPS board in the middle. A summary of each of the five trends plus one free domain are placed on the board. Each pair has one of the six domains in front of them. In a first round, participants are asked to come up with ideas that answer the central question and that relate to the trend that is in front of them. They should generate ideas without thinking about possible limitations. The free domain is meant for all ideas that do not fall under any of the selected trends. Every eight to 12 minutes, the GPS board is turned and each pair has a new trend in front of them. After six turns, everyone has their initial domain back in front of them and they are asked to classify the ideas in that domain into ideas that are realisable in the short term and those that are realisable in the long term.

The second round is all about selecting the good ideas. Participants can vote for the ideas that they would like to see realised the most. Ideas with three votes or more are then written down on a flipchart. Ideas can be merged together to create a new, larger idea. Every participant is asked to make their top-3 of ideas. Through the discussion afterwards, the top ideas will become apparent.

In a final round, the top ideas are divided amongst the group. For each of these ideas, a project card is made up for further developing the idea. The project card contains a short description of the idea, its benefits and possible pitfalls, what can be done to overcome these pitfalls, what needs to change in order to realise the idea and what parties are required to do so.

After the brainstorm session, a report is made up and sent to all participants. The report includes an overview of all ideas that were placed on the GPS board, the list of top ideas and

the project cards.

## 1.2. THE GPS' BLIND SPOT

The GPS brainstorm kit is a good way to enhance the creativity in a group and to generate a large number of ideas that can serve as a solution to a problem (Osborn, 1963). Brainstorming helps to come up with all sorts of ideas or possible alternatives, based on which a decision can be made. As such, the brainstorming technique focusses on quantity, more than on quality: as the number of ideas increases, the chance that a valuable solution is found rises.

However, there are several downsides to this technique, and it cannot be used in every situation. First of all, in a GPS brainstorm exercise, only 12 people can participate, which means that possibly, not every stakeholder who has an interest in solving the problem is involved in defining the solution. Consequently, the risk exists that the solution does not fit all stakeholders' reality. Secondly, groupthink could occur. Groupthink is a phenomenon where people in a group adjust their opinions, attitudes or behaviour to align with the norms of the group. Members of a group feel pressured to leave critical, unusual or unpopular views behind, strive for consensus in the group and come up with socially desirable ideas. Individual group members cease to make moral judgments or test reality as a result of group pressures (Robbins, Judge, & Campbell, 2010).

As a result, brainstorming may generate solutions that are not that creative after all. It is also not the most efficient technique to use when you want to generate a lot of ideas. Over the years, research has shown that individuals can generate more ideas when they're working alone than during a group brainstorming session (Robbins et al., 2010). Moreover, it is a technique that can be used when you want answers to a very concrete and specific question. However, nowadays, organisations are confronted with problems that are not easily reduced to one single "how"-question. Questions and problems are broader than that and consequently these cannot be tackled with the GPS kit alone.

## 1.3. PROJECT SCOPE

Future Search is a methodology that complements the GPS brainstorm kit, because it responds to these different needs of customers. Where the GPS brainstorm kit is suited for generating as many ideas as possible in a short amount of time for a very concrete question, Future Search is a large group meeting that involves all stakeholders and first explores the problem situation thoroughly, before coming up with possible solutions. Unlike GPS, Future Search is focused not on the immediate problem, but on the hidden assumptions behind it, which block creativity. By exploring the situation through story-telling, these barriers are removed and fertile ground is created for radical innovation. The Future Search methodology is hence more fit for large scale, even societal, radical change. This method should be used when the need exists to shift the paradigm of thought altogether and when a large, diverse group of people and/or organisations is involved in realising this paradigm shift. It is a conversation with many stakeholders focused on designing a new future (Norum, 2005).

In this project, we aim to develop a new intervention tool, that is based on the Future Search

principles, and that is more suited to solve the more complex questions that Flemish organisations face today. Furthermore, this project will determine the conditions in which each of the Flanders DC tools or their combination is most effective.

## 2. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to successfully develop a new instrument, which is a large group meeting, based on the Future Search principles, we first made a complete review of existing literature on this topic, bridging findings from different research streams, such as diversity in the workplace, mechanisms and moderators of creativity and innovation in organizations, and the impact of diversity on creativity in teams and organizations.

Based on these theoretical insights, a new instrument was developed, being a large group meeting that is based on the Future Search methodology. Future Search is a very powerful method, but in its original format, it takes three days. Engaging Flemish participants for a training or workshop for longer than one day, is something that is quite difficult to do, according to the Flanders DC experts. That is why we adapted the Future Search methodology to meet this one-day constraint. Once the instrument was developed and adjusted, it was tested and applied to a real problem situation of a Flemish organisation, our partner during this project, OVAM. A one-day Future Search conference was organised with about 40 different stakeholders of OVAM.

Because the aim of this project was to compare the existing GPS brainstorm kit to this new methodology and determine in what conditions each of them is most applicable, we held two more interventions during this project. After the Future Search conference, we held two additional GPS brainstorm sessions with the same central question as was used during the Future Search conference. One GPS session was held with participants who did not have any previous knowledge on the central question and who did not attend the Future Search conference before. A second GPS brainstorm session was organised with people who also participated in the Future Search conference. These participants thus had a much deeper understanding of the problem situation at hand, since they explored it into detail during the preceding Future Search conference on the topic.

After all interventions took place, we evaluated the different processes and the conditions in which these interventions took place. We also presented the three results to our project partner, OVAM. They compared the creativity of the different sets of results and their value and usefulness to handle the central problem situation.

# 3. WHAT IS FUTURE SEARCH?

When an organisation encounters a complex question, Future Search offers an inspiring and effective solution to approach the issue together with a broad network of stakeholders. It is a principle-based planning meeting that aims to help people take responsibility (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010). Many organisations have used this technique in order to change their world to a certain extent. IKEA, for instance, redesigned its product supply chain and set up a sustainability plan for the environment with the ultimate goal to recycle all of their products. UNICEF has also made use of Future Search to organise the release of child soldiers from involuntary servitude. Future Search is used to answer questions concerning strategic planning, innovation, organisational restructuring or other major changes.

The core idea is to organise a meeting and get the whole system in the room, that way integrating different perceptions of the world. Future Search gathers 60 to 100 participants from different stakeholder groups for two and a half days in order to create a shared vision and action plan for improving the system in the future. Bringing together different independent stakeholders often involves differing points of view and participants could be encouraged to try to resolve their differences. However, during the Future Search they are not supposed to focus on the problems and conflicts that arise between them. The specific design of Future Search obliges participants to leave their existing patterns of thought and put aside their prejudices. Throughout the entire process, conflicts are put aside and instead, common ground between different stakeholders is created, which leads to action plans that are valued by all and that no one can do alone (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010). Future Search is based on four conditions for success. These four conditions are mutually amplifying and aim to create an open, visionary process.

## 3.1. PRINCIPLE 1: GET THE “WHOLE SYSTEM IN THE ROOM”

The idea is to involve all people in the process who are affected by the problem and benefit from solving it. The stakeholders that participate in Future Search should answer to certain requirements. Aside from diversity in function, demographics and geography, all stakeholders should:

- ▶ Have the **authority** to act independently
- ▶ Dispose of sufficient **time, money and influence**
- ▶ Be an **expert** in the topic
- ▶ Have **information** that is of interest to other stakeholders
- ▶ Feel the **need** to solve the problem

This mix of stakeholders makes it more likely that action plans will be executed and that these actions are more realistic and right. The system then is made up by key stakeholders who rarely meet in daily life. The goal of Future Search is twofold. First, you want to make sure that every participant's experience is tapped. As such, everyone present will know more about the whole system before the start of the meeting. Second, you should involve those who can act without having to ask permission from anyone not present.

### **3.2. PRINCIPLE 2: EXPLORE THE “WHOLE ELEPHANT” BEFORE SEEKING TO FIX ANY PART**

The second guiding principle boils down to getting everyone in the room discussing the same world. It is often the case that each party interprets reality from their own perspective, and sees the whole as an extension of their world. To counteract this phenomenon, participants are asked to share their perceptions and interpretations with each other and describe their world in detail. As such, misunderstandings are reduced and action plans are based on the same starting point. The “whole elephant” can be explored by integrating the past and the present of the central topic in a global context.

### **3.3. PRINCIPLE 3: FOCUS ON COMMON GROUND AND FUTURE ACTION, NOT PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS**

It is only natural that participants from different stakeholder groups meet, differences in opinion and conflicts arise. Even though participants are encouraged to voice differing points of view, Future Search is not the right occasion to resolve those conflicts or try to change each other’s mind. Differences in opinion should be considered as additional information to fully understand the system, but they should not be addressed during this meeting. Instead Future Search participants are encouraged to focus on common stakes. However, they are not supposed to compromise but create a genuine common ground on which future action can be based and a sustainable community can be built.

### **3.4. PRINCIPLE 4: HAVE PEOPLE SELF-MANAGE THEIR OWN GROUPS AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTION**

Work groups on the Future Search are fully managed by the participants themselves and do not depend on facilitators. All participants get total freedom to generate information, interpret it and take action. This is done in an environment with reduced hierarchy, passivity or conflict. Participants must be allowed to make their own choices in every step of the process. Moreover, the Future Search organizers do not coordinate follow-up plans, nor do they organise data during the meeting. The small work groups are only advised to assign the responsibilities to different roles, and these roles should be rotated among different group members:

- ▶ A discussion leader
- ▶ A recorder
- ▶ A reporter
- ▶ A timekeeper

By rotating the different roles, almost every participant in the room gets the chance to take on a leadership role, which increases their feelings of control and accountability.

# 4. PROCESS

Future Search is designed in such a way that participants feel more capable to take control over their environment. They get the opportunity to learn from others who perceive the same situation differently as they do and are stimulated to take responsibility. In this type of conference, the process of making sustainable connections between all stakeholders and create a focus on future action is just as important as finding an answer to the central problem.

As was mentioned before, the ultimate goal of a Future Search is to develop an action-oriented vision for the future to which all stakeholders feel committed. It aims to affect the context in which the desired changes should occur by bringing together the whole system (i.e. all stakeholders) and providing them with the opportunity to get acquainted with each other's vision on the central problem (principles 1 and 2). In a Future Search, different stakeholders should not focus on the points on which they disagree, rather focus on what links them together and start from there to create a common ground (principle 3). Finally, participants are strongly suggested to take control over their own situation, thereby creating a sense of responsibility for the future (principle 4).

The four core principles of Future Search are translated into a blueprint for the conference. The process entails three phases (Van Der Ploeg & Stoppeleburg, 2006):

- ▶ a preparatory phase, in which the focus is on constructing the central question and selecting proper stakeholders and participants
- ▶ the conference
- ▶ the realisation of the action plans after the conference.

## 4.1. THE PREPARATORY PHASE

Because interventions by facilitators during the Future Search are brought back to a minimum, it is quite difficult to predict the results of the conference. However, in order to maximise chances of outcomes to be superior, spending sufficient time on planning the conference in the preparatory phase is of the utmost importance. The preparatory phase serves several purposes and the duration depends on the type of Future Search: when an organisation is the initiator of the process, it is feasible to plan the conference in a few days. A Future Search for a community, with multiple sponsors and diverse political issues to address, can last months.

### 4.1.1. Composing a steering committee

The preparatory phase starts with the initiator inviting six to 10 people from different stakeholder groups to be part of the steering committee. The stakeholder network depends on the purpose of the Future Search. The steering committee's job is frame the central problem and to articulate the central question of the Future Search. Besides, this group has the crucial task to get the right people to attend the conference. It is crucial that every member of the steering committee sees benefit in organising the Future Search and fully supports the initiator. It is crucial to create commitment in such a way that they feel ownership to set up the conference, yet without letting them claim responsibility over the process.

