

Welcome to our news

Dale Southerton (SCI Director) and **Andrew McMeekin** (SCI Research Director)

Welcome to the new SCI bi-annual newsletters, designed to provide some brief glimpses into our on-going research activities and insights. This first edition reflects on the first six months of a refreshed SCI, marked by a new Directorship and a sharpening of our research focus in order to understand and explain how everyday lives are (or are not!) changing, and the potential of shifts in innovation systems to achieve transitions to more sustainable societies. This requires critical reflection on the politics, visions and the 'evidence base' that frame debates around sustainable consumption. Please visit our website to read more about the SCI research programme (www.sci.manchester.ac.uk/research).

The last six months have been very busy. Five new projects (funded by a range of organisations including Tesco, the ESRC, the EPSRC, Unilever and the European Commission) have led to the appointment of six new researchers. Two of these projects are part of a strategic research partnership between the SCI and Unilever. We have re-launched the SCI seminar series, bringing world-leading scholars to the SCI to discuss their work, and established an SCI blog. Four new PhD researchers have been recruited to join us in September, and the SCI has developed an inter-disciplinary course for undergraduate students.

Of course, some activities come to an end. The ESRC co-funded Sustainable Practices Research Group (SPRG), which we led, formally ended earlier this year. Our final event – an exhibition and debate – pulled together the key research insights and their implications for policy and practice. The work and ideas from SPRG will be developed through a number of major

new research investments at the SCI and at SPRG partner Institutions. This newsletter contains 'tasters' of all the above activities.

Before we sign off we would like to congratulate Frank Geels for being selected in the preliminary list of the


extremely prestigious 'Highly Cited Researchers' in the Social Sciences by the Shanghai Jiao Tong World-Class University Centre.

We hope you find these pages interesting and, if you do, please explore our website some more.

SCI invites students to think about sustainability



SCI researcher Jo Mylan, was recently invited to participate in a three part University pilot scheme aimed at undergraduate students. The 'Sustainability Challenge' is the first in a series of three issues which all undergraduate students will be confronted with in the future; ('Social Justice' and 'Workplace Ethics' events will be held in the second and third year). This time round students were asked to consider a range of issues focused on dwindling natural resources and how we can plan better for the future. The initiative is part of the University's wider social responsibility strategy and it is envisaged that by 2017/18 every Manchester undergraduate will have completed this common programme of study. To find out more visit: www.manchester.ac.uk/socialresponsibility



How do we deliver a more sustainable future
without compromising our quality of life?

Is it time to take gender seriously in sustainable consumption?



SCI researcher Jo Mylan reflects on Prof. Oriel Sullivan's seminar at the SCI (6 May): 'Domestic outsourcing and multitasking – how much do they really contribute to

women's dual burden?' Women with greater access to economic resources are more likely to choose outsourcing (employing others to clean or care for children in the home) as a strategy to deal with their domestic workload. However, as demonstrated by Oriel Sullivan in the seminar she gave at the SCI recently, while financially better off women do less unpaid domestic labour, outsourcing does

not account for the reduction.

So what's going on here? Has innovation in domestic appliances finally delivered promises of reducing work? Does greater economic power translate into greater control over home design making homes more efficient? Or, as suggested in the seminar, does a busier life mean that we just can't be bothered to clean behind the sofa anymore? Each of these explanations has potentially important implications for sustainable consumption. Rising standards and expectations of what our material surroundings should deliver are often mobilised to explain the increasing resource intensity of our consumption. But if wealthy women are now eschewing these standards, or interpreting them in different ways, are we reaching a turning point? Alternatively, if furnishing our

homes with the most advanced technologies, adopting modern designs such as open plan living and glamorous streamlined bathrooms, reduces the work required (rather than simply moving it around) – this has implications for energy use in the home.

Most strikingly, if its women's income and women's requirements for organising the home which have the greatest implications for changes in patterns of domestic work, and by implication energy use, maybe it's time to take gender seriously in understanding sustainable consumption.

For more information on Jo's research please visit the SCI website.

