



Multi-level processes and conditions for workplace transitions to a low carbon society

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Overview of presentation



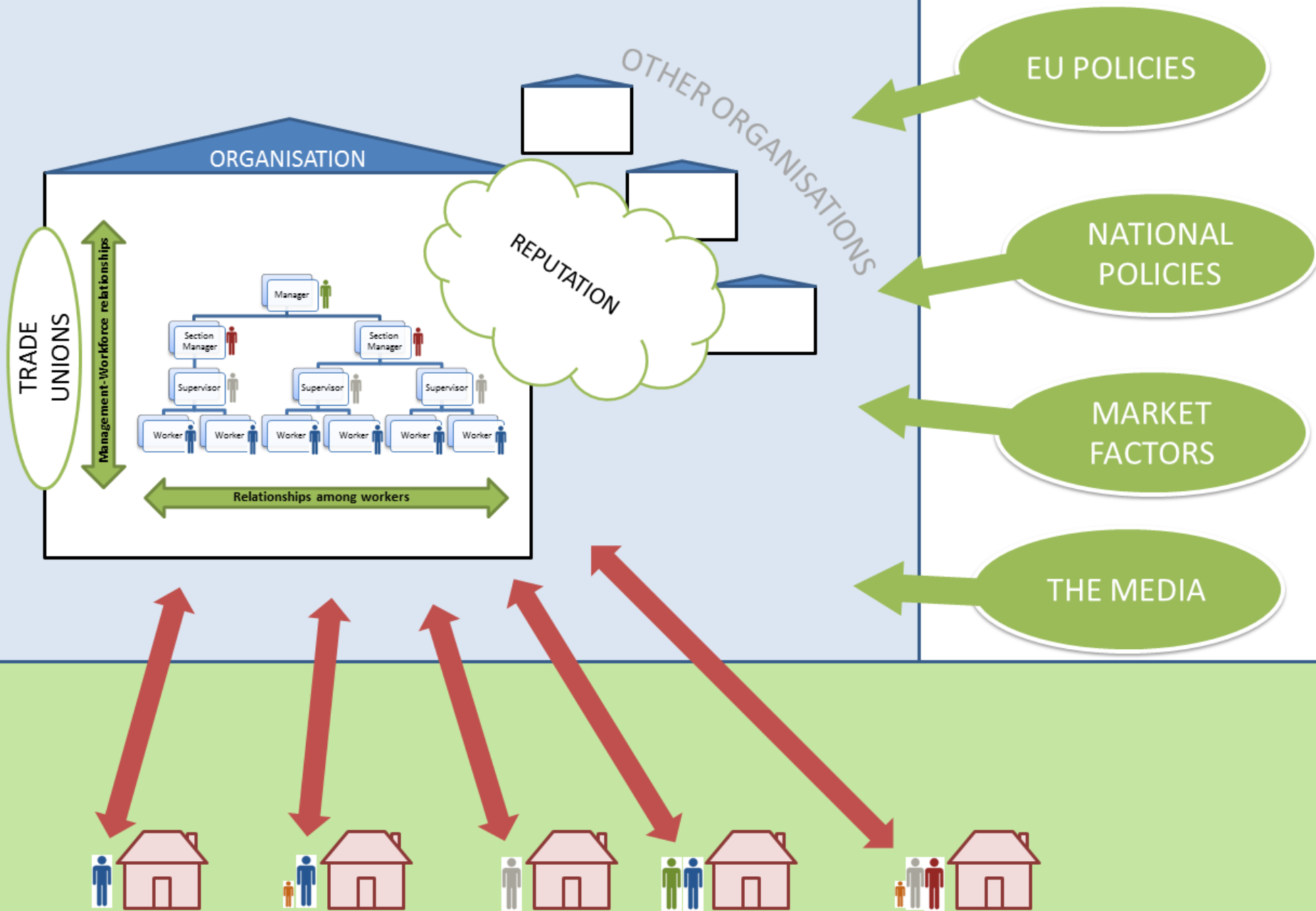
(1) Case study integration

(2) Methodological integration

(3) Policy
Recommendations

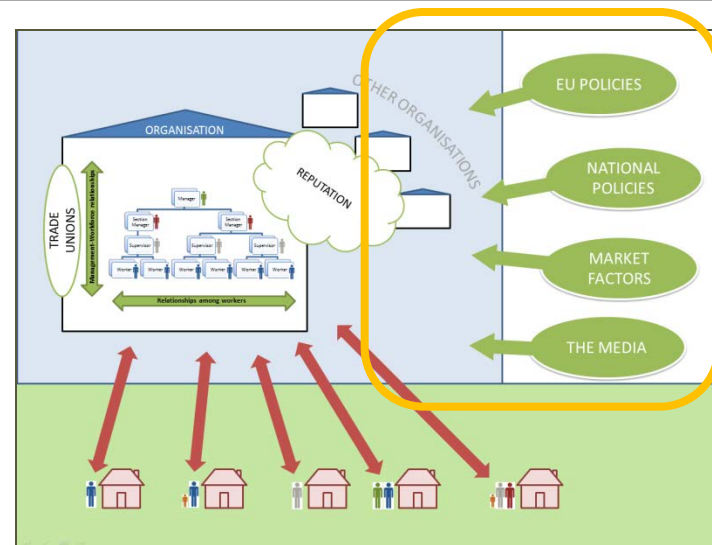
Creating the integration

- Integration themes developed using a collaborative, iterative process involving the whole consortium.
- Individual partner creation of integrative findings (using the agreed integration themes)
- Agent-based modelling experiments designed to test some of the ideas emerging from the integration
