



SCI Newsletter

Autumn 2019

The Year in Review and Looking Forward

Frank Boons, Director

As one of the key research institutes of The University of Manchester, the SCI seeks to combine the excellence of individual researchers with effective group practices to deliver meaningful research that has academic as well as societal relevance. The items in this newsletter, which reports on the academic year 2018-2019, shows how we have been successfully doing this. I am very pleased to congratulate two SCI members, Frank Geels and Alan Warde, on receiving recognition for their work. Both Alan and Frank have been key in the development of core areas of research within the SCI, and it is gratifying to see that such work is appreciated across the academic communities to which we seek to contribute.

We continue to build on the work of Alan, Frank and other SCI members, as we move towards a situation where the SCI is no longer dependent on a single funder, but instead strategically seeks funding in an increasingly competitive environment.

This success comes out of hard work done by all SCI members to develop the social practices necessary to acquire funding without losing focus on academic excellence. Through an internal competition we selected initiatives for one year projects that we see as kernels of future research activity. As the report in this newsletter shows, we have been able to generate immediate outputs from this funding. Perhaps the greatest effort to do this has been our Research and Internationalisation Fund (see p. 4).

One crucial result has been the development of our international networks around key areas of research such as digital urban platforms, social movements, consumption work, and social

inequality. For me this Fund, using small grants of £5000, is an example I would like to see replicated in other contexts within the University; as we have proven, such small grants, if awarded and then monitored in a coherent and contextualised way (a key condition!), provide excellent value for money.

These initiatives all contribute to our main target for the coming academic year: the finalisation and presentation of our renewed research agenda. As the item on the SCI Festival describes (p.12), we are working towards an event that promises to create a lot of buzz, and which will allow us to cement our position as a leading institute in the area of sustainable consumption and production in the years to come.

The ESRC-funded project *Imagined futures of consumption* is one of the early successes of our new strategy (see p. 11).

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PhD Congratulations



Joe Blakey

Congratulations to Dr Joe Blakey, who successfully defended his PhD thesis on 19 February 2019. Joe's thesis examines the relationship between carbon accounting and post-foundational approaches to 'the political'. It considers how accounting and accounting standardisation shape what (in)action is seen as legitimate through an auto-ethnography of accounting for Manchester's carbon footprint and a series of interviews with policy-makers, accountants and activists. The thesis was supervised by Dr Alison Browne and Prof Erik Swyngedouw. It was examined by Prof James Evans (The University of Manchester) and Prof Scott Prudham (University of Toronto). Joe has a 2 year lectureship in Geography, and you can read more about his work in *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/profiles/joe-blakey-454157/articles>. Congratulations again Joe!

Marc Hudson

Congratulations to Dr Marc Hudson, who successfully defended his PhD thesis on 7 January 2019. The thesis was examined by Prof Peter Newell from the University of Sussex (external) and Prof Mat Paterson from The University of Manchester. Marc's thesis, "Enacted inertia: incumbent resistance to carbon pricing in Australia (1989-2011)" examined the strategies and actions of industry incumbents in the Australian coal sector as they sought to defend the status quo in the face of attempts to introduce radical carbon reduction policies. Prof Andrew McMeekin and Dr Mike Hodson supervised the research. Marc has published many articles in *The Conversation*, drawing on his PhD research, which can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/profiles/marc-hudson-180939>.

Ulrike Ehgartner

Ulrike Ehgartner was awarded her PhD in April 2019, following a successful viva examined by Bente Halkier (Prof of Sociology, University of Copenhagen), and Alan Warde (Prof of Sociology, The University of Manchester). Ulrike's thesis, titled "Environmentally and socially responsible consumption? A study on food sustainability discourses" analysed understandings of sustainability and consumption of food amongst UK expert stakeholders, including supermarket sustainability professionals, policy makers, NGO practitioners, and journalists. Dr Ehgartner has already published on her research in the journal *Sustainable Consumption & Production*, as well as with fellow SCI doctoral researchers in *Global Discourse*. We are pleased that Ulrike continues to work at the SCI as a Research Associate on the ESRC funded "Imagined Futures of Consumption" project (see p. 11). Her thesis was co-supervised by former SCI Director, Dale Southerton (now Prof of Sociology of Consumption, University of Bristol) and the SCI's Dan Welch (Lecturer in Sociology).



Niki Hutson

Congratulations to Dr Niki Hutson, who was awarded her PhD at the end of 2017 following a successful viva examined by Prof Patrick Vermeulen from Nijmegen University (external) and Professor Jonatan Pinkse from The University of Manchester (internal). Niki's thesis is titled 'Exploring the Institutional Work of an Industry Association in the Greening of Industrial Sectors'. The study focused on sustainability challenges faced by the coatings industry and the role that a key industry association played in shaping innovative responses. The research was supervised by Prof Andrew McMeekin and Dr Paul Dewick. Niki now works as project manager for GlobeScan, providing insight and strategy for sustainable change to help companies, NGOs and governmental organizations address sustainable development goals.



