

**ULYSSES (Urban Lifestyles, Sustainability, and Integrated
Environmental Assessment)**

Jeroen P van der Sluijs

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Dr Mostafa K Tolba

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Ted Munn

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ULYSSES (Urban Lifestyles, Sustainability, and Integrated Environmental Assessment)

ULYSSES has been an innovative European research program (commissioned by EC DG XII, part of the Fourth Framework program), which has developed a procedure for citizen participation in integrated assessment (IA) (*see Integrated Assessment, Definition of*, Volume 4). The procedure comprises a process based on the *focus group* method. A group of citizens debates climate policy and sustainable development, having been given access to state of the art IA models to support their debates.

Between 1996 and 1999 ULYSSES has conducted and analyzed group discussions with over 400 citizens in eight European cities. Participants approached the climate change issue from a broad range of criteria including fairness, justice, and personal values and beliefs, and they related climate change to their own experiences and lifestyles.

Participants usually preferred strong reductions of energy use in the next decades to business-as-usual trends. They were often in favor of actions to be taken in order to reduce the risks of climate change, even if there were substantial scientific uncertainties. The issue of trust in science and policy communities is essential in this context.

ULYSSES has demonstrated that IA–Focus Groups can increase the possibilities for citizens to articulate their views on environmental issues in a thoughtful manner. This can help to bridge gaps between decisions by policy makers and citizens' views. Exploring alternative explanatory and moral frames in such processes can complement expert assessments on complex environmental issues. Focus group procedures involving open-ended discussions add a richer dimension to the traditional quantitative survey methods. In IA–Focus Groups, the discussions can broaden into directions impossible for the researchers to imagine beforehand. This is vital if we are to learn more about how the diversity of everyday life and experience affects the understanding, values, and objectives that different social groups bring to global change issues (*see also Integrated Assessment*, Volume 4).

JEROEN P VAN DER SLUIJS *The Netherlands*