- Simulation of interventions using the agent-based models
- Creation of policy recommendations

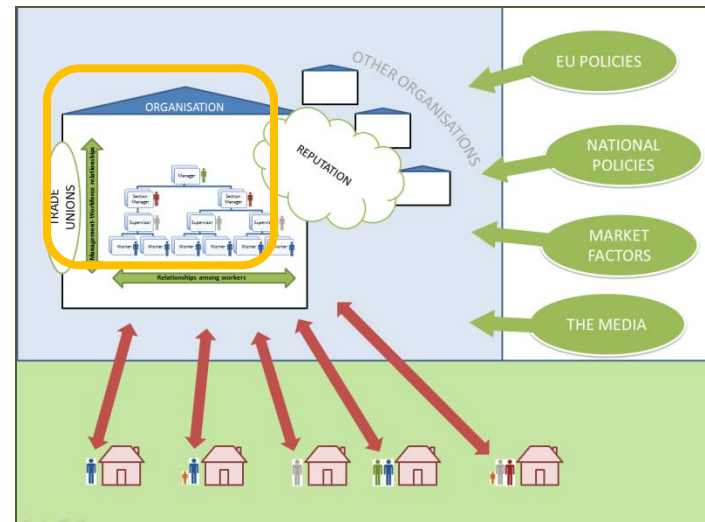


Structural conditions set from outside the organisation

- Legislation and regulation
- Encourage continual improvement.
- Avoid policy conflicts
- Reputation as a driver

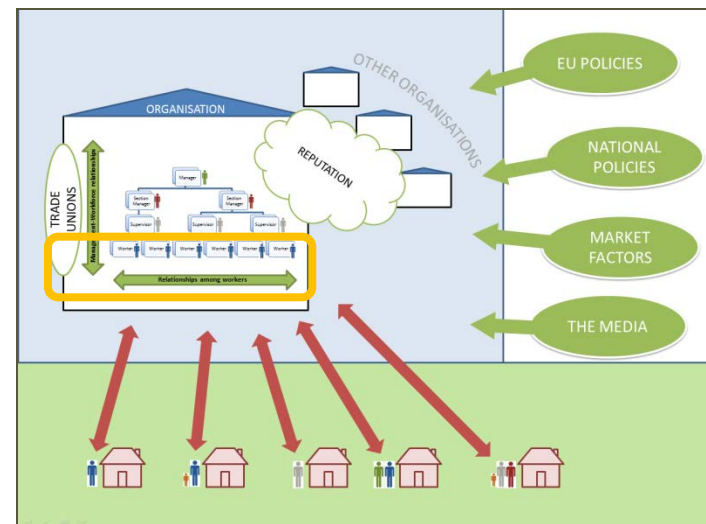


- Reprioritising the environmental
- Creating an ‘environmental culture’
- Monitoring and feedback
- Structuring social norms.
- Autonomy and perceived control



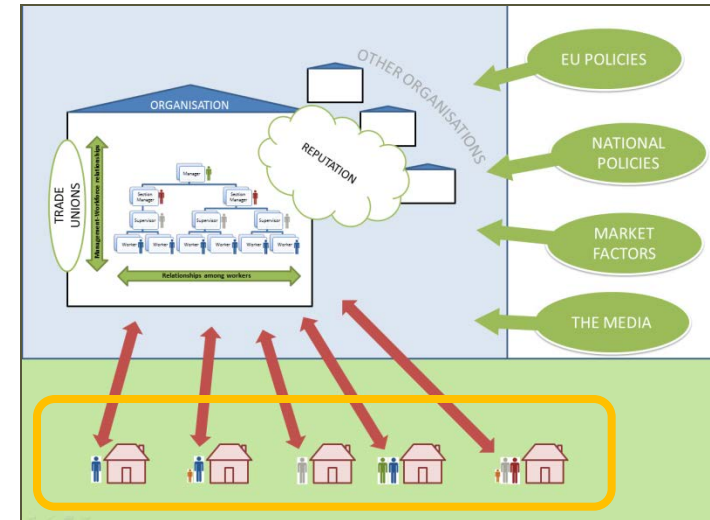
Horizontal relationships among workers

- Social and personal norms
- Identification with the organisation
- Dependence on top-down approaches
- Social networks