Anna Wienhues

Congratulations to Dr Anna Wienhues, who successfully defended her PhD thesis in May 2018. Anna's thesis, 'Life in Common: Distributive Ecological Justice on a Shared Earth', develops an account of justice to nonhumans (ie. to animals, plants, etc), which sits at the forefront of current posthumanist theoretical developments in political thought. Her thesis was supervised by Sherilyn MacGregor (Politics/SCI) and John O'Neill (Philosophy), and it was examined by Carl Death (Politics, University of Manchester) and Elizabeth Cripps (Politics, University of Edinburgh). Two journal articles from her doctoral research were published while Anna was a member of the SCI:

Wienhues, A. (2018) 'Situating the Half-Earth Proposal in Distributive Justice: Conditions for Just Conservation' *Biological Conservation*, 228C, 44-51.

Wienhues, A. (2017) 'Sharing the Earth: A Biocentric Account of Ecological Justice.' *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 30 (3), 367-385.

Since March 2019 Anna has been a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Ethics Research Institute of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, employed full-time on Anna Deplatzes Zemp's project 'Peoples' Place in Nature' funded by the NOMIS Foundation and the University Research Priority Programme (URPP) on Global Change and Biodiversity. She also has a book manuscript based on her PhD thesis under review with Bristol University Press. Congratulations again Anna!



'Come and let's have tea together': SCI researchers share findings from pioneering study of Somali perspectives on sustainability

Catherine Walker, Sherilyn MacGregor and Tally Katz-Gerro

On 29 April 2019, Sherilyn MacGregor, Tally Katz-Gerro and Catherine Walker held a community engagement event at Claremont Primary School (CPS), Moss Side, to share findings from their SCI-funded study 'Environmental Sustainability: Somali Perspectives'. The Somali phrase Kaalay Aan Shaah Cabnee ('come and let's have tea together') summed up the informal atmosphere at this event, where Somali residents of Moss Side had a chance to hear and comment on findings from research completed between August and October 2018.

The event was attended by 21 people, including Somali parents/carers with children at CPS, study participants, representatives from the Somali Adult Social Care Association, the local environmental group Upping It, the Al Furqan mosque and Mahadi Hussein Sharif -Mahamed, Councillor for Moss Side and Assistant Executive Member for Neighbourhoods for Manchester City Council.

Sherilyn MacGregor introduced the background to the study, explaining that it was designed to fill a research gap on what immigrants from low income countries think about sustainability, and how they practice sustainability in everyday life. Sherilyn explained that the study also aimed to help policy-makers become more aware of what can be learned from people who have come to Manchester from contexts where they did not live in over-consuming ways, for cultural and/or economic reasons. The study was conducted in Moss Side, where Somali-origin residents are currently the largest non-European group according to the last national census.

In introducing the research, Sherilyn acknowledged the invaluable role of two Somali co-researchers, Salah Abdissamad and Safia Abdulrahman, who were unable to attend the event due to work commitments. She explained that the interest in the research among community members owed a great deal to Salah and Safia's enthusiasm for the topic, which they both felt had been an overlooked area in relation to Somali communities. As expressed by Salah in a comment read by Sherilyn at the event: 'I was particularly looking forward to the response the Somali community would give to the survey and was apprehensive if they were going to turn up! But we were not disappointed, the response was excellent'.

Indeed, in a short time and with a relatively small budget, the study has produced excellent responses. In total, 56 Somali-origin adult residents of Moss Side completed a dual language survey, and 16 respondents agreed to be interviewed. These methods and our analysis have led to important research findings, which help to debunk the myth that immigrants from low income countries do not know or do not care about sustainability. These findings were presented at the event by Catherine Walker, ably translated into Somali by Mr Affi, a specialist staff member at CPS.

In sum, the research shows that:

- Although most participants were not very familiar with the word 'sustainability', participants' values and practices are consistent with the concept of sustainability.
- Specifically, participants care about using resources responsibly, try to teach their children to value resources, and want to keep their neighbourhood clean.

- The main reasons why participants said they cared about these things were Islamic values, care for others, saving money and awareness that resources are scarce in many contexts, including Somalia.
- Participants told us that they try to continue practices from Somalia, such as making daily efforts to save water and electricity and cooking to portion. However, some things that they used to do such as sharing food with neighbours and growing food organically (or at all) are more difficult in Moss Side.
- Participants also told us how they had developed new practices in Manchester. For example, whilst recycling was generally not necessary in Somalia, in Manchester participants said they try to recycle what they can.
- Most participants expressed frustrations about local recycling systems not being well kept and being hard to dispose of waste suitably. They had lots of suggestions for how the system could be improved.

