



SCORAI Europe workshop – Conference report

**‘Sustainable consumption’ problem framing and research design:
Can we be inter- and transdisciplinary and do we truly want to be?**

University of Lausanne, Amphimax Building, Room 414

December 8–9, 2014

The European chapter of the Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative (SCORAI Europe) convened a **two-day workshop in Lausanne, Switzerland from Monday December 8 to Tuesday December 9, 2014**, as part of the ‘Anchoring inter- and trans-disciplinary sustainable consumption research in Swiss universities’ project, funded by the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, Sustainable Development at Universities Programme.

In addition, two special sessions took place: one on **Monday morning December 8th**, on ‘sustainable consumption teaching’; the second on **Wednesday all day, December 10th**, on ‘bringing participative methods to life’.

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I. Workshop agenda

Monday December 8		Tuesday December 9	
		8:50	Welcome , introduction to sessions on 'Key topics and cross-cutting questions'
12:00	Lunch: Restaurant de Dorigny, Unithèque building (set menu, vegetarian and non-veg)	9:00	Energy , Audley Genus/ Philip Vergragt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of groups and communities in energy transitions: Edina Vadovics Towards an energy hierarchy: Frances Fahy
13:30	Welcome and introductions: (Suren Erkman, Marlyne Sahakian, Antonietta Di Giulio) Inter- and trans-disciplinarity, what is it and why is it relevant to sustainable consumption? (Antonietta Di Giulio / Henrike Rau)	9:50	Food , Henrike Rau: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researching food waste generation and prevention in the food service sector in Malaysia: Effie Papargyropoulou
14:00	Laying the groundwork: 10m The good life: clearing misunderstandings (Antonietta Di Giulio). The solidarity economy: what is it? (Sophie Swaton / Marlyne Sahakian) Understanding metabolism: opportunities and limits (Loic Leray). The relevance of participative methods (Laura Devaney).	10:35	Coffee break
15:00	Coffee/tea break	11:00	Good life , Antonietta Di Giulio: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Fractured Path to the Good Life: Michael Maniates
15:30	Main findings from the pre-workshop process by Chairs: food (Henrike Rau), energy (Audley Genus/ Philip Vergragt), good life (Antonietta Di Giulio), solidarity (Maurie Cohen/Marlyne Sahakian) (5 minutes each)	11:45	Solidaristic economy , Maurie Cohen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solidaristic Economy, Wellbeing and the Millennials: Halina Brown Defining and measuring value - the inaccuracy of price: Tom Moerenhout
16:00	Break out sessions by thematic areas (4 groups): developing 1-2 key topics (taken from, emerging questions, antagonistic issues, blind spots, and methodological issues).	12:35	Lunch: Cafeteria in the Unithèque building (several menus available in general cafeteria, tables reserved under SCORAI)
17:30	Wrap up of day 1	14:15	Break-out sessions: summarize main learnings and inspirations, from morning presentations; discuss state of the research and identification of research gaps
18:00	End of day 1, followed by dinner Chalet Suisse.	15:15	Coffee/tea break
		15:45	Group presentations: promising questions that have emerged, 1-2 per group (3m total per group)
		16:00	Agora of ideas: participants visit different tables, to discuss promising questions for future research
		17:00	Wrap up of day 2 (discuss management review special issue: Perspectives on Sustainable Consumption)
		18:00	End of workshop, followed by dinner. Café Java.

II. Workshop theme

'Sustainable consumption' is a growing area of research, practice and policy-making that has been gaining momentum around the world. Understanding why, how, in what way, and what we consume, in relation to environmental integrity and intra/inter-generational equity or more 'sustainable development' is a complex question – one that must be addressed by different disciplines and related methodologies, ranging, to name but a few, from sociology, economics, political science and psychology, to science and technology studies, history and environmental engineering.

This workshop takes as a starting point the need to address complex problems with complex approaches: to achieve transitions toward sustainable consumption, inter-disciplinary research is called for. Different perspectives and approaches should be acknowledged as being complementary rather than competitive, as far as possible, and respective accomplishments and possible synergies should be put forward. Yet little time is actually spent on understanding the basic assumptions and biases we carry with us as researchers, based on our own backgrounds and experiences.