#### 4.1.2. Naming and framing the Future Search

By discussing the different backgrounds and the purpose of the Future Search with the different stakeholders in the steering committee, the central question of the conference can be formulated. The central question emerges out of a combination of ideas from the steering committee members. It is crucial to spend sufficient time on this matter, since this question will determine who to invite to attend the conference. Overall, the central question should answer following requirements:

- ✓ Simple and clear
- ✓ Challenging
- ✓ Creates energy
- ✓ Ensures focus during the process
- ✓ Digs up assumptions
- ✓ Opens possibilities

#### 4.1.3. Selecting and approaching the stakeholders

In order to come up with a list of invitees, the steering committee is asked to brainstorm over all possible groups and key people who could have a stake in the central problem. They are not seen as representative of their organisation. It is their experience and perspective as a stakeholder that is important and they should not speak for anyone but themselves. The goal is to reach as many layers of the organisation and functions as possible, including clients, experts and suppliers, preferably also considering an equal distribution of several demographics, such as age, gender, education, and race to ensure diversity. Furthermore, in order to get “the whole system in the room”, following criteria should be beard in mind when selecting attendees (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010):

- ✓ Authority to act
- ✓ Resources
- ✓ Expertise
- ✓ Information that others need
- ✓ Need – people who are affected by the outcome

It is key to engage enough stakeholder groups to get sufficient perspectives on the central topic. On average, 60 to 100 people participate in the Future Search. Experience shows that there have to be at least 30 people present in order to meet diversity requirements and to enhance opportunities for breakthroughs to occur. Ideally, there are eight groups of eight people. As such, eight mixed groups can be created with one person from each stakeholder group.

Furthermore, it is crucial that the different stakeholder groups need to work together in order to obtain desirable results. When people are put together who only are interested in the topic but do not feel the need to cooperate in the future, they are best left out of the Future Search, since this will only lead to good discussions, but little action (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010).

#### 4.1.4. Practical preparations

Apart from the more strategic aspects, the steering committee is also responsible for the carry out of several practical issues:

- ✓ The **invitations** should be sent out. This can be done via e-mail or over the phone. It is opportune to stress how participants can benefit from attending the conference and ask if there are barriers to attend that the committee can remove.
- ✓ **Review the design.** Based on the different steering committee meetings, the Future Search design can be adapted to the specific needs of the steering committee.
- ✓ The steering committee is responsible for a few administrative tasks. First, they should select a proper **location**. This location must foresee rooms with windows and good acoustics. At the site, **food** must be arranged for, as well as flipcharts, markers, and other **materials**. Participants should be **registered** and participant lists are to be made up. **Group divisions** should be made up, as well as the **participant workbooks**.
- ✓ All participating and non-attending stakeholders should be able to consult the data that are generated during the Future Search conference. Therefore, it is advisable that all output is **documented** with photos, written documents, charts and graphs. That way, participants can review the action plans they committed to. These documents can be communicated with both participants and other interested parties in different ways: via newsletters, a website, reports, and so on.

## 4.2. THE FUTURE SEARCH CONFERENCE

The success of a Future Search conference depends on the extent to which the four core principles are applied. The design as suggested by Weisbord and Janoff (2010) has been modified repeatedly since the late 1980s. Generally, a Future Search conference lasts two and a half days and knows a specific sequence.

#### 4.2.1. Insurance policies

Four policies are best to be respected in order to protect against loss of information.

- ✓ **Encourage participants to attend the whole meeting**  
It is quite difficult to come up with a desirable future if participants do not know how they arrived at the common ground. Therefore, full attendance is required.
- ✓ **Meet under healthy conditions**  
Because this meeting takes a considerable amount of time, it is very important to ensure a pleasant atmosphere. This can be reached by providing for a nice location and good food. Preferably, the rooms are airy, with windows, good acoustics.

✓ **Allow three days for 16 to 20 hours work**

The preferred schedule for a Future Search conference is to start at lunch on day 1 and end in the afternoon on day 3. According to Weisbord and Janoff (2010), two and a half days is better than one or two days. People need the time to let the things they hear during the conference “soak” through. That is why two sleep-overs are required. In order to keep people engaged throughout almost three days, it is advisable to end the day in the middle of important tasks so that participants have the feeling that they are not finished yet and therefore pick up quickly the next day.

✓ **Invite people to take public responsibility for follow-up**

Each Future Search conference is ended by asking all stakeholders to publicly say what their next actions will be.

#### 4.2.2. Day 1: Welcome! The past and the present.

The Future Search begins with a welcoming speech by the initiator on the purpose of the conference and what he/she would like to see as outcomes in three days. Furthermore, participants are introduced to the way of working and learn what is expected of them. On the first day, the focus is on the past and the present. The historical context of the central question is explored, as well as current trends and developments.

##### Session 1: The Past

The first session is meant for participants to see the world from others' point of view. People sit together in mixed groups, with at least one representative of each stakeholder group, and are asked to write down key events in the world, their own lives and those related to the Future Search topic. Then, these events have to be written on the different **time lines** (personal, global and local) on the wall. Each group has to focus on one time line and tell stories to each other, covering implications for the central topic of the conference. One of the groups is asked to look at all three time lines and try to find connections between them. In a next step, all groups make up a picture of its past and report this towards the whole group. After these presentations, short in-group discussions are held about what they heard, followed by a whole-group dialogue. The essence of this first session is that participants develop a common picture of the world as it was and as it is today.

##### Session 2: The Present

After a break, participants move into a second session that aims to get everyone in the room talking about *all* influences on the central topic in order to make the complexity of the problem clear to everyone (Van Der Ploeg & Stoppelenburg, 2006). The idea is to create a **mind map** that covers everything that is important to the Future Search topic. On the mind map, the central topic is placed in the middle and **trends** that influence the topic are placed around them. These trends can be social, economic, technical, political, environmental, etc. Participants can call out any trend they can think of that has an impact. The mind map is created with everyone in the room. As such, participants hear what others are thinking and can stimulate each other to come up with new trends. Trends that belong together are clustered and marked by the same colour.

Subsequently, every participant gets seven dots which they may stick on the mind map next to the trends they consider to be most important. Every stakeholder group has its own colour. As such, it quickly becomes clear which trends matter the most to which stakeholders and who

shares the same concerns.

#### 4.2.3. Day 2: The present, the future and common ground.

##### Session 2: The Present [continued]

The second day of the Future Search conference starts by selecting the six to eight clusters of trends that count the most dots. Participants sit together in stakeholder groups and re-evaluate the trends they find most important. The **stakeholder groups** are asked to develop their own **mind map** that reflects how these trends are related, what actions they have taken upon them and what actions they plan in the future. The stakeholder mind maps are then presented to the whole group, after which a group discussion takes place about what people take away from these mind maps. Often, people are surprised that different groups share the same concerns.

This descriptive task is followed by an affective task: stakeholder groups describe how they feel about their actions related to the Future Search topic. They are asked to share their **prouds and sorries** concerning the central topic in order to make them own up for what they have done. By making public what people are proud and sorry about, chances of going into denial are limited.

##### Session 3: Focus on the Future

By now, participants have a clear view of the past, the present and others' stakes in the central problem. Based on this information, they can start imagining what their desired future would look like. In mixed groups, they are asked to come up with a vision of how the central Future Search topic is ideally dealt with in five, 10 or 20 years from now. Each mixed group has to make a list of concrete examples of how they are handling the central topic now, which barriers they had to overcome in order to get there and how they did it.

These **future scenarios** are then presented to the entire group. Participants are encouraged to present their ideal future in an active, creative way, for example through a song, a sketch or a play. That way they get a new boost of energy. Moreover, by acting out what their ideal future would look like, participants get a feel of what it could mean if their dreams become reality.

##### Session 4: Discover Common Ground

The last session on day 2 of the Future Search conference focusses on the common ground between the different stakeholders. Common ground is defined as the propositions that get full support of everyone present. As was mentioned before, common ground serves as the basis on which future actions will be formulated. In order to discover the common ground between the different stakeholders, the mixed groups are asked to list up eight **propositions** they believe **everyone present wants** for the central Future Search topic. Afterwards, the separate propositions of each group are read out loud to the whole group and everyone together decides which items are similar and should be grouped together in the same cluster. Each person present can make suggestions about where each item belongs. Participants do all of the clustering and editing themselves. If there is disagreement about where certain items go, they are simply put on the "not agreed" list.

#### 4.2.4. Day 3: Action!

The final day of the Future Search conference starts with **confirming the common ground** that was discovered the day before. The lists of similar items are read out loud and consequently, people discuss whether or not the items should stay on that list or be replaced to other lists. This process goes on until everyone present is satisfied. If an item is discussed longer than five to ten minutes, it is put on the “not agreed” list. These items are not meant to be discussed further during the Future Search conference, but merely serve as additional information. This does not mean that conflicts should be avoided or that these items are trivial, but they should not be considered when developing future action plans.

In a next step, participants are invited to choose the list of items they are most interested in. Together with other participants who are interested in the same theme, they summarize these items in a few sentences and formulate a goal statement that is supported by all and that can be understood by those who are not present. By now, the common ground is confirmed

### Session 5: Action Planning

The last session of the Future Search conference focusses on action plans. Everyone is free to choose the common-ground statement they would like to translate into an action plan, a programme or a project. They are asked to specify who will get involved, what their actions will be, what the due date is and which resources they need to realise their action plan. The action plans are then presented to the whole group.

To close the conference, the initiator of the Future Search conference takes the floor and explains how the work that was done during the three-day conference will be continued, where participants can find the report of the conference, when the review meeting will be, and so on.

# 5. ADAPT THE FUTURE SEARCH

Over the years, Weisbord and Janoff (2010), the initiators of Future Search, have observed countless Future Search conferences take place in different forms and in different settings. They came to the conclusion that, as long as the four conditions for success and the main underlying principles were respected, every variation of Future Search is able to be successful. The authors define a Future Search conference to be successful when participants are able to do things they value that they could not do before. They do not preach that their original Future Search method cannot be changed in any way are that it must follow a precise prescription. Sessions can be approached in a different way and timeframes may vary. However, the authors do recommend that the sequence, past – present – future – common ground – action is respected, since this is applicable to any situation or problem and it enables the participants to develop solutions based on their own expertise.

Before we could adapt the Future Search, it is important to first understand the core principles and theories that have influenced this methodology. The Future Search programme has several roots, but is mainly based on the differentiation-integration (D/I) theory.

## 5.1. THE DIFFERENTIATION-INTEGRATION (D/I) THEORY

The D/I theory (Janoff & Weisbord, 2004) has formed the basis philosophy for facilitating large scale group interventions for over 30 years. During a Future Search conference, participants move through consecutive cycles of differentiation to integration. Differentiation refers to distinguishing, classifying or separating. Integration is about making one, harmonizing and blending. In a Future Search meeting, people want to integrate their stakes for a shared purpose. Through the various sessions, participants should differentiate without excluding anyone and integrate without feeling forced to unity. D/I theory states that to integrate, people should first differentiate. Overall, during the conference, participants can first share their vision on the world with others and only then, these differing visions are integrated into joint action plans.