The interest in the topic was seen once again at the event as community members commented on the findings presented (leading to a lively discussion about the difficulties encountered with rubbish collection). 'The event closed with a reflection by Safia Abdulrahman, one of our co-researchers, whose words sum up this interest: 'I never really knew if my parents understood environmental sustainability yet they have been practicing it all along and I failed to see it [...] I can't express enough how many barriers these findings will eradicate – really excited to see what the future holds for this research.'

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Projects funded by the Research and Internationalisation Fund 2018/19

The Tesco Investment Fund supported activities and assisted in developing and strengthening the overall SCI agenda in the period May 2018 to August 2019. This support is particularly aimed at helping to generate high quality grant proposals and furthering international collaborations.

Applications from SCI staff members were solicited for a range of activities directed at:

- (a) Strengthening and developing existing lineages in research and ongoing international collaborations.**
- (b) Developing innovative new ideas that have the potential to become part of the SCI contribution to academic fields and society in the next 5 years.**

The following lists the projects that were supported by the Fund and provides information about outputs and future outputs.

Title: Exploring Lost Property

Team: Helen Holmes (PI), Ulrike Ehgartner (RA)

Description: This novel and interdisciplinary research project explores material loss and what that means for issues of sustainability. Working with members of the public, lost property offices and cultural institutions it seeks to understand what it means to lose something, the value judgments which surround loss and how a better understanding of our relationships with material things may enable us to tackle issues of overconsumption and accumulation.

- Outputs:** Nov 2018 One day public engagement event Manchester Museum including the Exploring Lost Property Pop-up Exhibition
 Jan 2019 One day public engagement event John Rylands Library including the Exploring Lost Property Pop-up Exhibition
 April 2019 Presentation at the British Sociological Association Conference
 June 2019 Invited talk at Keele University Business School

Outputs in progress/forthcoming:

- AHRC Early career standard grant Exploring Material Cultures of Loss
 Paper in preparation
 August 2019 presentation at the European Sociological Association Conference

Title: Consumption Work in the Circular Economy

Team: Helen Holmes and Dan Welch (Co-Investigators), Harald Weiser (Research Assistant)

Description: Current models of Circular Economy (CE) fall short in their understandings of consumption and in lack of attention paid to the domestic sphere (Mylan, Holmes and Paddock 2016). A fertile entry point to this gap is Wheeler and Glucksman's (2015) concept of 'consumption work' - the distinctive form of labour 'necessary for the purchase, use, re-use and disposal of consumption goods and services'. The project seeks to address what forms of consumption work are demanded by models of CE and what is the significance of this for the ambitions of CE models and visions?

Outputs: Literature Review on Consumption Work and Circular Economy (Harald Weiser)

Workshop 28 February/1 March 2019 attended by the team plus Katy Wheeler (CRESI, Essex) and Kersty Hobson (Geography, Cardiff)

Outputs in progress: Wheeler and Hobson have agreed to collaborate on a major funding bid with Holmes and Welch – next steps is a bid development workshop planned for September. An agenda setting journal paper will be developed from the literature review.

Title: Endangered Practices - Maintenance and Repair

Team: Helen Holmes, Wouter Spekkink, Dan Welch (Co-Is); Ulrike Ehgartner (Research Assistant)

Description: Sustainability is often framed in terms of innovation and change. Arguably, what's more important is the preservation of sustainable everyday activities in danger of being replaced by more resource-intensive alternatives. The project focuses on endangered everyday practices of mending and recent grassroots initiatives to preserve and revitalise such skills, such as Repair Cafés. Ulrike Ehgartner has conducted 9 interviews with organisers of Repair Cafés in the UK.

Outputs in progress: The project will serve as a pilot contributing to the development of a research funding bid, potentially with an existing consortium of international collaborators in Finland and Estonia, which will address a wider set of endangered practices, such as local food practices (foraging and preserving) and mobility (such as children walking to school). Analysis of the interviews will also feed into a journal paper.

Title: Building Bridges: Sustainability Education in Brazil and Manchester

Team: Catherine Walker (SCI), Rachel Trajber (Education Director, Cemaden), Raichael Lock (Coordinator, Manchester Environmental Education Network), Alison Browne (SCI)

Description: In March 2019 the Sustainable Consumption Institute hosted Rachel Trajber, education lead of the Brazilian government research institute Cemaden (National Centre for the Monitoring and Early Warning of Natural Disasters, Brazil) for two weeks. Rachel worked closely with Catherine Walker, the Manchester Environmental Education Network and local schools to consider the ways that unsustainable consumption and production - historically and in the present - can create environmental hazards for residents of cities. These events culminated in an intergenerational conference attended by around 70 primary and secondary school students and teachers, along with environmental researchers, activists and members of the Greater Manchester Fire Service.