The focus of this workshop is therefore on uncovering the disciplinary limits and opportunities involved in sustainable consumption problem framing and research design, and what the contributions from different perspectives can bring towards addressing the problem.

Our goal is to bring together researchers from different backgrounds focused directly or indirectly on 'sustainable consumption' to discuss and debate the following three central questions that touch at the core of interdisciplinary research:

1. How is 'sustainable consumption' depicted and framed as a problem, from the perspective of different disciplines, and what are the underlying disciplinary assumptions? What can we learn from a discourse between disciplines towards **collaborative problem framing**? What perspectives are currently missing or underrepresented in the sustainable consumption discourse?
2. How can different approaches to 'consumption', 'transitions' and 'sustainability' be integrated into research design, and which approaches are most suited for inter- and trans-disciplinary research? What are the limits and opportunities presented in **collaborative research design**?
3. What is the state of '**sustainable consumption**' **research today**, in terms of how the problem is framed and research projects are designed? Which are the knowledge gaps and future needs?

The workshop will not only raise these issues and thus discuss the (in)compatibilities of disciplinary approaches and the intricacies of interdisciplinary approaches, but will also lay some groundwork for future research collaborations. The language and focus of current calls released under Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the next decade, leave much to be desired for researchers working in the area of 'sustainable consumption' in Europe and beyond. The workshop aims to generate a position paper to address Horizon 2020 funding opportunities, building on other efforts underway within SCORAI. Beyond Horizon 2020, the workshop will also serve as a launching pad for developing innovative research proposals, based on ideas for theoretical and empirical research in 'sustainable consumption' will be identified through this first workshop and follow-up meetings.

III. Workshop format

SCORAI workshops are designed to maximize discussion and interaction. Space is limited to a total of 30-35 participants and will include both more established and younger researchers. Swiss and international researchers will be participating.

Thematic subcommittees: focusing in on key topics

For this workshop, a series of subcommittees are invited to form and meet around specific topics and questions. These meetings can take place over phone/Skype and are designed to prepare materials for the workshop. The goal is not to focus in on a topic at the expense of other topics or more comprehensive questions, but rather to use these topics as a way to get to a concise and meaningful discussion around inter- transdisciplinary research. The sub-committees currently proposed are focused on:

- A. **Food consumption:** apprehending complex systems, what does this really entail
- B. **The good life and a new policy paradigm:** relating human needs to resource management
- C. **Energy transitions:** innovations, co-responsibility and participatory forms of production
- D. **The solidarity economy and collaborative consumption:** questioning value systems, for whom and by whom

Pre-workshop calls: addressing cross-cutting questions in advance of the workshop

Please note, you are not required to participate in this process.

Each thematic sub-committee will be hosted by a Chair and will be invited to discuss a series of questions, and prepare written documentation in advance of the Lausanne workshop. The process will be organized and facilitated by Dr Antonietta Di Giulio (University of Basel) and Dr Marlyne Sahakian (University of Lausanne).

Cross-cutting questions addressed by each thematic sub-committee include:

1. **Reflecting on the approaches** of sub-committee members by scrutinizing our own approaches and contributions to the field, and comparing our reflections among the group.
 - a. What is your contribution to this thematic area and/or sustainable consumption studies?
 - b. What kind of questions do you always jump to in designing your own research in the field, i.e. what are your epistemological interests?
 - c. What are the basic assumptions you draw on?
 - d. What kind of phenomena do you look at in your research and what phenomena do you blind out?
2. **Taking stock of current approaches** and assumptions in the research landscape:
 - a. What kinds of research questions have been investigated in the past?

- b. Which perspectives, that is, which theoretical/methodical approaches are involved in actual or past research, and which are the academic disciplines having contributed in the past?
- c. Are there any blind spots, that is, completely neglected issues, be it in research or in research programs such as Horizon 2020?