The D/I theory is demonstrated in three ways in the process of the Future Search conference. First of all, **differentiation** is fostered by having participants speak individually or work in stakeholder groups, people who have the same interest at heart. For example, when the central question of the conference is about the strategic planning of a university, we make groups of professors, students, parents, student administrators and government representatives. Secondly, for other sessions participants are asked to work together in mixed groups, which are groups of different stakeholders, that way representing the whole system. Due to this, people get the opportunity to **integrate** their differing perspectives on the matter. Thirdly, every time small groups, either stakeholder or mixed groups, have to work on a task, they are asked to report their work to the whole group. That way, the conversations that were held in the small groups (**differentiation**) are **integrated** in the debriefing with the large group. In the Future Search conference, participants move from getting to know the diverse perspectives of different stakeholders on the central problem, towards discovering the common ground that exists between them.

Through this continuous cycle of differentiation – integration, participants get a better view on

their own stakes in the problem at hand and discover new insights, creative ideas, feelings and points of view of other participants. By repeatedly getting to know the differences in the whole group and by regarding them as being innate characteristics of the whole system, the group moves to becoming a “mature working group”. According to Janoff and Wesibord (2004), mature groups can work through their differences much more easily, focus on the future and hence solve problems in a more efficient and effective way.

## 5.2. EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS

Since the launch of Future Search in 1982, innumerable large scale group meetings have been organised that follow the process and structure as it was introduced by Janoff and Weisbord. Over the years, the method has been evaluated by many and more than often the original method was adjusted based on their experience. The criticisms and suggestions for improvement of the Future Search method have been collected in academic literature.

Oels (2002) for instance, summarizes the major criticisms that were brought up against the step-by-step design of a Future Search conference in the academic press and compares these to empirical insights. On a **general level**, several remarks came up. First, the very strict agenda of the conference may cause participants to feel compelled and do not perform the different tasks with an intrinsic motivation, which may decrease the chances of getting valuable outcomes (Emery & Purser, 1996). Also, it was often the case that participants did not know what the conference was all about. Hence, more time should be spent on explaining the problem situation and the ultimate goal of the conference. Second, participants often felt frustrated, angry and helpless during this type of large scale group meeting. Participants attributed these feelings to the extreme longevity of the conference or to the fact that they had to stand up for too long.

When looking at the evaluation of the different sessions of a Future Search conference, Oels (2002) also found several points of critique for each of them. The **time-lines session** at the start of the conference is criticised for not leaving room for a proper introduction of the central problem situation and for getting to know other participants. Therefore, it is recommended that facilitators foresee some time for exercises where participants can introduce themselves to each other. In the second session of the conference, participants are asked to sit in the large group and make up a **mind-map** of trends that influence the central topic together. Both theory and practice have pointed to the fact that this mind-map may come across as overwhelming and this may bring about feelings of negativity and dysfunctional and avoiding behaviour (Emery & Purser, 1996). A next step focusses on what participants feel most **proud and sorry** about in relation to the central topic. Previous conferences have shown that this session was considered to be the least necessary part of the conference (Oels, 2002). This may have to do with the fact that this session has a very American approach and may not be well received by other cultures. On the contrary, the session where participants have to think about their ideal **future scenarios** is very well received. According to many, this session generates a lot of positive energy in the room. It could be that having people fantasize about the possibilities that the future may bring, has the capacity to excite people. The next phase focusses on finding the **common ground** that exists between participants. This session was criticized on several points: participants felt that the common ground statements often lack detail to be meaningful, that they may be incompatible and that they are not ranked according to their priority. Finally, the last session, where participants have to come up with concrete **action plans**, was considered to be too short in comparison to the other sessions. Also, many were completely

stunned when they heard that every action plan calls for someone who is responsible to execute it and that they should continue their work once the conference was over. Again, these observations point to the absolute necessity of framing the conference at the start and explaining what is expected of participants.

Based on this knowledge and in consultation with OVAM and Flanders DC, we developed an alternative Future Search method that is based on the four conditions for success and on the differentiation-integration theory, and that takes into account the insights we got from academic literature and from other empirical evidence. We created a large scale group meeting that can be held in one day. The adapted Future Search conference contains the same sessions as the original Future Search, except for the ‘prouds and sorries’ – session. We chose to leave this session out, because of the aforecited criticisms and mostly to save time and meet the one-day constraint. You can find a detailed planning of the adapted Future Search conference in the next section.

# 6. SCENARIO AND GUIDELINES FOR THE ADAPTED FUTURE SEARCH

The original Future Search format was altered to a one-day conference. Below, you can find a detailed time schedule as well as the concrete instructions facilitators should give to the participants. This format was set up, bearing in mind that the group of participants would be limited to 40 to 45 people.

## 6.1. TIME SCHEDULE

08:00 – 08:45	Welcome & introduction to Future Search and the central question
08:45 – 10:30	<b>Session 1: Focus on the past and the present</b> Goal: Discover each other's view on the central topic and have everyone talking about the same world.
10:30 – 10:45	Break
10:45 – 11:45	<b>Session 2: Focus on the common reality</b> Goal: Create a mind-map of different trends that have an impact on the central topic
11:45 – 12:45	Lunch
12:45 – 14:00	<b>Session 3: Focus on the different realities</b> Goal: Create a mind-map per stakeholder group
14:00 – 14:15	Break
14:15 – 15:45	<b>Session 4: Focus on the future</b> Goal: Create your ideal future scenario for the central topic
15:45 – 16:15	Break
16:15 – 18:00	<b>Session 5 : Discover common ground</b> Goal: Find out what everyone present wants for the central topic
18:00 – 19:00	Dinner
19:00 – 20:30	<b>Session 6: Action plans</b> Goal: Set up action plans for the short and the long term
20:30	Closing the conference

## 6.2. GUIDELINES

Before the Future Search conference starts, you make up two group divisions. On the one hand, participants should work in stakeholder groups for certain sessions. Make sure that each stakeholder group has an equal number of participants. On the other hand, they will also work together in mixed groups, with one representative of each stakeholder group. When participants arrive at the conference, you can already give them the two groups they will participate in.

### 6.2.1. Welcome & introduction

Given the importance of framing the purpose of the conference in a decent way (Emery & Purser, 1996; Oels, 2002), we foresee a considerable amount of time on the introduction. The adapted Future Search conference begins with a welcoming speech by the initiator, in our case OVAM, in which they explain the context of the central question. They elaborate on the purpose of the conference and what they would like to see as outcomes for the day. After the welcoming speech by the initiators, the conference facilitators give an introduction on Future Search. They elaborate on the Future Search principles, the way of working and run through the agenda for the day.

After the introduction, participants also get to know each other. Since they are already sitting in the mixed groups they will spend most of the day in, they now get about 10 minutes to introduce themselves to the others in their group and say what stakeholder group they are representing. Finally, they are asked to stand up per stakeholder group and shortly introduce themselves to the whole group. This way, participants get to know each other and learn who represents which stakeholder group.

### 6.2.2. Session 1: Focus on the past and the present

The goal of the first session of the day is to discover everyone's view on the world and find out how we got to this point, and to the central problem situation. There are **three time lines** on the wall, each showing the period of 1980 until today:

- ▶ A GLOBAL timeline on which people can write down world events that have shaped the society of today.
- ▶ A PERSONAL timeline on which people can write down personal experiences that made them to the person they are today.
- ▶ A LOCAL timeline on which they can write down important events that can be related to the central topic.

In the first part of this session, participants get about 30 minutes to write down as many events as possible on all three timelines, either in words or in drawings. Afterwards, in the following 45 minutes, they are asked to sit with their small mixed group again. One third of the groups are asked to summarize the global timeline in a story that describes how the world has changed over the past 30 years and which events were crucial in this story. One third of the groups summarize the personal timeline and recapitulate the experiences that people bring to this conference. The other third of the groups examine the local timeline and compose a story of the events of the last 30 years that are related to the central topic. Each group should also think

about the implications their story has on the central topic.

Every group is asked to write down or draw their story on a flipchart and prepare a presentation of about 3 minutes. At the end of the session, each small group reports their findings to the whole group.

### 6.2.3. Session 2: Focus on the common reality

After a short break, the second session takes place where all participants work together. In the next 45 minutes, a mind-map is created together with the whole group. The goals of the session is to create a broad context in which dialogue can take place and based on which decisions can be made. We want everyone in the room talking about the same reality.

At the mind-map wall, the central Future Search topic is written in the centre. Participants are asked to think of trends that affect the central topic and that should be taken into account when planning the future of the central topic. Trends are lines of directions or movements that influence the current situation or future and can be social, economic, technological, political or environmental. This session can be seen as a “brainstorm” session with the whole group: the trends are not evaluated, there is no censorship, people do not need to agree.

Everyone can participate and can shout out trends they believe have an influence on the central topic. It can be a new trend, which should be indicated with the word “new”, or trends related to another trend, which should be indicated by the words “related to”. The person who names the trends says where it belongs on the mind-map.

When they are finished, each participant gets five coloured dots to put on the mind map branches they want others to pay attention to and are of highest concern to them. Every stakeholder group gets a different colour. As such, others can immediately “see” what is important to each group.

### 6.2.4. Session 3: focus on the different realities

At the start of the third session, we ask two volunteers to circle the three mind-map branches that have the most dots. These trends are written down on a flipchart by the facilitators. This way, everyone present knows which trends are considered to be important by most participants that are in the room today.

The third session aims to discover what trends matter to each stakeholder group and how they are handling these trends today and in the future. Participants get the assignment to sit together with their stakeholder group and are asked to identify the three or four trends that are of the highest concern to them. They get 45 minutes to draw their own mind-map on which they indicate how these trends relate to one another. Additionally, they should answer the following questions:

- ▶ What actions do you take today to anticipate on these trends?
- ▶ What actions do you plan to take in the future?

Every stakeholder group is asked to prepare a presentation of four minutes that they will show to the whole group.

### 6.2.5. Session 4: Focus on the future

Up until now, we have got a pretty clear image of how the world looks to everyone today and what the common reality is. In the fourth session, we will have a look at what the ideal future looks like according to everyone. Participants work together in their small mixed groups to compose a scenario of how the community would look like 10 years ahead of today.

Facilitators ask all participants to visualise themselves 10 years into the future and think about how the central problem situation is ideally handled then. Their ideal future scenario should be

- ✓ **Attainable:** the knowhow to implement the scenario should already exist
- ✓ **Desirable:** the community will benefit from it
- ✓ **Motivating:** they should be ready, willing and able to implement it

On a flipchart, they have to list

- ▶ how policies look like
- ▶ how all stakeholders interact with each other
- ▶ how to ensure continuing progress
- ▶ how to measure if their scenario is successful

Once they have developed their vision for the future, they are asked to think back about today and also write down which steps they had to take during these 10 years in order to have their ideal future become reality. Afterwards, every group has 5 minutes to present their ideal scenarios to the whole group in the most creative way possible. By acting out their ideal future, participants get a feeling of what it could mean if their dreams would become reality.

### 6.2.6. Session 5: Discover common ground

Now that we know what the ideal future looks like according to everyone in the room, we can have a look at what all stakeholders have in common. For this session, participants also work together in mixed groups. In the first 30 minutes, every small group is asked to make up a list of eight propositions, values, themes they believe everyone in the room wants in relation to the central problem situation.

Next, this list of eight propositions is cut up in separate items. Each item is read out loud to the whole group and then placed on a blank flipchart at the wall. Similar items go together. This process continues until all separate items are sorted into categories. Participants are fully in charge of clustering the items and making up and editing the lists. It is important to note that the whole group has to agree with the item and with the category it is assigned to. If an item does not get full support of everyone present, it is put in the category "Not agreed". These items should not be seen as conflicts that should be resolved during the conference, but serve purely as additional information for all stakeholders.