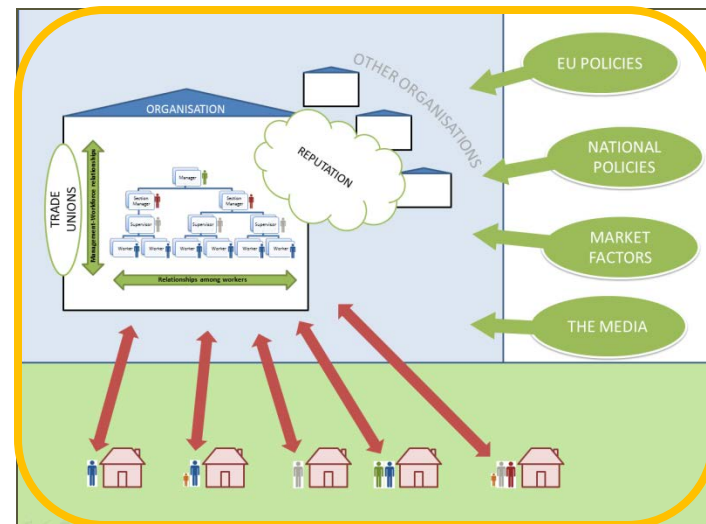
Home-work-third places relationship

- Strong borders between home and work
- Border crossing more likely to be from work to home
- Workplace-to-workplace transfer of 'ideas'
- Fostering positive transfer via an environmental culture



Towards an overall integration...

- Useful framework from which to consider future pathways to sustainable production, both for policy-makers and for organisations
- The framework has parallels with the Scottish Government's ISM tool
- Tailored for the unique challenges of organisational context



- LOCAW has successfully:
 - Introduced methods to the psychology community with allow researchers to explore the logical consequences of the conclusions arising from questionnaire-based research findings
 - Integrated qualitative and quantitative findings
 - Simulated policy tracks based on the results of these integrated research findings
 - Broadened the methodological toolkit available to all researchers in the consortium, through gaining an understanding of the complex mix of skills and techniques involved in creating this synthesis

Policy recommendations



1. Provide a supportive policy landscape

Regulations to protect the environment are often regarded as limits to be reached and not exceeded rather than drivers to raise standards. In this case regulations can become boundaries of permissive areas rather than drivers for change. We therefore recommend that government regulations and advice should be formulated so that they encourage improvement rather than reinforce status.

It is also important to avoid conflicts between policies at different levels. For example, public bodies have a key role to play in increasing market demand in particular areas, such as renewable technologies. However, in some cases public bodies risk incurring financial barriers to realising their strategic environmental objectives (for example becoming reclassified and taxed as an energy producer). Policy design should therefore be mindful of the pivotal role the public sector plays in leading the transition to low carbon economies.

In addition, it is important to provide a stable policy landscape in which organisations have the certainty required in order to facilitate long-term strategic thinking and investment. Past examples of policy shifts (e.g. unstable incentives for renewable energy generation) have sometimes been unhelpful in this respect.

Issues relating to wider societal infrastructure as a barrier to low carbon transitions emerged across all the LOCAW case studies. For example, improvements to transport infrastructure were viewed by organisations as a key enabler of sustainable transport practices. Furthermore, business travel and commuting, communications network infrastructure is a crucial foundation underpinning the adoption and wider uptake of flexible and home-working practices.

We therefore recommend that policies aiming to reduce carbon emissions of large organisations must focus their remit beyond the boundaries of individual organisations. Specifically, policies should concentrate efforts in addressing the infrastructural limitations constraining both physical and virtual connectivity.

2. Encourage the development of environmental cultures through adaptive organisational policy loops

Both national and EU legislation have sought to strengthen regulations in respect to health and safety. The largely successful implementation of these systems has been, in part, due to a widespread appreciation that the most effective way of bringing about change is to address the behaviours and risks, but to create a safety culture in which the prioritisation of safety becomes a national and EU level should encourage organisations, through the formulation of policy and promotion of good practice.