3. Promising ground for interdisciplinary research:

- a. Which theoretical/methodical approaches are missing in the field, which disciplines could provide them and what contributions would we expect from them?
- b. Which are pressing not yet researched questions?
- c. What issues could be investigated by interdisciplinary teams, and what are the perspectives to involve?

Milestones and process leading up to the workshop

- July:** All participants are issued a form on questions related to ‘problem framing’, which they are invited to complete.
- September:** Participants return their forms related to ‘problem framing’ to workshop organizers (marlyne.sahakian@unil.ch); Decisions regarding international funding will be communicated. All completed forms are shared with the Chairs.
- October-November:** Prior to the workshop, each Chair identifies a process for working with their thematic group members in order to summarize the main findings from the pre-workshop exercise (captured on the forms).
- This includes two steps: 1) identifying emerging questions, antagonistic issues, blind-spots and methodological/empirical issues, and 2) identifying 2-3 people from each group to further present their work, questions, issues, etc. at the workshop as ‘spotlight’ presentations. This can be achieved through a conference call with participants or by sharing a working document, which all participants can contribute to.
- In addition, the workshop organizers will send updated information on the workshop program and a second form: ‘taking stock of existing research’. Participants can either complete this form in advance of the workshop and send to the workshop organizers (marlyne.sahakian@unil.ch), or be prepared to discuss this on day 2 of the workshop.
- November 28:** 4 short papers (2-3 pages each) summarizing the results of the pre-workshop process, drafted by the Chairs and with the input of thematic group participants, are made available to all participants.
- We request that all participants read these four short papers in advance of the workshop! This is important, in terms of getting a head start in our discussions.**

IV. Practical information

Hosts: The University of Lausanne Industrial Ecology Group and the University of Basel Programme Man-Society-Environment (MGU)

Main

Organizers: Antonietta Di Giulio, University of Basel
Marlyne Sahakian, University of Lausanne (00 41 79 393 8733)

Organizing

Committee: Maurie Cohen, New Jersey Institute of Technology
Audley Genus, Kingston University
Henrike Rau, National University of Ireland, Galway
Philip Vergragt, Tellus Institute & Clark University
TBD – Maria Csutora

Location: University of Lausanne campus, Switzerland (closest international airport: Geneva; 30 minutes on a direct train).

Guests will be staying at the Alpha Palmiers Hotel in Lausanne.
Rue du Petit-Chêne 34, 1003 Lausanne, Suisse
T. +41 21 55 55 999, F. +41 21 55 55 998
E-Mail alpha@fassbindhotels.com
<http://www.fassbindhotels.com/fr-hotel-alpha-palmiers.html>

Timing: Two-day workshop, December 8-9, 2014 (late start on Monday to accommodate those who prefer to travel the day of).

Participants: approximately 40 participants.

Researchers working in the area of sustainable consumption, willing to and interested in discussing methodological challenges and interdisciplinary approaches

Seeking a balance between junior and more established researchers, Swiss and international.

Outcome: SCORAI workshop proceedings, which could become part of a journal special issue or edited book.

Proceedings would be based on the input gathered prior to the workshop, as well as discussions during the workshop.

A summary of areas identified for future research and possible collaborations.

V. Thematic groups - pre-workshop process

A. Food consumption: apprehending complex systems, what does this really entail

Chair: Henrike Rau, National University of Ireland, Galway

Effie Papargyropoulou, UTM, Malaysia
Evelyn Markoni, Bern University of Applied Sciences
Hellmuth Lange, Bremen University
Loïc Leray, University of Lausanne
Marlyne Sahakian, University of Lausanne
Martina Schaefer, Technical University Berlin
Monica Castro, University of Lausanne
Thomas Brunner, Bern University of Applied Sciences
Vivianne Visschers, ETH Zurich
Yana Manyukhina, University of Leeds