The last step of this session exists in developing common ground statements. Every participant can join the cluster of items they feel most familiar with. These ad hoc groups are then asked to come up with a goal statement that reflects the items on the list. The statements describe the directions that should be followed when plans for the future are drawn up. These should be no longer than a couple of sentences and should be comprehensible to people who are not present that day. At the end of the session, all statements are then read out loud to the whole group.

### 6.2.7. Session 6: Action planning

The last session of the Future Search conference focusses on developing action plans for the future. Participants can stand with the common ground statement they prefer to transform into an action plan, a programme or a project. These ad hoc groups are asked to come up with an action they can execute nearly immediately and an action plan to be executed on the long term. For each action, they should write down on a worksheet:

- ▶ How they will measure success
- ▶ Who they need help from
- ▶ The target date by which the plan would be realised

After 45 minutes, all the action plans are presented to the whole group. For every one of them, facilitators ask who volunteers to realise these actions.

### 6.2.8. Closing the conference

After the last session, all participants sit together in a big circle. One by one, they are asked to summarize in two or three words how they feel about the work they did that day. The Future Search conference ends with the initiator addressing the whole group to inform them on what will happen with all the output that was created that day and how participants can follow up.

# 7. IMPLEMENTATION

In order to test effectiveness of our adapted Future Search scenario, we partnered up with OVAM, the public waste agency of Flanders, and applied this “new” methodology to one of the most pressing issues they are currently facing. Their central problem situation was used in all phases of this research project: in the adapted Future Search and in the two GPS brainstorm sessions.

## 7.1. FINDING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Defining the central question was the first hurdle to overcome in this project. The central question for a Future Search conference should deal with a topic that requires many different stakeholders’ attention and their commitment. The question must be future-oriented and should aim to cause a paradigm shift in the whole system. Future Search is directed towards action and the output of the conference should definitely not be dealt with as just ‘nice to know’-information (see section 4.1.2).

In our first meeting with OVAM it became clear that they had been dealing with one specific topic for quite a while. For a couple of years, OVAM is focussing on the subject of ‘Enhanced Landfill Mining’ (ELFM). The definition of ELM according to P.T. Jones is “*the safe conditioning, excavation and integrated valorisation of landfilled waste streams as both materials and energy, using innovative transformation technologies and respecting the most stringent social and ecological criteria*”. The main idea is that landfills would be no longer looked at as a concentration of disposed waste, but rather as material stock for future use or future recycling, for example when recycling technologies for certain materials has been further developed. OVAM already handled this subject in a multi-actor event in 2011, in which 80 people from four stakeholder groups participated: people from university, from the industry, social actors and policy makers. This multi-actor event mainly focused on the opportunities and risks of ELM and how they could create solutions for potential problems.

During the meeting, the discussion arose whether or not to use the same subject for this research project. Main reason to put this topic back on the table was that two years had passed since OVAM’s event and they would like to see if all stakeholders still hold the same view on the matter. However, on the other hand, if the same stakeholders would be invited to a Future Search conference that deals with the same topic as two years ago, chances are that these stakeholders would not be as engaged. OVAM was worried that these stakeholders could get the feeling that nothing happened with the output they delivered in the previous multi-actor event.

For this reason, we searched for a different central question that would be broader than ELM. A subject that was also raised repeatedly, was the one of ‘Landfill Site Management’. At this moment, there are about 2000 landfill sites in Flanders, of which 1600 that are no longer operational. OVAM figured that it would be interesting to discuss, together with all parties who have a stake in this topic, what the future possibilities of these landfill sites could be. ELM would then be considered as just one of the possibilities in dealing with the landfill sites.

Since the central topic was not immediately agreed upon, OVAM organised a few internal

meetings to decide on that question. Defining the question was a difficult process, since the different initiators at OVAM had a rather diverse perspective on what was the most compelling question would be to use in this project. As it is of the utmost importance that the central topic is a joint decision of all concerned parties from OVAM, we suggested they first organised two or three additional internal meetings on this matter.

About a month later, the decision was made to focus on how to valorize the potential of the 2000 landfill sites in Flanders. OVAM aimed to use to the results of the Future Search conference, and of the two GPS brainstorm sessions, as input for a new plan on sustainable materials management. This research project would thus focus on the question: **'How to transform the potential of 2000 landfill sites from a threat to an opportunity, within the frame of sustainable materials and waste management?'**.

## 7.2. SAMPLING PARTICIPANTS

As discussed before, the participants that are invited to a Future Search conference should meet several requirements (see [section 4.1.3](#)). We decided to apply the same prerequisites in the adapted Future Search. OVAM already made up a list of potential stakeholders for their multi-actor event in 2011 and suggested to invite the same parties to the Future Search conference. 65 people were invited of which 37 could attend the conference. The participants represented 6 stakeholder groups

- |               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| ▶ Civilians   | 3 representatives |
| ▶ Industry    | 7 representatives |
| ▶ Government  | 8 representatives |
| ▶ Federations | 7 representatives |
| ▶ OVAM        | 6 representatives |
| ▶ Research    | 6 representatives |

Since not all stakeholders were equally represented, we asked two people who were initially representing the government, to participate in the conference and act from their role as a civilian.

## 7.3. 20 JUNE 2013: FUTURE SEARCH ON THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013 the first adapted Future Search conference took place. The central question on the future of landfill sites was addressed in six sessions. The report with the more detailed results of each of these sessions can be found in [Appendix 1](#). Generally, it became clear that everyone who attended the conference was truly concerned with the central topic and participated actively in all sessions, notwithstanding the heavy programme of the day.

In the morning, participants shared their view on the current reality quite easily. The local timeline, where participants could write down events that related to the topic of landfill site

management, was completed the quickest, which proved that the people who attended the conference were really engaged and wanted to share their insights on the matter. Also during the second session of the day, people participated very actively. Numerous and very diverse trends were shouted out which resulted in a mind-map with over 70 different trends. After lunch, it became clear that even though everyone was very concerned about the future of materials and waste management in Flanders, the different stakeholder groups had quite the diverse perspective on the subject. Up until now, participants have had the feeling that most of them were on the same wavelength. However, in the third session, where participants were split up in stakeholder groups, it became clear that everyone had his/her own reason to be there and the interests of the different stakeholder groups could not always be reconciled.

When focusing on the desirable future scenarios, the energy in the room took a new boost. Dreaming about the possibilities that the future could bring, re-energized the groups in looking at possible scenarios beyond their immediate interests. Projecting into a distant future helped tremendously in spinning the imagination of participants and setting them free from immediate constraints. Dreaming about a distant enough future that it could be a desirable one had a significant impact in unleashing the potential for ideas and ‘dreaming big’. It was easier for them to then go back and look at the obstacles between the current situation and that future and explore together ways to overcome these obstacles. Also, their attitude towards each other suffered a shift at that point, and the common interests emerged much easier, above current controversies. When looking at the distant future, common ground is easier to find.

For the final stage they grouped according to interests in possible ideas to develop action plans. This implied different stakeholder groups sat together and actively worked towards one common interest. This had the potential for opening up a collaborative atmosphere for discussion, a ‘we’ feeling that led to looking together for solutions and actors that could make those solutions happen. Unfortunately, in the adapted version, this phase, which should be the peak of common effort, came too late in the evening and it turned out to be a straining effort for the participants. Nonetheless, their commitment to finding solutions stood out and the day ended in a harmonious atmosphere, where the bottom line was ‘we trust each other enough to put on the table openly points of disagreement, while we will still focus on searching solutions together’. This openness for dialogue and further joint exploration is one precious gain of the day, beyond the actual solutions to the stated problem.

## 7.4. GPS BRAINSTORM

FDC then organized two GPS sessions to provide a point of comparison for the new FS methodology. The first GPS brainstorm session was organized with nine participants who did have an interest in the topic of sustainable materials management, but who did not attend the Future Search conference on June 20<sup>th</sup>. These participants did not revise the past and the present of materials management, they did not know about the interests of the different stakeholder groups nor did they formulate the common ground between them before they would think about future action.

The second GPS session was organized with a sample of participants who had attended the FS session, in order to see the benefits of having participants who were already aware of the complexities of the situation and had been made aware during the FS session of the many facets of the problem and the context.

As was mentioned earlier, the two GPS sessions in this research project used the same research question as the Future Search conference. At the start of this GPS brainstorm session, one representative of OVAM gave a short introduction to frame the research question, similar to the introduction at the Future Search conference. OVAM did not participate in the GPS brainstorm session themselves. Afterwards, the brainstorming session could begin. The GPS-board was divided into six fields, each focusing on a trend that influences the materials management today:

▶ **Marketing**

which useful applications for landfill sites can you think of that we could market on the short or the long term? Which need could these landfill sites fulfill? Think of the need for space, the need for materials, the need for energy, ...

▶ **Dynamic use of space**

We cannot cultivate 2000 landfill sites all at once. What opportunities can you think of to make temporary use of these landfills?

▶ **Research**

ELFM is a rather new concept. Which research still needs to happen to explore this topic in more depth? Which topics would you like to see investigated? What knowledge is currently missing?

▶ **Data**

Collecting data is crucial. How can we collect the right data? What are the right data? How can we update old data? How to keep the data up-to-date? What processes should be installed to do this?

▶ **Actors**

Seeing our landfill sites as opportunities is a societal, economic and environmental challenge. Who needs to play a part in this? And why? What is their added value?

▶ **The sky is the limit**

This field gives you the complete freedom to add extra, fantastic, great ideas from your own point of view. Think of the most innovative opportunities for the landfill sites!

All participants had the chance to write down ideas in each of these six fields because the GPS session is divided into six rounds of idea generation. The first round was the smoothest one. Generating ideas was no issue for anyone, no matter which field they had before them. Especially participants at the “free” field, where there was no trend they had to start from, came up with many ideas rather easily. Only from the third brainstorming round onwards, the idea generation process required a bit more effort from participants. Many ideas were already on the GPS-board, and the time to brainstorm decreased each round. Nonetheless, at the end of the final round, the board showed over 100 ideas for the future of the 2000 landfill sites.



After the phase of generating ideas, participants were asked to select the ideas that would be most valuable for OVAM. Participants each got 10 yellow and red dots to vote for the short and long term ideas respectively they supported the most. Two lists were put together with the ideas for the short and for the long term with the ideas that received the most votes (see [Appendix 2](#) for the illustration of the list in the first GPS session with new participants). Afterwards, these lists were discussed with all participants together to see if there were any recurring themes. In the end, more than 100 ideas were summarized to a shortlist of four to five topics that received the most attention and that appeared to be of the highest concern during the final discussion. These topics were then elaborated on within the work fiches (see [Appendix 3](#) for the illustration of the fiches in the second GPS session with FS participants). These fiches were then shared with OVAM as the output of the GPS process.

# 8. EVALUATION

After running the three session proposed in the initial design (FS, GPS with new participants, GPS with FS participants), we assessed and compared the process and output of the different methodologies. Process-wise, we compared FS with GPS in general, while output-wise, we compared all three instances.

To compare the two methodologies, we looked into both the process and the emerging output.

