

Strategies for “more sustainable chemistry” in the leather sector: Findings of a multi-stakeholder scenario process, and next steps

J. Schenten¹, J. Rehn²

¹ Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, Society for Institutional Analysis - sofia, Darmstadt, Germany

² Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Design (IDF), Darmstadt, Germany

Content

Many companies in the supply chains for leather products strive to use “more sustainable chemistry” in their processes and products. Understanding the factors, on a global scale, that influence which and how chemicals are applied in the global leather chains is a major challenge. In a series of workshops in 2019, a scenario process with representatives from organisations along the leather value chains – i.a. chemical industry, tanneries, automotive and consumer products (shoes, fashion), as well as NGOs and researches from Darmstadt – identified these factors of influence and considered different assumptions how they may evolve. Based on that, the team developed two opposing scenarios with respect to “Leather 2035”, one of which describing, from the future perspective, how “more sustainable chemistry” was achieved. Subsequently, strategic roadmaps roughly covering the period from 2020 to 2035 were developed, including milestones as well as specific actions and tasks, to work towards the developments described in the ambitious “Leather 2035” scenario becoming reality. The four roadmaps are addressing governance to ensure international harmonisation of operations, feasible traceability of leather products (and chemicals present therein) along the global chains, innovation in production processes and the attribution of costs, as well the consumer perspective.

The conference contribution outlines the main findings of the work done so far in the project “Systeminnovation: Nachhaltige Entwicklung (s:ne)” at the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences. Providing adequate formats allowing actors to gain a mutual understanding of the complex and interrelated challenges, the project aims to support the leather sector in the transition to a “more sustainable chemistry”. From this perspective, innovative systemic solutions (i.e. comprising of technical innovation, of strategic innovations with regards to the conceptual development of leather products, but also of social and organisational innovation, as well as governance mechanisms thereof) are being created that are capable of tackling these challenges. The Project is now on the verge to initiate thematic experts groups addressing different key factors flagged in the roadmaps.

Email: julian.schenten@h-da.de

Web:

<https://sne.h-da.de/en/implementation-project/more-sustainable-chemistry-in-the-leather-supply-chains/>

Keyword

sustainable chemistry, scenario process, governance