TreeDependent

HUNGARY

Summary

The 'TreeDependent – responsible events, responsible travel' programme is about providing support to reduce carbon emissions, as well as calculating and compensating them through various services. However, this is not a typical compensation programme as it emphasises reduction before compensation. Furthermore, only native fruit trees that are planted in school or non-profit gardens are used to achieve fully voluntary compensation, thereby connecting activities related to different sustainable development objectives. This is a programme run by GreenDependent, a non-profit organisation in Hungary.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

The TreeDependent programme helps others to become more active energy citizens and offers a variety of tools/services for this. Calculating the carbon footprint of events, travel or lifestyles and compensating them through planting native fruit trees is the programme's main focus. However, through the planting activities, different organisations and social and environmental objectives are also connected.

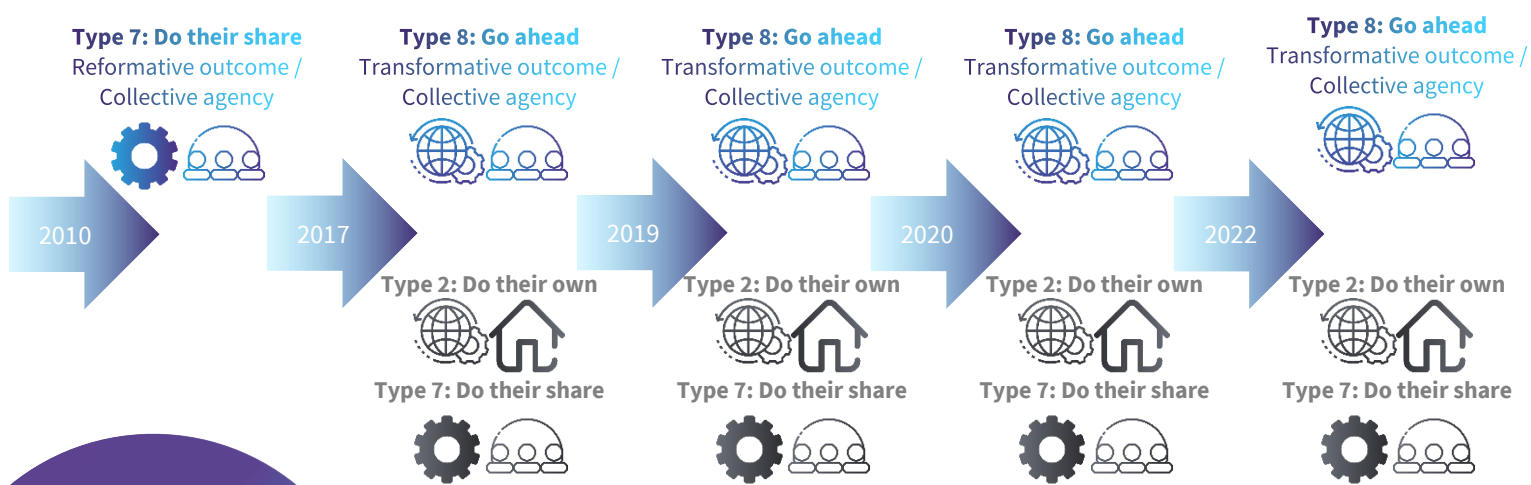HOLISTIC   COLLECTIVE

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Goals

1. Awareness-raising about more conscious (sustainable) lifestyles / environmental education;
2. Helping participating companies, organisations and individuals in their carbon compensation and reduction efforts;
3. Connecting participants – individuals and companies on one side and tree-hosting educational, social and non-profit institutions on the other, with the involvement of the tree nursery that collects and provides the native fruit trees.

TREE : DEPENDENT
responsible events | travel

The story and the typology

The project started as a carbon footprint compensation tool for the host organisation, GreenDependent. It only later became a more extensive project as more and more individuals and organisations desired to participate in it. Hence, it went through various phases of development. In the beginning, only a few compensation projects were implemented, and it took several years for TreeDependent to manifest as a fully functioning project. Later, the project became very successful and grew exponentially for a period, but the COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant decline in project finances. After the COVID-19 epidemic passed, project activities started to pick up again with new and old clients.

Type 7: Do their share Reformative outcome / Collective agency	**Type 8: Go ahead** Transformative outcome / Collective agency	**Type 8: Go ahead** Transformative outcome / Collective agency	**Type 8: Go ahead** Transformative outcome / Collective agency	**Type 8: Go ahead** Transformative outcome / Collective agency
2010	2017	2019	2020	2022
	Type 2: Do their own **Type 7: Do their share**	**Type 2: Do their own** **Type 7: Do their share**	**Type 2: Do their own** **Type 7: Do their share**	**Type 2: Do their own** **Type 7: Do their share**

Case history summary

For the summary methodology, click HERE!