## 8.1. PROCESS EVALUATION

	FUTURE SEARCH	GPS
COSTS /session	<p><i>Nr of participants:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• min 40, max 80</li></ul> <p><i>Duration:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• min 13 hrs (note: very tiring for participants)</li></ul> <p><i>Nr of certified facilitators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• min 3</li></ul> <p><i>Preparation meetings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• min 2</li></ul> <p><i>Materials:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• big wallpaper (6*1.5/4m); flipcharts, markers</li></ul> <p><i>Other resources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• coffee and catering (lunch &amp; dinner) for participants</li></ul>	<p><i>Nr of participants:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• min 9, max 12</li></ul> <p><i>Duration:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 hrs</li></ul> <p><i>Nr of certified facilitators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• min 1</li></ul> <p><i>Preparation meetings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• min 1</li></ul> <p><i>Materials:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GPS kit; flipchart, markers, stickers, post-its</li></ul> <p><i>Other resources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• coffee for participants</li></ul>
BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• has a significant in-depth qualitative research function since it basically consists of multiple focus groups that flow naturally and build on each other, not as separate unities the researcher needs to put together in the report, but as an organic interacting system</li><li>• all stakeholders are given an equal voice, but unlike with GPS, they are represented as a</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• short (time-saving), energetic and energizing session, positive and constructive atmosphere</li><li>• ideas built-up is gradual and cross- interest groups, and synergy is reached gradually between different stakeholders (though not in direct interaction) in finding solutions</li></ul>

	<p>stakeholder group and not blended in the big picture. Thus the field force analysis of the problem becomes more clearly defined, the common positions and interests as well as the differences are clearly mapped out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extensive time spent in exploring each perspective and elaborating all points of view. Thus the different interest groups have enough contained space to elaborate their position without needing to become defensive, and all groups can eventually move beyond their differences towards finding common ground as the cornerstone of solution building</li> <li>because of the strenuous effort all participants put in the process, a new 'we' feeling that supersedes group interests is present at the end of the FS, a feeling of safety and trust to state matters and differing interests openly while at the same time focusing on joint explorations of possibilities for solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creative, solution-oriented interactions, good build-up and rhythm for finding together clear solutions to problems</li> </ul>
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To sum up the analysis made in the table above, the FS session is significantly more costly (time, preparation, effort of participants, resources) than the GPS. If time and the need for an immediate solution are crucial issues, GPS is the better suited tool. Because of its rhythm and energy, it creates enough cooperation between different stakeholder groups to lead to creative and complex ideas. What it does not to the same extent as the FS is create traction in the acceptance and implementation of these ideas based on the emotional bonding between participants and between them and the new definition of the problem, in which all stakeholder groups are reflected. Also, it does not make a significant contribution (as FS does) in thoroughly exploring all facets of the situation, thus constituting a reliable and rich source of research data.

## 8.2. OUTPUT EVALUATION

To get an impression of the overall output of each session, **Appendix 1** gives an overview of the sample report produced at the end of a FS session, while **Appendices 2 and 3** summarize the outputs (list plus elaboration) of a GPS session.

The final ideas generated in the three research sessions were assessed in writing by two of the clients who attended the framework preparatory meetings. The assessment consisted of a 1 to 10 evaluation of each idea according to the following criteria that define a creative output:

1) Uncommon, novel

- ✓ It is uncommon.
- ✓ It is unique and can attract attention.
- ✓ It is original and can inspire relevant new ideas.
- ✓ The work approaches chosen are innovative and interesting.

2) Pragmatic, grounded in the existing reality (*reversed indicator*)

- ✓ It can be used to solve problems according to the actual situation.
- ✓ It has practical value.

3) Makes sense, logical

- ✓ The work approaches chosen make logical sense.
- ✓ It can be easily understood and accepted by others.

4) Complex

- ✓ It is rich in content and theories used (i.e. it contains various elements/arguments).

At the end of this item per item evaluation, they made a general assessment of all ideas by ranking them (top 3) according to the following criteria: (1) creative, (2) useful, (3) easiest to implement.

We thus wanted to disentangle the extent to which each method offers creative, but also feasible, pragmatic output. When comparing the three sessions, there was no significant difference between the three outputs on the first two assessed dimensions: uncommon, novel, solutions, and pragmatic, grounded in existing reality. The FS output however scored higher on the last two dimensions: logical and complex. In other words, the major output difference was the depth of analysis the FS output reached, and consequently the broader alignment of solutions (solutions given there were less punctual, they took a more strategic, global approach).

This feedback comes to straighten the usefulness of FS not in offering creative, novel, but clearly circumscribed solutions (where it does not differ from the GPS), but in helping build more comprehensive representations of reality, and thus offering more strategic approaches as solutions. This conclusion comes to confirm and complement the comparison of the two methodologies based on the process itself.

Consequently, in the next section we summarize the overview of the FS procedure and delve deeper into the advantages and conditions of its use.



# 9. CONCLUSIONS & TIPS FOR THE FUTURE

## What are the types of problems Future Search is suitable for?

For **highly complex and ill-defined problems**, where mapping out the various dimensions of the problem and reaching an **understanding of the field force** is more relevant than arriving at a quick solution. If there is a clearly defined problem, or if there is a need for an immediate, straight-forward solution, opt for GPS instead. FS is preferable when the situation is more ambiguous, and time should be invested separately in doing research to get to **define the parameters of the situation** before looking for solutions.

For problems where the feasibility of the proposed solutions depend extensively of their **acceptance by various stakeholder** groups and their **commitment** towards a successful implementation.

## What other conditions need to be met to prefer a Future Search to a GPS session?

1. When there are **several relevant stakeholder groups** for the problem at hand, **which could all influence the generation and implementation** of solutions - for instance:
  - either helping seeing things differently, or
  - blocking the implementation of a solution because it did not take their position into account, or
  - when the ones who bear the consequences have a very small voice (if at all) in devising the solutions to the problem.
2. When **social dialogue** (rather than the serial elaboration of ideas in GPS) is relevant for exploring all facets of the problem, making sure the solution takes into account all sides of the story, and in order to prevent possible roadblocks in implementing the solution, FS is worth the time, people and energy investment.

## What cautions should be considered when opting for a FS?

1. **The motivation of participants.** Participants get very tired at the end of the day, so in selecting them the organizers should make sure they are highly motivated in contributing to such a session (i.e., they have a direct stake in the problem, a real interest to jump in).
2. **Client should not take over the process**, otherwise it will bias it towards his own position and reduce the active participation and input of other stakeholders. Key moments in preventing this from happening:

- invitations are to be sent by facilitators, not client, so it appears he is the project beneficiary, not project lead
  - facilitators not client to do the opening of the conference
  - facilitators to pay attention in plenary debrief moments to give the floor first to the other stakeholders and make sure the contribution of the client (if actively participating) is balanced time-wise. This is a particularly difficult feat, since he has a very clear and probably most elaborate perspective on the problem, and the other stakeholders tend to use him as benchmark.
3. It is extremely important to **frame the purpose** of the Future Search conference before it starts and **explain elaborately what the problem owner wants to achieve**. Oels (2002) for example found that often, many participants have their own ideas about what the conference was all about and what the goal of the 3 days was. However, for the GPS session the problem owners should not participate in the brainstorming exercise.
  4. If you have a choice, **run the FS conference over one and a half days rather than an intensive long day** (full day first, half a day at the end, when it is time to narrow down definitions and action plan). A fresh mind is needed for insuring the quality of the action plan and continuing the active debate among various stakeholders, including lobbying for relevant actors for the actions proposed to be on board by the end of the conference.
- Arguments for strongly recommending a 1 ½ days session instead of a one-day:
- a. In the one-day session we ran, we lacked heavily time for the global discussion at the end of each section. Participants seemed very willing to open up then and the floor for having all involved contribute is genuinely open, if there is enough time (normally there is half an hour allotted for this after each section, but in a one-day session this must be cut. Therefore it becomes a series of exercises and a very valuable element, which is conducive to open discussion and the emergence of new perspectives. Furthermore, potential contradictions are merely brought up, instead of properly discussed (in our session, there have been a few attempts in the morning to bring up divergent issues, but they died soon because of lack of time, and participants were consequently disheartened to even bring them up anymore in the afternoon). When we offered time for this group discussion, it was the most engaging bit of the conference, because it offers a safe environment and proper facilitation to bring up these issues. If the floor is truly opened to discussions, especially before breaks, then the work continues in interest groups throughout breaks as well.
  - b. If the time is limited, the topics and approaches brought up are first the traditional ('the tried-out' ones), participants are not forced to look into different alternatives than the ones they normally think and use
  - c. Commitment to the process is different when there are 2 days involved. Because of the sacrifice you make to be there and the difficulty in dealing with agendas, participants are given the signal that this is a truly important thing. Plus, they know they need to engage for longer, and it is frustrating

to always let go of your opinion for such a long time. At some point people start asserting themselves more convincingly.

- d. More than one day allows for proper networking and the development of a real group feeling (we are in this together, let's make it work).
- e. Cramming the whole event in one day is too taxing for people, by the evening they retire mentally from the process, thus little added value is achieved precisely at the end, when new ways of dealing with the topic should be broached. Plus, by 5 o'clock 1/3 of the participants left.
- f. On the side of the organizing team, the number of hours involved if the FS is run in one day are too long for facilitators to still do a proper job at the end of the day.

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# APPENDIX 1

## REPORT FUTURE SEARCH

### CONFERENCE 20 JUNE 2013

#### OVAM, Flanders DC & Vlerick Business School

Deze Future Search bijeenkomst is het resultaat van een onderzoeksproject van Flanders DC en Vlerick Business School. Samen willen zij een nieuwe interventietool ontwerpen die de creativiteit van Vlaamse ondernemers en werknemers vergroot door hen van meer inventieve, veelzijdige ideeën te voorzien. Hiervoor heeft Flanders DC reeds de GPS brainstormkit ontwikkeld. De GPS brainstormkit is een tool om 12 tot 15 personen te laten brainstormen, waarbij op een halve dag tot 120 ideeën uit de bus komen. Future Search moet een aanvulling bieden op de GPS brainstormkit. Deze nieuwe interventietool is meer geschikt voor situaties waar een radicale, grootschalige verandering nodig is en waar de mentaliteit van alle betrokken stakeholders moet veranderen. Dit project heeft tot doel te onderzoeken op welke manier een Future Search een de GPS brainstormkit kan complementeren en hoe deze methodiek dient aangepast te worden naar een Vlaamse context.

In dit onderzoeksproject treedt OVAM op als partner en leveren zij het centrale vraagstuk aan waarrond deze Future Search workshop zal draaien. OVAM moet een antwoord vinden op een van de meest prangende milieuvraagstukken van de toekomst: **'Op welke wijze kan OVAM het potentieel van 2.000 stortsites binnen het kader van duurzaam materialenbeheer omvormen van een bedreiging naar een opportunitet?'**. Materialenbeheer is een nieuwe bevoegdheid van OVAM en betekent een nieuwe stap binnen de evolutie van het afvalstoffenbeheer. Een integrale kijk op de materiaalketen is onontbeerlijk om een blijvende oplossing te vinden voor het afvalvraagstuk. Vandaag grijpt het afvalbeheer grotendeels in op het einde van de keten, wanneer het materiaal reeds afval geworden is. Het huidige afvalbeheer mag niet op zichzelf blijven bestaan, maar moet haar blik verruimen naar het duurzaam materialenbeheer. Omdat de input van alle betrokken stakeholders onmisbaar is, heeft OVAM beslist om dit thema samen met Vlerick Business School en Flanders DC te exploreren via een eendaagse workshop en op die manier een zo groot mogelijk draagvlak te creëren.

#### Future Search

"Future Search" is een **methodologie** om actiegericht aan visieontwikkeling te doen. Het is een werkwijze die ontwikkeld werd door Marvin Weisborn en Sandra Janoff en werd al in tal van complexe (veelal sociale) vraagstukken met succes toegepast. Uniek aan deze methodologie is dat zij partijen samenbrengt die



elk vanuit hun eigen insteek of belang oplossingsgericht meedenken over de toekomst.