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Sustainability, Social Practices, Policy: Exhibition and Panel Discussion

The Sustainable Practices Research Group (SPRG) held its finale event in London on 11 September 2013. The SPRG was a major research collaboration (2010-13) across eight UK universities, funded by the ESRC, the Scottish Government and Defra. The SCI's Dale Southerton and Andrew McMeekin led the programme, which also included Alan Warde, Alison Brown and Dan Welch. The research programme addressed the dynamics of social practices, cultural conventions, institutional processes and infrastructures in order to inform transitions towards sustainability. Empirical projects included research on the spread of air conditioning, 'zero

carbon' housing, international variations in drinking water provision, changing eating habits, and UK domestic water consumption.



**SUSTAINABLE
PRACTICES
RESEARCH GROUP**

The event brought together an invited audience of over a hundred policy makers, academics, business people and NGOs. According to Dan Welch, who helped organise the event, "The goal of the event was to inform and frame debates around sustainable consumption beyond academia. The SPRG exhibition opened up the programme's research in an accessible

way to an influential audience." The panel discussion included Lord Gus O'Donnell, former Cabinet Secretary, David Nussbaum, Chief Executive of WWF-UK, and Mike Barry, Head of Sustainable Business at Marks and Spencer.

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Pressure to cook and ‘eat properly’ leads to more food waste than Bogofs

Cooking from scratch and dinner parties are more responsible for food waste than lazy consumers and special offers, research shows

Research shows that the more socially significant a meal is, the more food waste results.

The UK wastes 15m tonnes of food every year, according to a report published this week. This has serious economic and environmental implications. Annually food waste costs UK business at least £5bn, and worldwide, the carbon footprint of food waste is twice that of road transport in the US.

Baroness Scott, chair of the House of Lords committee that produced the report, condemns this state of affairs as “morally repugnant”. When consumers in the developed world waste nearly as much food as sub-Saharan Africa produces, few could disagree.

The report is refreshing in not laying responsibility for the global issues of food waste squarely on householders’ doorsteps. Where statistics suggest that 42% of food waste in the EU can be attributed to consumers, the report draws attention to the ways in which retailers – who are directly responsible for just 5% – pass waste “from the store to the household” through the way in which food is sold. Distinguishing between the causes of waste and the location where it occurs is crucial.

But it’s disappointing the debate about the interface of households and retailers is limited to a narrow and predictable focus on promotions – such as “buy one, get one free” offers (Bogofs) – and date labelling. This falls into the trap of seeing food waste primarily as a consequence of individual decision-making.

Research into how and why food we buy to eat ends up in the bin tells a different story entirely. Studying real households as they shop, cook and eat suggests that food waste is better understood as a product of household routines, cultural expectations around cooking and eating, and the social

organisation of food consumption.

Our work at the Sustainable Consumption Institute, University of Manchester, suggests that “positive” values and practices such as cooking from scratch, or eating with family and friends, are more often the cause of food waste than laziness, profligacy and ignorance.

All of the households studied felt guilty about wasting food and tried to avoid doing so. Many developed routines that allow them to match their patterns of grocery shopping to the meals that they cook and eat between trips to the supermarket. When these routines are unexpectedly thrown out of balance – whether by a surprise visit from a friend, a parents’ evening, or a traffic jam – we see food that would normally be eaten at risk of going to waste.

To make matters worse, there exists an imperative to cook and eat “properly”, and this is commonly understood as a matter of cooking from scratch using a variety of fresh ingredients. But the rhythms of everyday life – whether for working parents or single young professionals – are often mismatched with the timeframes in which broccoli wilts and tomatoes go wrinkly.

The family meal is a cultural ideal that many of us consider a good thing. However, ensuring the family eats together and eats “properly” – a responsibility usually falling on women – means both the continuous effort to push suitable meals on unwilling partners and kids and having to buy “fail safe” ingredients as back up. Negotiating these conflicting imperatives can often lead to food waste.

Research currently underway at the Sustainable Consumption Institute, drawing on a recent large-scale data set of eating patterns in the UK, suggests the

more socially significant a meal is – such as a dinner party with family and friends – the more food waste results. Our findings also reveal that the smaller the quantity of leftovers from a meal, the more likely they are to go to waste – contrary to common misconceptions about the relation between over-consumption and food waste.