Evaluation is a critical element of adaptive policy success. However, there was little evidence of feedback to employees in the LOCAW project. Feedback to employees at different levels within the organisational hierarchy. This is particularly important in establishing and maintaining a pro-environmental norm within the workplace.

Establishing an environmental culture will require training of staff in pro-environmental practices, as well as training and development programmes for managers and team leaders. The importance of establishing low carbon workplaces, social and environmental norms emerged as a key driver underpinning the role of managers as positive role models and critical decision makers. Managers and policy-makers should work in partnership with staff development programmes.

Evaluation should therefore form the foundation upon which organisational policies are built. To support the development of indicators it is important to encourage the development of communication strategies to foster a widespread awareness of environmental performance amongst the workforce.

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3. Encourage participatory practices within organisations

Organisations should be supported to participate in place structures which facilitate bottom-up engagement with environmental processes and employee-led activities. Harnessing the creative potential of workers offers considerable scope for environmental issues at work to be tackled on this bottom-up engagement is not merely a tick-box exercise, but is understood to be an integral component of the social and environmental culture within the organisation. The form of participatory engagement that most effectively constitute part of wider initiatives to promote health and wellbeing in the workplace.

National governments have a role in encouraging a more participatory approach to climate solutions. Trade unions may play an important role in this respect. One example of a bottom-up approach where trade unions have engaged with industry and governments is through the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) – a market-based instrument arising from the Climate Change Act and involving 20,000 of the largest public and private sector organisations in the UK. The Trades Union Congress supported the CRC sectoral working groups on energy management, reporting to senior management.

Celebrating knowledge and successful bottom-up initiatives is an important component of instilling active worker engagement. To do this, it is important that the potential to specialise successful initiatives is seen as a real possibility by workers. Coupled with the support of management, policies should be designed to facilitate an on-going ethos of continual improvement whereby engagement with environmental matters is built into the role each individual plays within the organisation.

4. Actively promote the business case for low carbon practices

While laws and regulations are important drivers for company environmental performance, it can be a significant driver for improving environmental performance. Direct economic benefits of building an environmental reputation include the enhanced ability to secure ethical investment funds, and the potential to increase market share.

In the LOCAW case studies, we found an explicit where the implementation of environmental actions resulted in direct cost savings to the organisations. However, we also found evidence of a subject's belief that environmental measures and criteria are not compatible with economic drivers. The consequence of this perspective may be that when funds are limited, environmental relevant decisions are postponed or may be deprioritised, especially when environmental investments are postponed or not made.

We recommend that policy-makers create platforms for the promotion and celebration of good practice examples where eco-innovation has resulted in dual benefits of significant cost savings alongside environmental

improvements. We also recommend that policy should encourage the sharing of good practice between organisations through business-to-business collaborations within the same domain of activity. This would complement existing knowledge sharing through existing organisational networks.

Business planning involves balancing both short term economic gains with long term returns on investments in technology and infrastructure. A significant barrier to uptake in the LOCAW case studies, for example in relation to building improvements, internet IT infrastructure, and renewable energy investments. This barrier is particularly evident in times of economic recession. During such periods, policy instruments which reduce disincentives to strategic investments in environmental infrastructure should be prioritised.

We also recommend that further research and engagement by governments is needed to devise creative approaches to the use of reputation as a driver for environmental improvement.



5. Evaluate impacts of flexible working as a low carbon strategy

Findings from the LOCAW project suggest that flexible and home working arrangements are a viable and desirable option for large organisations in transitioning to a low-carbon future. Several of the central components of the future vision, and the case study organisations saw this as being a natural progression of existing trends.

Home working can (or) lead to environmentally friendly practices (e.g. reducing commuting). However, the net environmental outcome will not necessarily always be positive. Providing employees with the technology to work from home is a form of outsourcing with a consequence that environmental regulations and standards within the work setting become invisible and avoidable. Additionally, in terms of energy at home attributable to direct consumption of energy (e.g. heating and lighting) may actually be higher across the workforce. Moreover, it may result in underreporting in audits of environmental compliance.

We recommend that strategic research funding prioritises the study of flexible and home working in relation to both total carbon emissions and everyday environmental practices. There is considerable opportunity to investigate these issues through natural experiments due to the growing number of workplaces implementing such initiatives.



And finally....

- Care needs to be taken to design policy mixes well, and to ensure that adequate maintenance mechanisms are included
- Social networks play a key role in transitioning to a low-carbon future, especially over the longer term
- The pivotal role of the public sector should be recognised and developed (for example in championing renewable energy, and developing demand)
- The development of environmental cultures and participatory practices within organisations are necessary conditions for workplace transitions to a low carbon society

Thank you!