Een Future Search wordt toegepast op vraagstukken waarbij één enkele partij of belangengroep er niet in kan slagen om het vraagstuk op te lossen en waarbij elke groep nood heeft aan **toekomstgericht overleg en samenwerking**. Iedereen is met andere woorden afhankelijk van elkaar om de beste oplossing te vinden en te realiseren.

Een Future Search steunt op volgende **4 principes**:

1. Het hele systeem neemt deel, een doorsnede van alle mogelijke betrokkenen met autoriteit en middelen om actie te ondernemen, met expertise en met unieke informatie en een nood om het centrale vraagstuk op te lossen. Iedere partij die belang heeft bij de uitkomst van de Future Search Workshop moet aanwezig zijn. Samen hebben ze de kans om van elkaar te leren en actie te ondernemen op een manier die ervoor niet mogelijk was.
2. Dialoog is essentieel: iedereen brengt vanuit zijn of haar achtergrond deeltjes van de puzzel samen. Het centrale vraagstuk wordt vanuit verschillende hoeken belicht. Tijdens een Future Search Workshop krijgen de deelnemers een gedetailleerd beeld van elkaar werelde en zoeken alle partijen samen naar een gemeenschappelijke en actiegerichte visie.
3. In een Future Search workshop wordt gefocust op de toekomst en op de zoeken die alle stakeholders gemeenschappelijk hebben. Gezien tijdens zo'n workshop verschillende belangengroepen worden samengebracht, is het niet meer dan logisch dat mensen van mening verschillen. Het is echter niet de bedoeling om problemen en conflicten tussen verschillende betrokkenen op te lossen, maar wel om meningsverschillen te erkennen en waarderen.
4. De deelnemers worden uitgenodigd om alle sessies zelf te leiden, vertrekende vanuit de dialoog. Zij krijgen de volledige vrijheid om te delen wat zij willen en hebben zelf rechtstreeks impact op het proces en de resultaten.

Een Future Search workshop verloopt steeds volgens dezelfde procedure. De deelnemers starten vanuit het verleden, worden zich bewust van het heden en creëren een gemeenschappelijke toekomst. Zo ontdekken ze de overeenkomsten tussen hun belangen en definiëren ze acties om de nieuwe toekomst waar te maken.

De Future Search methodologie voorziet de mogelijkheid voor alle partijen om hun ideeën, achtergronden, motieven, weerstanden en bewegredenen kenbaar te maken tijdens de workshop. Om de uitwisseling te faciliteren wordt gewerkt met twee soorten groepen: 1) groepen per partij (zogenaamde 'stakeholdergroepen') en 2) gemengde groepen (waarin minstens 1 vertegenwoordiger van elke stakeholdergroep zit).

## Belangengroepen

Zoals hierboven beschreven, hangt het succes van een Future Search workshop voor een groot deel af van zijn deelnemers. Omdat dergelijke workshops beogen om een mentaliteitswijziging bij het volledige systeem tot stand te brengen, is het van belang dat alle mogelijke stakeholders betrokken worden bij het formuleren van de toekomstvisie en de acties die daaruit volgen. Elke deelnemer brengt vanuit zijn of haar eigen referentiekader ideeën, achtergronden, motieven, weerstanden en beweegredenen aan. Die zijn de brandstof voor een succesvolle Future Search workshop. Het is dus essentieel voor het succes dat alle relevante partijen aanwezig zijn en gemotiveerd meewerken.

Voor de eigenlijke Future Search workshop op 20 juni 2013 ging een proces vooraf om de juiste deelnemers te selecteren. OVAM heeft in samenspraak met Vlerick Business School een deelnemerslijst opgesteld van alle partijen die mogelijk belang hebben om het centrale milieuvraagstuk op te lossen. Na een grondige analyse van dit vraagstuk werd besloten om zes stakeholder groepen uit te nodigen voor deze workshop. Meer bepaald ging het om vertegenwoordigers van de burgers, bedrijven, federaties, onderzoekers, overheden en OVAM zelf. In totaal werden 65 personen uitgenodigd, waarvan telkens een gelijk aantal vertegenwoordigers per belangengroep. Helaas, waren op de dag zelf niet alle groepen even sterk vertegenwoordigd. Uiteindelijk telden we 37 aanwezigen, waarvan voornamelijk mensen uit de overheid en uit het bedrijfsleven. Omdat niet alle stakeholder groepen evenredig vertegenwoordigd waren, is voorzichtigheid geboden bij het generaliseren van onderstaande resultaten.

## Gemeenschappelijke realiteit

In het eerste deel van de workshop werd gefocust op verleden en het heden. Aan de hand van een tijdslijn-oefening konden alle deelnemers gebeurtenissen noteren die de wereld van vandaag mee vorm gegeven hebben. Deze gebeurtenissen konden van persoonlijke aard zijn (ervaringen die de deelnemers hebben gemaakt tot wie ze nu zijn), van maatschappelijke aard (lokale of globale gebeurtenissen die de maatschappij hebben gevormd) of betrekking hebben op het beheer van materialen en stortplaatsen.

Daarna werden uit de tijdslijnoefening trends gedestilleerd die het centrale vraagstuk vandaag beïnvloeden. De volledige groep aanwezigen werkten hierbij samen om trends op te sommen die het centrale thema beïnvloeden. Alle trends werden samengevoegd op een grote mind-map die toeliet om de rest van de dag te focussen op een selectie van essentiële trends.



De drie trends waar de meerderheid van de aanwezigen op wilde verder bouwen waren:

1. Operationele stortplaatsen vragen om een aangepast beheer.
  2. De nood aan innovatieve technologieën stijgt.
  3. Vlaanderen wordt stilaan te klein. Ruimte wordt schaarser en daarom moet elk stuk grond een bestemming krijgen. Echter, dit proces wordt complexer met de tijd.

Aan de hand van deze grote mind-map verkregen de deelnemers een duidelijk beeld van hoe de realiteit rond afval- en materialenbeheer er vandaag voor iedereen aanwezig uitziet, welke

maatschappelijke trends op dit thema een invloed uitoefenen en hoe deze trends met elkaar in verband staan. Op die manier wordt een gemeenschappelijke realiteit gecreëerd die de basis vormt voor de rest van de Future Search workshop.

## Focus op de verschillende realiteiten en klemtonen

In een volgende stap werd aan de deelnemers (per stakeholdergroep) gevraagd om in te zoomen op de trends die zij als meest belangrijk ervaren en welke acties zij vandaag en in de toekomst ondernemen om op deze trends te anticiperen. Hierna volgt een overzicht van de belangrijkste trends die elk van de stakeholdergroepen hebben geïdentificeerd.

### OVAM

- A. Er is een dalende aandacht voor het leefmilieu in tijden van crisis. Nochtans is er een noodzaak om het ecologisch perspectief te integreren in het economisch, sociaal en ruimtelijk gebeuren. Binnen OVAM worden verschillende projecten reeds op die manier geïntegreerd.
- B. Er is een toenemende schaarste aan water, ruimte, groen, grondstoffen. OVAM zet daarom verschillende projecten op rond innovatie en voorraadbeheer.
- C. Versnippering beleid: de impact van de EU neemt toe, wat zorgt voor vertraging in het ondernemen van initiatieven. Bovendien ontbreekt een duidelijk overzicht van beleidsmaatregelen en wetgeving. OVAM tracht interessante partnerships aan te gaan met bedrijven.

### Overheid

- A. Er is een toenemende versnippering in de bevoegdheden en een verschil in prioriteiten tussen de verschillende belangengroepen, inclusief het subsidiering beleid. Daarom onderneemt de overheid actie om het proces rond subsidiebeleid te optimaliseren.
- B. Ruimtelijke ordening (perceptie burgers, draagvlak en haalbaarheid) wordt belangrijker.
- C. Ook de overheid merkt de schaarste aan grondstoffen op. Zij maken werk van een vernieuwd afvalbeleid.

### Onderzoekers

- A. Onderzoekers erkennen de nood aan meer innovatieve technologieën en verrichten dan ook meer onderzoek rond dit thema.
- B. Meer aandacht nodig voor de link sociaal – technologie. Het ecologische volgt het economische.
- C. Europa moet meer optreden als driver voor onderzoek (en financiering).
- D. Er is toenemend ondernemerschap in Vlaanderen die inspeelt op de ecologische noden.

## Burgers

- A. Ruimte wordt schaarser, waardoor de nood om deze nuttig te gebruiken stijgt. De herbestemming van stortplaatsen moet in een groter kader gezien worden. Er is technologie nodig om ruimte te sparen of te hergebruiken.
- B. Burgers leren zuinig om te springen met energie. Er is steeds meer gebruik van hernieuwbare energie (minder olie en gas).
- C. Cleantech nodig om economie te verduurzamen.

## Bedrijven

- A. Rentabiliteit staat meer en meer centraal (grondstoffen en energiebeheer, recyclage van vrijgekomen stortplaatsen en materialen).
- B. Een sterk wetgevend kader ontbreekt. Vereenvoudiging is hoogstnodig.
- C. Toekomstgericht uitwerken van stortplaatsbeheer door het betrekken van alle stakeholders.

## Federaties

- A. Stabiele wetgeving nodig over landfill mining in combinatie met materialenbeleid. Coherente regelgeving ontbreekt. De federaties werken mee aan het opstellen van ethische code.
- B. Meer heffingen als bron van financiering.
- C. Toekomstgericht uitwerken van stortplaatsbeheer door het betrekken van alle stakeholders. De federaties zullen actief de boodschap mee uitdragen

Algemeen gesteld merken alle stakeholder groepen de nood op voor een duurzaam wetgevend kader. De overheden moeten hierin volgens velen het voortouw nemen. Zij moeten de risico's van het afwezig zijn van duidelijke wetgeving erkennen. Alle aanwezigen realiseren zich dat het uitwerken van nieuwe wetten voldoende tijd in beslag zal nemen en dat dit daarom best niet langer uitgesteld wordt.

Ongeacht de eensgezindheid over bovenvermelde thema's, werd uit de discussie achteraf ook duidelijk dat de verschillende stakeholdergroepen nog op vele punten van mening verschillen en dat iedere groep andere trends als meest relevant beschouwt. Zo is er nog onduidelijkheid over wie welke verantwoordelijkheid moet opnemen inzake toekomstig materialenbeheer, of op welke wijze de toekomst van afval- en materialenbeheer best dient gefinancierd te worden.

## Toekomstbeeld: stortplaatsen in 2023?

Een essentieel onderdeel van de Future Search Workshop is het ontwikkelen van een toekomstvisie. Er werd aan de deelnemers gevraagd om te beschrijven hoe de wereld (met betrekking tot stortplaatsen en hun beheer) er in 2023 zal uitzien. De volgende toekomstbeelden kwamen meer dan eens naar voor:

- A. In 2023 zijn er duidelijke en snelle administratieve processen die een efficiënt beheer van (nieuwe) stortplaatsen mogelijk maken (o.a. vergunningenbeleid).
- B. In 2023 is alle relevante informatie over bestaande stortplaatsen in kaart gebracht (zgn. ‘database’ idee), en een plan (met prioriteiten) opgemaakt voor de ontginning van de stortplaatsen. In de plannen worden economische, sociale, ruimtelijke... parameters tegen elkaar afgewogen.
- C. In 2023 staan we ver vooruit op technologisch vlak. Onze kennis en beschikbare technologieën worden succesvol vermarkt in het buitenland. We zijn leider op het innovatievlak en anderen kunnen veel van ons leren.
- D. In 2023 is er bij de producenten een doorgedreven focus op het vermijden van niet-recycleerbaar afval.
- E. In 2023 is er een ruim draagvlak bij alle stakeholders rond afvalbeheer en de rol van stortplaatsen. Er wordt erkend dat stortplaatsen nodig blijven maar eerder dienen als tijdelijke opslagplaatsen.