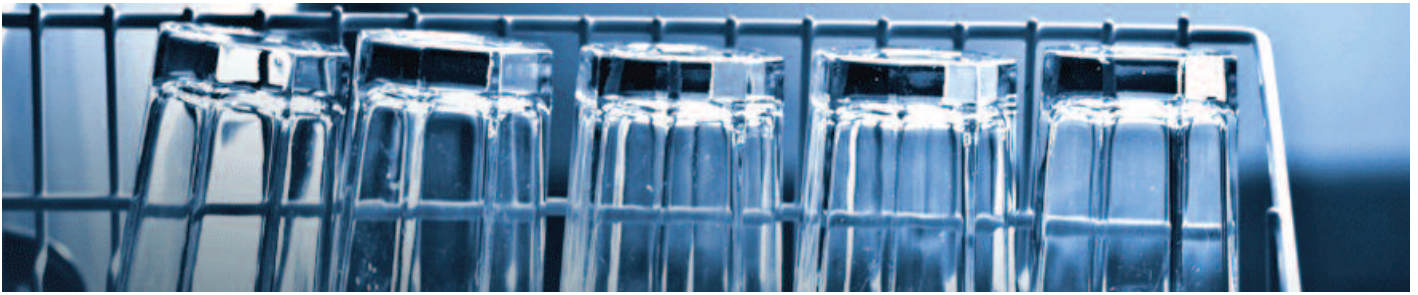
So what does this all mean for retailers? Our research suggests that Bogofs – especially on non-perishable items – are something of a red herring.

We know the pressure to cook from scratch using a variety of fresh ingredients leads to food waste. One modest suggestion is that there is more retailers can do to promote packets of pre-mixed vegetables that would allow households to eat “proper” meals without buying surplus perishable ingredients. Of course, this kind of portion control is liable to be seen as “cheating” – at odds with prevailing ideas of cooking “properly”.

This tension highlights that the challenge for household food waste reduction might be one of shifting cultural conventions around food and eating. And here retailers are well placed to act as cultural mediators who can work alongside others, such as celebrity chefs, food bloggers and media outlets to shift those conventions in a way that helps reduce household food waste.

David Evans is lecturer in sociology and research fellow of the Sustainable Consumption Institute at Manchester University. He is the author of the forthcoming book Food Waste: Home consumption, material culture and everyday life. Daniel Welch is research associate of the Sustainable Consumption Institute at Manchester University.

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SCI staff develop cutting edge interdisciplinary course for undergraduates

Bringing together world-class sustainability expertise, the SCI's 'Innovation for a sustainable society' is a cutting edge course unit designed to enable students to get to grips with the concepts behind efforts to achieve sustainability and to identify where the real world challenges and opportunities lie.

Innovation is crucial in developing less resource intensive ways of meeting the needs of society (such as food, transport and energy) and any solutions will need to include new products, new services,

changing behaviours and even re-shaping entire systems. But how is this possible when so many societal actors are involved? What roles can consumers, businesses, governments and new technologies play in this transformation? Answering these fundamental questions requires perspectives which span traditional academic disciplines, including sociology, economics, management and innovation studies. 'Innovation for a Sustainable Society' does just that and simultaneously introduces cutting edge



ideas and debates in this area. Throughout the unit these perspectives will be explored through discussion of sustainability initiatives in areas of food, transport and energy provision in the UK and beyond.

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Don't believe the hype!

Alan Warde is Professorial Research Fellow of the Sustainable Consumption Institute (SCI) and

Professor of Sociology in the School of Social Sciences at The University of Manchester. His research has included a significant number of studies into eating routines and patterns. One recent project was based on a survey of around 3,000 British people and their daily eating habits.

We might be forgiven for believing that the population of the UK lives on crisps, pizzas, chips and chocolate.

Or that we never sit down at a table to eat a "proper" meal. This is the story the media tells us about the food we eat and the way that we eat it. My research, and that of other social scientists, simply does not support this view.

Let me give two examples:

First, let's consider snacking. The common belief is that we are all hooked on a steady diet of high-sugar, high-salt, mega-processed and non-nutritious snacks to get us through the day.

In fact, the data from our survey shows that a lot of people don't have any snacks at all and those who do, tend to eat them in a controlled pattern; maybe one with a

morning coffee and another mid-afternoon.

In reality, very few people eat crisps, chocolate or other snacks to the extent and with the regularity that the media suggests. One reason for this misperception might be visibility – more people eat in public than used to be the case, because more food is readily available to eat on the street.

So we often see people snacking, but this doesn't mean that the same people are snacking all the time.

My second example is the traditional family meal. There is a lot of media discussion about the breakdown of the family and it is sometimes argued that not eating together is one aspect of this decline. However, our research shows that most families do try to eat together every day and that many achieve this, despite the pressures of work and often conflicting timetables.