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Phase 1: Creation and initial years, 2010 - 2017

The initiative started organically, as the original idea was not to create a separate project but simply to calculate GreenDependent's own carbon footprint (events, travel, etc., and later organisational emissions) as well as to take responsibility for them by compensating them by planting native fruit trees in the gardens of educational, social and non-profit institutions (who then became active participants in this collective case). Furthermore, it was important for GreenDependent to integrate this approach into all its projects (European, national and local) and to implement them as sustainably as possible ('walking the talk'). Slowly, the process was picked up by some partner organisations that participated in GreenDependent's events. They considered it an effective way to influence their employees' and partners' attitudes towards energy efficiency and sustainability.

	Individual			Collective	
Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	**7. Do their share**	9. Do the job
Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way within organizations	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

Main type: Do their share
Reformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

TREE : DEPENDENT
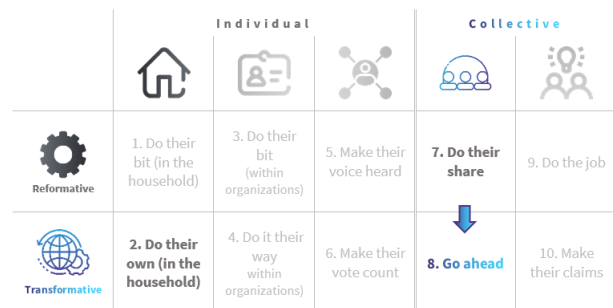responsible events | travel

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Phase 2: Growth, 2017 – 2019

Although there was initially no expectation at all of creating a separate project, the project became more successful than expected. As the project emerged and became a success, the organisers developed some ideas and started developing related plans. Nine years after the initial concept was born, a logo and the project name were coined (in 2019).

TreeDependent is the only programme to plant native fruit trees but not other types of trees (e.g., oak, beech, or pine). This means that compensation-related activities and responsibility-taking are better 'owned' by clients. The social acceptance of planting trees is high in Hungary, and there are not many programmes which help people understand and take responsibility for their action (in terms of carbon footprints), and it is an alternative to carbon credit programmes. Slowly, well-known companies started using this programme (Business Council for Sustainable Development Hungary, E.ON Hungary, ALTEO, etc.)

– improving the programme's reputation. All in all, the project's innovative aspects helped it come to life.

Furthermore, in addition to the collective energy citizenship agency enabled by the project, individuals became interested in participating during this period. Several people approached GreenDependent to inquire about calculating the carbon footprint of their overseas travels and taking responsibility for it by planting trees.

	Individual			Collective	
	🏠	🪪	✳️	👥	💡
Reformative ⚙️	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	**7. Do their share**	9. Do the job
Transformative 🌐	**2. Do their own (in the household)**	4. Do it their way within organizations	6. Make their vote count	**8. Go ahead**	10. Make their claims

Main type: Go ahead
Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency
Secondary types
Do their share
Reformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency
Do their own
Transformative outcome / Private in the household agency

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Phase 3: Peak, 2019 - March 2020

Gradually, more and more external customers – institutional and individual – approached GreenDependent to calculate the carbon footprint of their events or travelling and compensate them, regardless of the very strict selection criteria GreenDependent had defined. The process that is employed avoids the possibility of greenwashing: Clients cannot be companies whose actions are inherently harmful to the environment (e.g., oil or car manufacturing or fossil fuel companies) or are not in accordance with the project's principles (e.g. not ready to reduce their emissions at following events).

After several years, some long-standing clients started to request more services from GreenDependent within its TreeDependent programme (e.g., awareness-raising campaigns for employees and training on low-carbon event solutions).

	Individual			Collective	
Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	**7. Do their share**	9. Do the job
Transformative	**2. Do their own (in the household)**	4. Do it their way within organizations	6. Make their vote count	**8. Go ahead**	10. Make their claims

Main type: Go ahead
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Reformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency
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Transformative outcome / Private in the household agency

Phase 4: Lockdown & pandemic, March 2020 - 2022

The COVID-19 crisis interrupted the project's successful momentum. GreenDependent had to let people go, and the organisation lost most of their customers as well because events could not be organised as a result of the strict pandemic-related regulations; people stopped travelling, and partners (usually, business ones) put a halt to "extra investments" (i.e., providing funds for sustainability or education-related activities) due to uncertainty about the future. Furthermore, finding host institutions for the fruit trees became more difficult. In this period, the project returned to its original type, and only GreenDependent, with some core partners, continued to participate.

	Individual			Collective	
Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	**7. Do their share**	9. Do the job
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Phase 5: Picking up again and renewed growth, March 2022 -

As the major phase of the COVID pandemic passed, the project gradually started to pick up speed again; some old and new clients have been participating with the educational and social institutions that are home to the trees.