Na een brainstorm en uitwisseling van standpunten over bovenstaande toekomstbeelden kozen elk van de deelnemers er één toekomstbeeld uit om op verder te werken. Gemeenschappelijke of aansluitende thema's werden geclusterd om overlap zoveel mogelijk te vermijden.

# Actie! Op naar 2023!

**Het waarom van Sustainable Landfill Site Management.** We zetten in op duurzaam beheer van onze stortplaatsen (in plaats van ze dood te zwijgen). We willen ze hierdoor maximaal waarde laten creëren. De drie grote redenen: 1) onze bestaande stortplaatsen evenwichtig beheren; 2) de aanwezige historische storten op lange termijn veilig beheren; 3) tegemoetkomen aan de schaarste van hulpbronnen (materialen, water, ruimte, natuur). Daarom zetten we in op Landfill Site Management.

Om ervoor te zorgen dat alle toekomstvisies duidelijk zijn omschreven - ook voor hen die niet aanwezig waren - werd aan de groepen eerst gevraagd om een kort en duidelijk statement te schrijven over het toekomstbeeld. Daarna werd hen ook gevraagd om de nodige acties te definiëren. Tijdens een plenaire besprekking van de resultaten werd ook gevraagd naar individuen/partijen die het initiatief wilden nemen voor een eerstvolgende actie op korte termijn (bijvoorbeeld om een bepaald voorstel verder af te toetsen, voor een extra brainstorm rond een bepaald thema, enz.). Het dient gezegd dat vele van de initiatieven door OVAM worden opgenomen. Voor het succesvol realiseren dient OVAM alle relevante partijen te motiveren en betrekken.

De volgende definities (letterlijk overgenomen) en acties (gegroepeerd volgens thema) werden door de deelnemers uitgewerkt:

## A. Inventarisatie.

*“De stortplaatsendatabank is op korte termijn bruikbaar voor de uitwerking van het Sustainable Landfill Site Management (onderzoek, testcases, beleidsvorming...).”*

- Onderzoek van stortplaatsen dient een holistische benadering te kennen: met aandacht voor inhoud, risico, potentieel en nabestemming van stortplaatsen. Een recente studie door een extern bureau heeft reeds parameters/criteria voorgesteld. Na een validatie door alle stakeholders kunnen ze de basis vormen voor de prioriteitenlijst van stortplaatsen en de nodige acties. OVAM zal de nodige acties nemen om de lijst te valideren.
- Het is volgens de deelnemers de opdracht van OVAM, bij voorkeur in partnership, om stortplaatsen te onderzoeken en in het beheer ervan te (bege)leiden. Op korte termijn zien de deelnemers een funding rol weggelegd voor OVAM (onderzoeksfase), maar een lange-termijn financieringsconstructie (OVAM én partners) is noodzakelijk om aan deugdelijk Landfill Site Management te doen. Het Agentschap Ondernemen is bereid de denkoefening samen met OVAM verder te initiëren.

## B. Rendabiliteit.

*“De haalbaarheid van een Sustainable Landfill Site Management project moet afgewogen worden binnen een kosten-baten analyse en moet self-supporting zijn.”*

- Beheer en verdere ontwikkeling van stortplaatsen kan gebeuren via raamcontracten voor meerdere sites waardoor minder winstgevende sites ook aangepakt worden. Bij de gunning van beheersovereenkomsten dient dit te worden bewaakt. Hierin zien de deelnemers een rol voor OVAM.

## C. Wetgevend kader.

*“Nu wetgeving schrijven voor Sustainable Landfill Site Management is dwaas. Want er is nog vrijwel geen praktijk → Nood aan testcases. Testcases Landfill Management kunnen met Bodem Saneringsplan vergund worden. Testcases tijdelijke opslag kan onder VLAREM. Op basis van ervaring zal nood specifieke regelgeving al dan niet blijken.”*

- Beslissingen die nu genomen worden rond stortplaatsen mogen een toekomstige ontginnung ervan niet hypothekeren.
- Een quick-win is om aan het bestaande Bodem Saneringsplan extra criteria toe te voegen die o.a. het potentieel van stortplaatsen meeneemt in de evaluatieprocedure. OVAM bevestigd dat ze hier al aan werken en hier verder actie voor blijven ondernemen.
- Het “Overlegplatform Stortplaatsen” dient met een vernieuwde motivatie opnieuw te worden geïnstalleerd. Duidelijke en relevante objectieven moeten aan dit overlegplatform worden toegewezen. De deelnemers beslissen dat OVAM dit samen met de Federaties verder uitwerkt.
- Materialen recyclage. Aan de wetgever wordt een belangrijke taak toegedicht om recyclage-gerelateerde wetgeving te herbekijken en te verstrekken. Dit om het aandeel niet-recycleerbaar afval drastisch te verminderen.

## D. Innovatie.

*“Onder innovatie wordt een breed kader verstaan waarbij o.a. techniek en sitemanagement een rol spelen. Aan de hand van testcases en (inter)nationale programma’s, uitgevoerd door consortia van stakeholders worden duurzame technieken en processen ontwikkeld. Dit wordt afgetoetst aan de haalbaarheid.”*

- OVAM neemt het voortouw om een bijeenkomst te organiseren met wetenschappelijke partners en potentiële business partners. IWT spant zich in om te helpen bij het matchen van innovatie/projecten en business partners.
- De bestaande financieringsbronnen voor projecten dienen beter bekend gemaakt te worden. Er worden op dit moment te weinig subsidieaanvragen ingediend bij instanties zoals EU, IWT, ELF M Sysposium, MLP...). Nochtans is er een sterk geloof in deze manier van projectfinanciering.

## E. Draagvlak.

*“Sustainable Landfill Site Management moet als concept gekend en begrepen zijn door alle spelers uit het brede maatschappelijke middenveld. Op lokaal site-project niveau moet complementair een multi-actor werking opgezet worden om de doelgroepen proactief te betrekken bij de verschillende stappen vanaf de lokale uitwerking van het project. Alle betrokkenen moeten ernstig genomen worden als volwaardige gesprekspartner.”*

- Een brede sensibilisering op (nationaal) niveau blijft belangrijk om de impact van stortplaatsen op mens, milieu, maatschappij en economie te duiden. Om het draagvlak voor het beter beheer van stortplaatsen te verbreden werd de suggestie gedaan tot het ontwikkelen van een Panorama documentaire rond de koerswijziging en opties voor Vlaamse storten.
- Inzetten van sociale media om alle stakeholders met elkaar in contact te brengen, alsook om het draagvlak te verbreden.
- Organiseren van, en als spreker optreden op, studiedagen helpt om het draagvlak te vergroten, en de discussies aangaande stortplaatsen bij diverse belangengroepen te verrijken, en over belangengroepen heen gemeenschappelijke thema's te herkennen.

## Tot slot

Tijdens de Future Search Workshop hebben we vastgesteld wat de gemeenschappelijk aanvaarde en gewenste richting is met betrekking tot het beheer van stortplaatsen in Vlaanderen. Deze workshop is geen ‘one-off’ gebeurtenis maar vergt een voortdurende inspanning van alle betrokkenen om het thema levendig te houden.

Voor de meeste van bovenstaande thema’s werden initiatiefnemers bereid gevonden om de actiepunten op korte termijn verder vorm te geven. We vragen hen om in de komende zes maanden minimaal een eerste bijeenkomst samen te roepen om het gedefinieerde thema verder uit te werken en actiepunten te plannen.

Het is essentieel voor het succes van de Future Search Workshop dat alle aanwezige stakeholders blijvend betrokken worden, en afwezige stakeholders geïnformeerd worden over de Future Search Workshop resultaten.



Samenwerken in de sleutel tot succes!

# APPENDIX 2: LIST OF IDEAS FROM THE FIRST GPS BRAINSTORM WITH “NEW” PARTICIPANTS

<i>SHORT TERM IDEAS</i>	<i>LONG TERM IDEAS</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Trial gardens for landfill sites</li> <li>▶ Make up a priority list for landfill sites</li> <li>▶ Taxes on primary materials</li> <li>▶ Solar energy (as a dynamic use)</li> <li>▶ Valorising construction waste</li> <li>▶ Plasma techniques</li> <li>▶ Make bioreactors</li> <li>▶ TOP &amp; ROS</li> <li>▶ Keep an inventory of landfill sites that already have a destination</li> <li>▶ Landfill sites should be cheaper than green fields</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Set up a local H<sub>2</sub>- network: win H<sub>2</sub> out of waste through syngas from plasma</li> <li>▶ Potential use of critical materials</li> <li>▶ Research should focus on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How to intensify bio processes?</li> <li>○ The quality and composition of materials?</li> <li>○ The long-term cost of doing nothing?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Agro forestry as potential user</li> <li>▶ Couple cultivation to ELFM</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX 3: THE ELABORATED FICHES OF THE MAIN TOPICS FROM THE SECOND GPS BRAINSTORM WITH “FS” PARTICIPANTS

## IDEA NUMBER 1: CERTIFICATION

### DEFINITION IDEA

- guarantee quality of both 1) the mining process and 2) determining the value of secondary materials
- create general framing for uniform assessment

### PRO's

- market-acceptance
- societal support
- increased quality of materials

### CONTRA'S AND PITFALLS

- level of certification (Flemish, Belgian, EU)
- risk of not living up to criteria: e.g. between different market specifications and quality of current raw materials
- private certificate – government certificate
- who will pay for certification

### SOLUTIONS

- European benchmark
- need of technical valorisation through research
- political choice together with sector
- depends on problems arising in previous bullet point

### IMPACT

- increase acceptance societal --> easier marketing
- better technical methods + impact on the process

### NECESSARY PARTIES

- governments (FI, BE, EU)
- sector (takes lead and pulls this)
- notified certified? / certification? bodies

### ACTION PLAN

- 1) market study: sector + government (2014)
- 2) study of feasibility: sector + government (2015)
- 3) create frame of reference: sector + government (parallel)
- 4) create general framework sector / certified /certification body (2015-16)
- 5) sector / cert. body operational (2015-16)

## **IDEA NUMBER 2: (6 VOTES)**

### **DEFINITION IDEA**

- development of simple, consistent, fast and cheap measuring techniques to map feasibility LFM concerning dumping grounds (+ perhaps decide on priorities of different projects)

### **PRO's**

- necessary. from here: -> A) risks and B) potential ]-> 1) decide on priorities, 2) necessary to set up business model

### **CONTRA'S AND PITFALLS**

- no contra's
- a lot of pitfalls to do this RIGHT:
  - 1) (labour)intensive
  - 2) very widely spread (and inconsistent) data
  - 3) insecurity
  - 4) techniques not yet up to date
  - 5) ...

### **SOLUTIONS**

- more research, MORE BUDGET
- specific targets for research:
  - 1) bottom up instead of top down
  - 2) data becomes more consistent
  - 3) quick win to build on this

### **IMPACT**

- get flywheel, spiral going
- concrete goals in function of recyclability --> consistent measuring techniques --> showcase proof of concept --> concrete goals, taking feedback / evaluation into account --> simple measuring system

### **NECESSARY PARTIES**

- government /OVAM (--> goal) --> get all OVAM departments on the same page
- research centres (--> measuring techniques)
- study bureaus / contractors / specialised project developers / financiers? (--> pilot project)

### **ACTION PLAN**

- see scheme impact / necessary parties
- use existing dumping grounds as a reference to evaluate / calibrate measuring techniques

## **IDEA NUMBER 3: HIGH QUALITY VALORISATION OF RESIDUAL CURRENTS (6 VOTES)**

### **DEFINITION IDEA**

- no down-cycling but materials heighten value of materials extracted from landfill to become high quality raw materials with economic value.