So why does the media tell a different story - one that seems plausible to many of us? Perhaps because the patterns and rituals of household eating appear to be less rigid than they were for earlier generations.

Many of us have eschewed the tradition of the formal Sunday lunch, for example, in favour of a less structured meal such as

a barbeque with friends and neighbours. Also, we eat out more and we eat more takeaways, but it is important to remember that these are contexts in which we also eat together.

I don't want to deny that there have been changes in the content and organisation of eating in recent years but this change has not been either as dramatic or disruptive as many media representations would suggest.

We also need to understand that the story of a golden age where everyone ate three square meals a day around the family table is itself a bit of a myth. There is a great deal of anxiety about food choices and eating patterns, especially in the context of debates about obesity and the content and contamination of food, which could lead to misperceptions about people's eating behaviour.

It is therefore especially important that the public and policy makers have access to reliable information based on rigorous research and that is exactly what we're trying to do at the SCI.

A video of Alan discussing his research is available at:

<http://www.sci.manchester.ac.uk/blog/2013/08/02/dont-believe-hype>

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How do we align our personal desire for a better life with a shared need for a better future?

Researcher Spotlight: **Sally Gee** SCI Research Fellow

In each SCI Newsletter we'll take the opportunity to introduce one of our researchers and ask them about their projects and engagements. Here we put the spotlight on Sally Gee, a Research Fellow at the SCI and the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research (MIOIR).



Sally, can you tell us about the kind of research you do?

My research is broadly concerned with the governance of research and innovation, and processes of socio-

technical change towards sustainability. I use case studies to analyse innovation processes over time, in areas including energy, waste and agriculture. I have a multi-disciplinary approach and draw on different theoretical lenses appropriate to the specific case – usually, science and technology studies, evolutionary economics and technology management.

My entry point may be the micro level (e.g. firm level processes), the meso level (e.g. intellectual property regimes in biosciences) or the macro level (e.g. comparative national biofuel trajectories). When possible, I prefer to tackle research problems from a multi-level perspective, analysing bottom-up and top-down processes of socio-technical change.

Can you tell us about some of the core research projects you've worked on?

I've worked on a number of projects addressing eco-innovation systems, particularly around bio-energy. The ESRC funded Transition to a Sustainable Bio-economy" involved comparative analysis of the evolution of biofuel innovation systems in the USA and Brazil. This research

examined the role of the State as a core actor in the mobilization of innovation systems and how specific institutional arrangements, political contexts and technological competencies influence how problems are framed. The framing of ecological problems was shown to have a significant impact on the direction and momentum of system evolution.

In a sister project funded by the SCI - "Foresight for European Biofuel Futures" – we looked at whether biofuels could make transport in Europe more sustainable – and how. I also worked on the SCI project "Demand and Innovation for Sustainable Consumption" which explored the role of lead firms in eco-innovation, particularly in supply chains in the agri-food sector.

In conjunction with "Understanding Public Procurement of Innovation" (Underpinn), funded by the Innovation Research Initiative, I've explored with colleagues how purchasing by public bodies can stimulate eco-innovation in products, as well as the transformation of urban waste infrastructures. We demonstrate how local authorities can govern the transformation of socio-technical systems through 'entrepreneurial procurement'. The research included an in-depth case study on the emergence of a recycling-based waste infrastructure in Greater Manchester.

What are you currently working on at the SCI?

I'm continuing to develop my research on

the governance of eco-innovation through my role in a major European project: Res-AGorA. The aim of the project is to develop a governance framework for responsible research and innovation (RRI), encompassing governance challenges from lab-based R&D to market relations, and involving a wide variety of actors.

A huge variety of governance instruments and arrangements designed to reduce risks and maximise the positive impacts of research and innovation already exist. Creating a new RRI governance framework in isolation won't work. So I'm engaged in a large empirical programme, with colleagues at MIOIR and our European partners, informed by the Res-AGorA research model to inform the development of the governance framework.

What do you think the SCI brings to the debate around sustainable consumption?

Production and consumption tend to be treated by academics and policy makers as discrete socio-economic activities. I see the research being undertaken at the SCI as attempting to overcome this dominant dichotomy. This is critical if we are to understand and influence the processes of socio-technical change necessary for achieving a sustainable global society.