		Individual			Collective	
		🏠	📇	⛓	👥	👤
⚙ Reformative		1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	7. Do their share	9. Do the job
🌐 Transformative		2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way within organizations	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

Main type: Go ahead
Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency
Secondary types
Do their share
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DISTRIBUTION AND PLANTING OF TREES: SCHOOL GARDENS AND NON-PROFIT INITIATIVES

DATA COLLECTION

CALCULATION OF THE CARBON FOOTPRINT AND THE NUMBER OF TREES NEEDED

$\sum 1, 2, 3, ...$

OBTAINING NATIVE FRUIT TREES

GreenDependent ©

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The aspects of
energy citizenship

One of the project's outcomes is **helping people to become more active energy citizens; the project offers instruments and services** for this.

One of the goals is to raise awareness and for people to become more conscious about the related issues. TreeDependent puts tangible options and tools in people's hands, letting them take responsibility for their action/footprints.
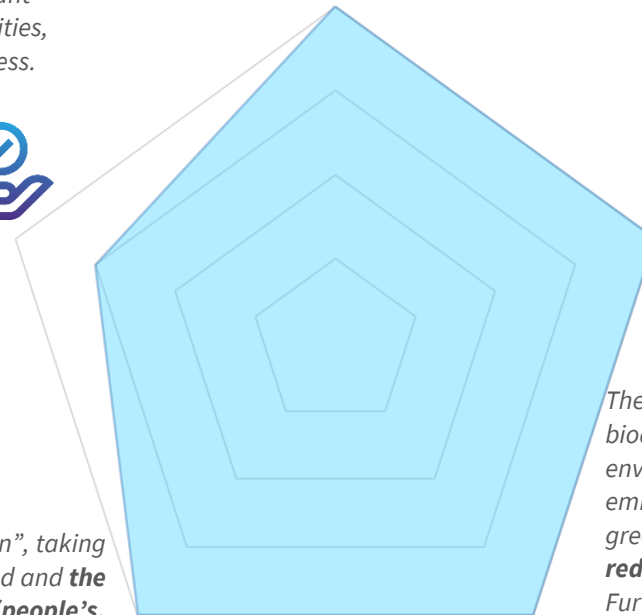
ENERGY PROSPECTS

Democratic energy future
A more democratic energy future is a core concern of the case, and is part of the vision

The partners (the clients) decide for themselves how much responsibility they wish to take. Schools (where the trees are planted) can also decide how many and what kind of trees they want to plant – taking into account external limitations. In the case of communities, they decide about everything; the project only facilitates the process.

When distributing trees for planting, the project pays special attention to social aspects, such as **involving institutions that deal with people with special needs or who have a disadvantaged background**. The hosts receive the trees for free.

On the other side, the trees have a fixed price, but the calculation/the service provided by the project is adjusted to the customer, making the project more equal. For example, multinational companies pay a higher price, while for individuals the service is free; in the case of communities, the price is tailored to the circumstances.

Citizen power/control
Citizens can express their views, but their views are not necessarily taken into account

Equity and justice
Involvement is fully open

The activity itself mainly aims at carbon compensation and protecting biodiversity by planting trees. This activity is strongly related to environmental issues. Usually, the first step is to calculate the carbon emission of an event or a person's travel and then reduce it, while avoiding greenwashing. **The project only works with partners who are willing to reduce their carbon footprint and do not only want to compensate it.** Furthermore, TreeDependent adopts a more holistic approach: in addition to reducing carbon emissions and other environmental impact, preserving biodiversity through planting local species is an important objective.

The SDG goals of "responsible production and consumption", taking "climate action" and "creating partnerships" are mentioned and **the goal of the whole project is to reduce our (people's, organization's, companies' etc.) carbon footprint, take responsibility for it and to draw the attention to the carbon limit**.

Carbon limit
Explicit recognition with mention/objective of reaching the max. carbon footprint

Environmental sustainability
Environmental sustainability is a core issue, and is considered in goal setting

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Further information

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References

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- Hévízi Televízió (2020). News item about TreeDependent – Fákkal felelősen. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovZ1yy_3DqQ (Accessed 30.09.2023)
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- Vadovics, E., Szőllőssy A., and Vadovics K. (2023). Introduction and Methodology for the EnergyPROSPECTS Detailed Case Summary Reports. EnergyPROSPECTS (PROactive Strategies and Policies for Energy Citizenship Transformation). Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10075408

Source of images

GreenDependent Institute, Hungary

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Mapping and detailed case research by:
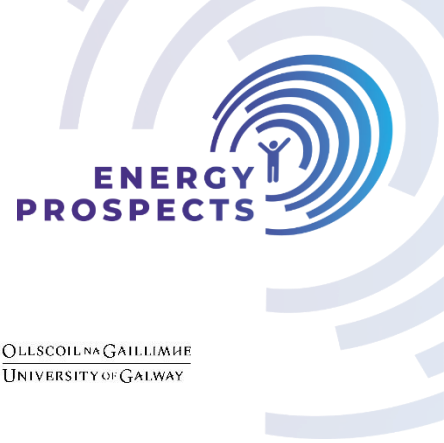Ráchel Surányi & Edina Vadovics, GreenDependent Institute

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