

Session C5 (dialogue)

Track 11 - New frontiers -new directions

Time: 16:00 - 17:00

Date: 12th June 2018

Location: Room 4.205

224 - Sustainable Consumption and production across domains: The 'nexus' as a locus of analysis

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Abstract

Sustainability transitions are often understood as arising from the coevolution of technical, social and organizational innovations, a dynamic which necessitates focusing on whole system processes and outcomes. However, 'whole system' approaches usually focus on specific domains (mobility, energy, agro-food, climate etc.), thereby backgrounding interlinkages with other domains. As such, transitions that are considered sustainable in one domain (e.g. energy) may have negative impact on the sustainability of other domains, either directly, or by affecting sustainability transitions elsewhere. Efforts to understand the 'nexus' of different domains therefore seek to understand (un)intended consequences of policies, technologies and practices that may arise out of specific domains. Much of this work suggests that sustainable transitions necessitates not merely *whole* system, but also *cross* systems approaches, for example considering the interactions between water, energy and food (and other) domains. Nexus analyses offer a novel form of scientific enquiry, emphasizing the complex, nonlinear interactions between system components and the emergence of a variety of (un)predictable and (un)intended outcomes across domains.

This dialogue session thus focusses on the role of nexus analysis in developing a richer understanding of the reconfiguration of consumption and production systems. In this vein, this session will bring together four perspectives on the value and limitations of 'nexus thinking', using them to stimulate discussion and debate with the wider audience. Four speakers have already agreed (see foot of abstract) to present recent work exploring some of these issues.

A diverse collection of perspectives on sustainable production and consumption across the nexus are presented here. These draw on a range of disciplines, theoretical approaches, and methodologies to offer critical insights into the interaction of practices (production, consumption, and waste) and innovations (both technological and social/organizational innovations) across scales (household, firm, sectoral, national, and international) and domains (water, food, energy, climate), thereby contributing to discussions around decision-making across all levels of governance in enabling, supporting, and resisting processes of transition. Importantly, they engage actively with the suitability of existing concepts, methods, theories and analytical foci for

understanding sustainability transitions in the whole. Collectively, they offer important contributions to the development of 'nexus-thinking', while also aligning well to the conference theme, for example by developing our understanding of the nature of intra- and inter-domain interdependencies, the dynamics of reconfiguration within and across domains, and the role of actors, discourses and evidence in shaping (and resisting) sustainability transitions.

For a 90 minute session we envisage four talks of 10 minutes each, allowing ample time for in-depth audience participation. While all employing a nexus lens to interrogate sustainability transitions, the breadth of perspectives presented here offers an exciting opportunity for a broad audience to engage in this session. Indeed, engagement with perspectives from across dimensions, disciplines and domains – such as this forum offers – is a critical component of nexus studies.

Agreed speakers:

- Alison Browne (University of Manchester) with Mike Foden, Matt Watson, David Evans, Liz Sharp. *The water-energy-food nexus at home: New opportunities for policy interventions in household sustainability*
- Keith Matthews & Kirsty Blackstock (James Hutton Institute). *What we have learnt from Quantitative Story Telling (QST) at the European Commission – nexus thinking or policy silos?*
- Iain Soutar (University of Exeter). *Understanding innovation at the water energy food nexus*