B. The good life and a new policy paradigm: relating human needs to resource management

**Co-Chairs: Antonietta Di Giulio, University of Basel and
Marlyne Sahakian, University of Lausanne**

Christian Arnsperger, University of Lausanne
Daniel Fischer, Universität Lüneburg
Evelyn Markoni, Bern University of Applied Sciences
Maria Csutora, Corvinus University of Budapest
Michael Maniates, Yale-NUS College
Peter Bartelheimer, SOFI Göttingen

C. Energy transitions: innovations, co-responsibility and participatory forms of production

**Co-Chairs: Audley Genus, Kingston University and
Philip Vergragt, Tellus Institute & Clark University**

Edina Vadovics, GreenDependent Institute
Frances Fahy, National University of Ireland, Galway
Joelle Mastelic, HES SO Valais
Marlyne Sahakian, University of Lausanne
Mehdi Farsi, University of Neuchâtel
Suren Erkman, University of Lausanne

D. The solidarity economy and collaborative consumption: questioning value systems, for whom and by whom

Co-Chairs: Maurie Cohen, NJIT and Marlyne Sahakian, University of Lausanne

Bert J.M. de Vries, Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
Halina Brown, Clark University
Iris Kunze, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
Iris Vidonne, HEC Lausanne
Kersty Hobson, University of Oxford
Sophie Swaton, University of Lausanne
Tom Moerenhout, Graduate Institute Geneva
Victoria W. Thoresen, Director PERL

VI. Emerging research questions around 4 thematic areas

Energy:

1) Transitioning towards sustainable energy consumption: a) best practices, what can we learn from the German or other examples, b) policy and governance (e.g., discourses around regulation, ecological taxation, policy cohesiveness, institutional/ entrepreneurial leadership, decentralized energy supply, and business models for sustainable energy, etc.), c) hierarchies as communication tools, critiques and opportunities.

2) The energy hierarchy: exploring the feasibility of adopting a similar approach to the waste hierarchy but for energy consumption. For example, at the top of the pyramid, the question of needs; at the bottom, eco-efficient actions. This could also translate into research related to the 'good life' at the top of the pyramid, the solidaristic economy in the middle (related to sharing), and industrial ecology tools at the bottom of the pyramid, for example. Environmental desirability increases as you move towards the top of the pyramid. Technological change would be relevant at the bottom of the pyramid.

Solidaristic economy:

1) Understanding and theorizing the relation between the macro-economy, institutions, organizations, values and lifestyles, in relation to a more solidaristic economy.

2) Exploring the question, can a solidaristic economy flourish without economy growth? Consider examples from Japan, Greece, Argentina, among others. The question relates to the fulfilment of human needs in relation to the growth paradigm, as well as to the solidaristic economy and the steady-state economy.

3) Is a solidaristic organization less resource intensive and more committed to social justice? Consider the example of Geneva based social and solidarity economy, worker cooperatives in Europe and the United States, as well as Italian purchasing cooperatives, among other existing examples.

The good life:

1) Modelling ways of life and assessing the impacts/potential, which would include: a) establishing criteria for modelling ways of life, b) engaging in modelling consumption patterns, c) considering criteria for impact, based on emissions, health, etc., d) assessing and comparing impacts. The goal would be to conduct this research across life stages, activity patterns, etc.

2) Exploring the different conceptual systems originating from different disciplinary and also political contexts (national/international) dealing with good life, well-being, quality of life and similar in terms of meaning, value system, underlying assumptions, focus/blind spots and research approach and developing some kind of interdisciplinary and inter-cultural coherent system allowing to link these terms.

Food:

1) How do organizations shape food consumption patterns? Consider the example of schools, hospital, restaurants and other food service providers at the meso-scale. Key focal points include: how decisions are made, by what gate-keepers in the food procurement process; the physical and infrastructure context, e.g. kitchen facilities, seating areas, etc.; the organizational philosophy or culture regarding sustainability; the 'spill-over' effect into the private sphere; the potential role of organizations, government, individuals, etc. The methodology would be a cross-organization/cultural comparison; consider data on material/social/cultural dimensions through iterative research process; consider policy context.