### **PRO's**

- essential component to successfully develop landfill mining:
  - 1) acceptance by public opinion
  - 2) certification (or being recognized differently if possible)
  - 3) turn into a business model that show the economic value of product
  - 4) leads to sustainable concept

### **CONTRA'S AND PITFALLS**

- still a technological challenge, since you also start by using heterogeneous current
- perception use of similar “waste” products
- need of flexible technology that can handle the heterogeneous nature of the material, but must also be economically feasible.

### **SOLUTIONS**

- focus on mono- or bigger dumping grounds

### **IMPACT**

- need to further develop technology, whilst going further than quick wins and dares to invest in the production of high quality materials (long term perspective)

### **NECESSARY PARTIES**

- industry that's willing to invest in innovative technology and valorize high quality products
- knowledge institutions / companies whom can develop this technology
- legislative framework that supports / enables innovation

### **ACTION PLAN**

- action plan with clear focus on mono-/ big dumping grounds
- pilot project to show feasibility (use the most obvious case(s))

## IDEA NUMBER 4: BUILDING LEGAL FRAMEWORK (5 VOTES)

### DEFINITION IDEA

- need to establish a legal framework that identifies all actors and rules to sanitize old dumping grounds with focus on valorisation of energy and materials. This legislation could for example be grafted on the existing soil decree.

### PRO'S

- create framework
- clear understanding / division of responsibilities between actors
- OVAM = 1 stop shop / coordinator / control of concept
- waste materials can get a specific status
- creation of market: make obligatory /subsidise cleaning / valorisation of old dumping grounds
- positive environmental impact / impact use of space

### CONTRA'S AND PITFALLS

- ownership of materials originating from dumping grounds
- market of part flows
- relevance / big enough scale
- will it be put on political agenda?

### SOLUTIONS

- amendment soil decree
- use existing system
- bronunfield? procedure
- in urgent / high risk cases ex officio approach

### IMPACT

- need of inventory?
- possibilities / need of valorisation current

### NECESSARY PARTIES

- OVAM (lead)
- actors in the field

### ACTION PLAN

- inventory: OVAM (busy, now)
- economical assessment: OVAM + actors (now)
- adapt legislation: OVAM (2016-2020)
- apply legislation: all (2020)

## **IDEA NUMBER 5: FEASIBLE BUSINESS MODEL (BOTH SOCIETAL AND ECONOMICAL) (14 VOTES: 9+5)**

### **DEFINITION IDEA**

- also stress societal importance, not only the economical profitability
- societal cost-benefit analysis as a basis, but economical feasibility also important
- probably need of sufficient volume for profitability
- exportability of business model (not site bound)

### **PRO'S**

- basis for start of ELFM (probably together with legislation)

### **CONTRA'S AND PITFALLS**

- Business model not based on correct representation of dumping ground composition (correct estimate?)
- Quantification of societal costs and gains
- alternations in legislation during time frame of business model

### **SOLUTIONS**

- correct analysis of dumping ground quality (not easy though!)
- in the long run recalculation of finalised projects concerning realisation of societal costs and benefits
- sensitivity analysis of business model for certain adapting parameters

### **IMPACT**

- technology: precise characterisation of dumping grounds
- spatial reuse as a stimulus
- mining certificate / reuse of materials as a stimulus

### **NECESSARY PARTIES**

- financial consultants / study bureaus
- OVAM (lead together with financial consultants / study bureaus)
- companies that valorise materials
- companies that mine and separate materials

### **ACTION PLAN**

- number of (theoretical case studies) + in depth cost / benefit analysis: financial consultants / study bureaus for OVAM (2014)
- study on reusability of dumping grounds: spatial & urban design bureaus (2014-2015)
- financial evaluation of existing / realised projects: OVAM (2014-2015)

# APPENDIX 4: ASSESSMENT FS & GPS IDEAS

## (1) Certification

- guarantee quality of both the mining process and determining the value of secondary materials
- create general framing for uniform assessment

### Action plan

- market study: sector + government (2014)
- study of feasibility: sector + government (2015)
- create frame of reference: sector + government (parallel)
- create general framework sector / certified /certification body (2015-16)
- sector / cert. body operational (2015-16)

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

(2) Development of **simple, consistent, fast and cheap measuring techniques to map feasibility** LFM concerning dumping grounds (+ perhaps decide on priorities of different projects)

### Action plan

- see scheme impact / necessary parties
- use existing dumping grounds as a reference to evaluate / calibrate measuring techniques

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

(3) **High quality valorisation of residual currents:** i.e., no down-cycling but materials heighten value of materials extracted from landfill to become high quality raw materials with economic value

### Action plan

- action plan with clear focus on mono-/ big dumping grounds
- pilot project to show feasibility (use the most obvious case(s))

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

(4) **Building a legal framework:** need to establish a legal framework that identifies all actors and rules to sanitize old dumping grounds with focus on valorisation of energy and materials. This legislation could for example be grafted on the existing soil decree.

#### Action plan

- inventory: OVAM (busy, now)
- economical assessment: OVAM + actors (now)
- adapt legislation: OVAM (2016-2020)
- apply legislation: all (2020)

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

(5) **Feasible business model** (both societal and economical)

- also stress societal importance, not only the economical profitability
- societal cost-benefit analysis as a basis, but economical feasibility also important
- probably need of sufficient volume for profitability
- exportability of business model (not site bound)

#### Action plan

- number of (theoretical case studies) + in depth cost / benefit analysis: financial consultants / study bureaus for OVAM (2014)
- study on reusability of dumping grounds: spatial & urban design bureaus (2014-2015)
- financial evaluation of existing / realised projects: OVAM (2014-2015)

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

(6) **Inventarisatie.**

*“De stortplaatsendatabank is op korte termijn bruikbaar voor de uitwerking van het Sustainable Landfill Site Management (onderzoek, testcases, beleidsvorming...).”*

- Onderzoek van stortplaatsen dient een holistische benadering te kennen: met aandacht voor inhoud, risico, potentieel en nabestemming van stortplaatsen. Een recente studie door een extern bureau heeft reeds parameters/criteria voorgesteld. Na een validatie door alle stakeholders kunnen ze de basis vormen voor de prioriteitenlijst van stortplaatsen en de nodige acties. OVAM zal de nodige acties nemen om de lijst te valideren.
- Het is volgens de deelnemers de opdracht van OVAM, bij voorkeur in partnership, om stortplaatsen te onderzoeken en in het beheer ervan te (bege)leiden. Op korte termijn zien de deelnemers een funding rol weggelegd voor OVAM (onderzoeksfase), maar een lange-termijn financieringsconstructie (OVAM én partners) is noodzakelijk om aan deugdelijk Landfill Site Management te doen. Het Agentschap Ondernemen is bereid de denkoefering samen met OVAM verder te initiëren.

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

### (7) Rendabiliteit.

*“De haalbaarheid van een Sustainable Landfill Site Management project moet afgewogen worden binnen een kosten-baten analyse en moet self-supporting zijn.”*

- Beheer en verdere ontwikkeling van stortplaatsen kan gebeuren via raamcontracten voor meerdere sites waardoor minder winstgevende sites ook aangepakt worden. Bij de gunning van beheersovereenkomsten dient dit te worden bewaakt. Hierin zien de deelnemers een rol voor OVAM.

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

### (8) Wetgevend kader.

*“Nu wetgeving schrijven voor Sustainable Landfill Site Management is dwaas. Want er is nog vrijwel geen praktijk → Nood aan testcases. Testcases Landfill Management kunnen met Bodem Saneringsplan vergund worden. Testcases tijdelijke opslag kan onder VLAREM. Op basis van ervaring zal nood specifieke regelgeving al dan niet blijken.”*

- Beslissingen die nu genomen worden rond stortplaatsen mogen een toekomstige ontginning ervan niet hypothekeren.
- Een quick-win is om aan het bestaande Bodem Saneringsplan extra criteria toe te voegen die o.a. het potentieel van stortplaatsen meeneemt in de evaluatieprocedure. OVAM bevestigt dat ze hier al aan werken en hier verder actie voor blijven ondernemen.
- Het “Overlegplatform Stortplaatsen” dient met een vernieuwde motivatie opnieuw te worden geïnstalleerd. Duidelijke en relevante objectieven moeten aan dit overlegplatform worden toegewezen. De deelnemers beslissen dat OVAM dit samen met de Federaties verder uitwerkt.
- Materialen recyclage. Aan de wetgever wordt een belangrijke taak toegedicht om recyclage-gerelateerde wetgeving te herbekijken en te verstrekken. Dit om het aandeel niet-recycleerbaar afval drastisch te verminderen.

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

### (9) Innovatie.

*“Onder innovatie wordt een breed kader verstaan waarbij o.a. techniek en sitemanagement een rol spelen. Aan de hand van testcases en (inter)nationale programma’s, uitgevoerd door consortia van stakeholders worden duurzame technieken en processen ontwikkeld. Dit wordt afgetoetst aan de haalbaarheid.”*

- OVAM neemt het voortouw om een bijeenkomst te organiseren met wetenschappelijke partners en potentiële business partners. IWT spant zich in om te helpen

bij het matchen van innovatie/projecten en business partners.

- De bestaande financieringsbronnen voor projecten dienen beter bekend gemaakt te worden. Er worden op dit moment te weinig subsidieaanvragen ingediend bij instanties zoals EU, IWT, ELFM Sysmposium, MLP...). Nochtans is er een sterk geloof in deze manier van projectfinanciering.

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

#### (10) Draagvlak.

*"Sustainable Landfill Site Management moet als concept gekend en begrepen zijn door alle spelers uit het brede maatschappelijke middenveld. Op lokaal site-project niveau moet complementair een multi-actor werking opgezet worden om de doelgroepen pro-actief te betrekken bij de verschillende stappen vanaf de lokale uitwerking van het project. Alle betrokkenen moeten ernstig genomen worden als volwaardige gesprekspartner."*

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- Inzetten van sociale media om alle stakeholders met elkaar in contact te brengen, alsook om het draagvlak te verbreden.
- Organiseren van, en als spreker optreden op, studiedagen helpt om het draagvlak te vergroten, en de discussies aangaande stortplaatsen bij diverse belangengroepen te verrijken, en over belangengroepen heen gemeenschappelijke thema's te herkennen.

Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex

	Uncommon	Pragmatic	Logical	Complex
(11) Trial gardens for landfill sites				
(12) Make up a priority list for landfill sites				
(13) Taxes on primary materials				
(14) Solar energy (as a dynamic use)				
(15) Valorising construction waste				
(16) Plasma techniques				
(17) Make bioreactors				
(18) Keep an inventory of landfill sites that				

already have a destination				
(19) Landfill sites should be cheaper than green fields				
(20) Set up a local H2- network: win H2 out of waste through syngas from plasma				
(21) Potential use of critical materials				
(22) Research should focus on				
(23) How to intensify bio processes?				
(24) The quality and composition of materials?				
(25) The long-term cost of doing nothing?				
(26) Agro forestry as potential user				
(27) Couple cultivation to ELFM				

KNOWLEDGE PARTNER



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