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PhD Student Spotlight:

Samantha Foster

Samantha is a second year doctoral researcher whose work provides a powerful sociological critique of so-called alternative food networks and the assumption that they are somehow synonymous with notions of nature, quality and sustainability. Her ethnographic fieldwork traced the connections between the production and consumption of biodynamic, organic wheat. This involved in-depth exploration of how wheat is enacted as it moves from seed to grain to flour to bread.

These data reveal continuities and associations that cut across the apparent divide between conventional and alternative food networks. Samantha is developing an account of wheat as multiple (Mol, 2002) alongside an argument that the purification (Latour, 1991) of hybrid food networks works to maintain particular power relationships. She has recently presented these ideas at international conferences and is currently writing them up for her PhD and other publications.

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SCI and Unilever agree research partnership

As part of the strategic partnership between the University of Manchester and Unilever, signed in October 2013, the SCI will be working

with and developing a range of research activities with our Unilever colleagues. The first set of activities will involve some pilot projects with a

particular focus on comparative analysis (comparing, for example, aspects of consumption across European and BRIC countries) and identifying robust data sources for analysing consumption patterns. This will be accompanied with knowledge exchange activities including workshops drawing on broader insights from the research of both the SCI and Unilever.

Welcome to New Staff and Visitors



Cary Monreal Clark

has just completed his PhD thesis on the Mobile life of Food and Drink Packaging with viva examination expected in July 2014. In this research he explored the different ways in which food and drink packaging has shaped and continues to shape not only the movements and rhythms of food production but also, and in more or less subtle ways, the everyday patterns and practices of human mobility. The research formed part of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded research programme on Technologies and Travel which aimed to examine the influences of technology on social practices, land-use patterning and mobility. Whilst at Newcastle University Cary was also involved in a research project which looked at the social life of carbon measurement. Cary will be a Research Associate at the Sustainable Consumption Institute working with Professor Dale Southerton, Professor Andy McMeekin and Dr David Evans on two projects: one on Eco-innovation and Consumer Behaviour and the other on Households, Retailers and Food Waste Transitions. When Cary is not reading and writing (which is not often these days!) he enjoys spending time with friends and family.



Dr Mike Hodson

joined the University as Research Fellow in April

2014. Based jointly in the SCI and the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research (MIOIR), he will primarily be working on a comparative EU Framework 7 project, PATHWAYS. The project assesses transition pathways across electricity, mobility, land-use and agro-food sectors. It does this comparatively across national contexts. Mike joins the SCI from Salford University where he spent a decade in the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF) working in the area of urban and regional governance and transitions. He has published and presented widely on this research agenda. His developing research interests are at the interface of systemic transitions and territorial transitions. In particular Mike's research focuses on the relationships

between systemic transitions, territorial transitions and the ways in which relationships between the two are and can be organized.



Dr Dunfu Zhang is

a Professor within the department of Sociology and Political Sciences at Shanghai University, China. His areas of interest include the sociology of consumption, consumer culture and China's social change. He is also interested in grassroots everyday practice of sustainable consumption. His May to October 2014 visit to the SCI has been financially supported by the China Scholarship Council and during this time he will be working on his proposal "Idea, Behavior & Social Policy of Sustainable Consumption".

Upcoming activities and events at the SCI

25 Jun 2014

SCI Seminar Series - Dr Ritsuko Ozaki
Dr Ritsuko Ozaki, Senior Research Fellow at Imperial College Business School will be giving the Seminar on the 25 June 2014. Further details to follow.

24 Sep 2014

SCI Seminar Series - Dr Maurie Cohen
Dr Maurie Cohen, Associate Professor at New Jersey Institute of Technology & Director of the Program in Science, Technology, and Society will be giving the Seminar on the 24 September 2014. Further details to follow.

22 Oct 2014

SCI Seminar Series - Dr Tom Hargreaves
Dr Tom Hargreaves, Lecturer in Environmental Science & Policy at the University of East Anglia will be giving the Seminar on the 22 October 2014. Further details to follow.

26 Nov 2014

SCI Seminar Series - Dr Lenneke Kuijter
Dr Lenneke Kuijter, Research Associate at the University of Sheffield will be giving the Seminar on the 26 November 2014. Further details to follow.

To find out more about the SCI's research and related activities please visit our website at: www.sci.manchester.ac.uk