2) What are the promising points of sustainability within food systems? Consider key focal points including structure and dynamics; individual agency / collective actions, types of interventions (technology, systemic, etc.), pace of change, shocks, resistance to change; change agents (winners and losers); individual vs. common interest; impact of extreme cues (nudging); actors engaged in nudging process. Methodology would be based on comparative case studies, including qualitative and quantitative measurements. Also, present historical cases and history of food practices. Scenario building, visioning and back-casting could also be involved.

3) 'The onion': considering the macro, meso and micro dimensions of food consumption. Macro: Cultures, norms and rules, policy, infrastructure/'systems of provision', market/prices, class structure/patterns of stratification in society; Meso: Networks, social groups, organisations, communities (corporeal and virtual); Micro: Households and individuals

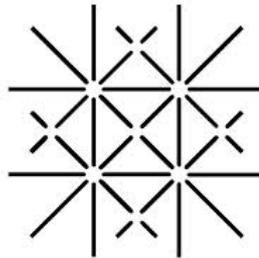
VII. Guest list (alphabetical by first name)

1. Dr Antonietta Di Giulio, Senior researcher, Universität Basel
2. Prof Audley Genus, Professor, Kingston Business School
3. Prof Dr. Em Bert J.M. de Vries, Professor emeritus, Universiteit Utrecht
4. Mr Claudio Beretta, PhD candidate, ETH Zurich
5. Dr Daniel Fischer, Universität Lüneburg; UNESCO-Chair for Higher Education for Sustainable Development
6. Ms Edina Vadovics, Professional director, research institute, GreenDependent Institute
7. Ms Effie Papargyropoulou, Lecturer of environmental management, PhD candidate, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
8. Ms Evelyn Markoni, PhD candidate, Bern University of Applied Sciences
9. Dr Frances Fahy, Lecturer, NUI, Galway, Ireland
10. Prof Halina Brown, Professor, Clark University
11. Prof Dr Hellmuth Lange, Bremen University
12. Dr Henrike Rau, Lecturer, NUI, Galway, Ireland
13. Dr Iris Kunz, sustainability researcher, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
14. Ms Iris Vidonne, PhD candidate, HEC Lausanne
15. Ms Joelle Mastelic, Professor, HES SO Valais
16. Dr Kersty Hobson, MSc Course Director and Lecturer, University of Oxford
17. Dr Laura Devaney, Post-Doc, Trinity College Dublin
18. Mr Loic Leray, PhD candidate, University of Lausanne
19. Prof Dr Maria Csutora, Associate professor, Corvinus University of Budapest
20. Dr Marlyne Sahakian, Senior researcher, University of Lausanne
21. Prof Dr Martina Schaefer, Professor, Technische Universität Berlin
22. Prof Dr Maurie Cohen, Associate Professor, New Jersey Institute of Technology
23. Prof Dr Mehdi Farsi, Professor, University of Neuchâtel
24. Prof Dr Michael Maniates, Professor of Social Sciences, Head of Studies, Yale-NUS College
25. Dr Monica Castro, Senior researcher, University of Lausanne
26. Dr Phil Peter Bartelheimer, Senior researcher, Soziologisches Forschungsinstitut Göttingen (SOFI) an der Georg-August-Universität
27. Prof Dr Philip Vergragt, Research Professor, Clark University
28. Dr Pia Furchheim, Post-doc, HEC, Lausanne
29. Prof René Véron, Professor, University of Lausanne
30. Prof. em. Dr. Ruth Kaufmann-Hayoz, Zollikofen, Switzerland
31. Dr Sophie Swaton, First assistant, University of Lausanne
32. Prof Dr Suren Erkman, Professor, Industrial Ecology Group, University of Lausanne
33. Dr Thomas Brunner, Professor, Bern University of Applied Sciences
34. Mr Tom Moerenhout, PhD candidate, Graduate Institute, Geneva
35. Prof Victoria W. Thoresen, UNESCO Chair for Education about Sustainable Lifestyles; & Director PERL
36. Dr Vivianne Visschers, Senior researcher, ETH Zurich
37. Ms Yana Manyukhina, PhD candidate, University of Leeds

VIII. Partners and funders



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