Outputs: Intergenerational conference, attended by around 80 people in total, two internal seminars at SCI, SCI blog, two established research partnerships with a local and an international organisation working in areas of interest to the Global Challenges Research Fund Outputs in progress:

- Small-scale data collection in a local school that presented at the intergenerational conference
- Submitted abstract with local school to present at an event celebrating 30 years of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at UCL Institute of Education in November

Title: The Cultural Politics of Household Sustainability

Team: Sherilyn MacGregor, Tally Katz-Gerro, Catherine Walker, Salah Abdisamad, Safia Abdulrahman

Description: Pilot study conducted from August to October 2018 by researchers from the Sustainable Consumption Institute at the University of Manchester, and Somali community researchers. The main aims of this research were to find out about the environmental concerns of Somali-origin residents of Moss Side, a ward within the City of

Manchester, and to explore how cultural perceptions, values, practices and relationships shape pro-environmental environmentally-friendly household practices among diverse city residents.

Outputs: New survey and interview data, findings from research presented at internal seminar at SCI, British Sociological Association Annual Conference 2019, Nordic Geographers' Meeting 2019 and an invited seminar at UCL Institute of Education, journal article submitted, community engagement event held in a local school and attended by around 20 Somali community members, a local councillor and representatives from the local mosque and the Somali Adult Social Care Agency

Outputs in progress: Report for policy-makers (English/Somali), Abstracts accepted to present on research at European Sociological Association Conference 2019 and Royal Geographical Association Annual Conference 2019.

Title: The Intergenerational Transmission of Environmental Behaviours

Team: Tally Katz-Gerro

Description: Two collaborators on an international project, Dr Itay Greenspan from the Hebrew University and Prof Femida Handy from the University of Pennsylvania, spent one week at the SCI in February 2019. Our project titled "A Cross-National Analysis of the Intergenerational Transmission of environmental Habitus," is based on data collection conducted in 2016-2018, which included three nationally representative surveys in South Korea, Israel, and the US, and group interviews in the same countries. During the visit we engaged in an intensive write up of the results for two papers and met with the Social Inequalities and Sustainable Households working group who also study households and daily practices.

Outputs: Findings from research presented at internal seminar at SCI, International visitors: Femida Handy and Itay Greenspan, Journal article submitted.

Outputs in progress: Two journal articles in preparation.

Title: Social Movements, Everyday Life and the Politics of Sustainable Consumption

Team: Luke Yates, Simin Fadaee, Kevin Gillan, Sheryllyn MacGregor

Description: We are interested in how economic activity has become increasingly moralised in and outside of academic work, often with ideas about sustainability popularly invoked in discussion of 'alternative' commodity chains, products and modes/means of provisioning. We're also interested in exploring the politics of everyday activity beyond the 'usual suspects' and the usual contexts, thinking about the forms of collective action, civic initiatives, subcultures and practices (e.g. Bayat 2009) where political activity intersects with ordinary life. Much has been written in these areas, but we want to unpack some of the assumptions and make theoretical and inter-disciplinary connections to advance and inform future research. The purpose of these events is to explore ideas for cutting edge new research, and perhaps to foster new collaborations.

Outputs: Two workshops of 1.5 days each.

Outputs in progress: Shared writing projects (as yet not finalised).

Title: The coordination of grassroots innovation networks: a pilot study

Team: Wouter Spekkink (Principal Investigator), Malte Rödl (Research Assistant), Martin Charter (External Advisor)

Description: For this project we conducted small surveys among two grassroots innovation networks, which are the Repair Café network, and the Precious Plastic network. A distinguishing feature of these networks is their 'franchise-like' structure, where individual initiatives are explicitly recognised as being part of the network, and where some form of 'coordinating body' exists, such as the Repair Café International Foundation and the Precious Plastic team. Through our surveys we map when and how initiatives that constitute the networks were started, and we explore their diversity in terms of both their organisational setup and their activities. We also explore how the initiatives in the networks relate to each other, to the coordinating bodies of the movements, and to organisations outside their movement. Finally, we examine what visions there exist in the movements about their future.

Outputs: The results of the surveys will be used as basis for one academic publication, as well as publicly available reports for the Repair Café network and the Precious Plastic network. Anonymised versions of the data will be shared with the networks as well. Finally, the results of the survey will be used as a basis for a proposal for further research on the topic of franchise-like grassroots networks.

Title: Decentralised energy and 'smart cities'

Team: Julia Kasmire

Outputs: International visit (Andrew Bollinger), SCI seminar, this collaboration has become the basis for a Presidential Fellowship application, international visit (J. Kasmire to Zurich).

Title: Agent-based modelling for transition towards the circular economy

Team: Julia Kasmire

Outputs: International visitors (Igor Nikolic, Jaco Quist), SCI seminar, this collaboration has become the basis for an Instagram Research Fund application, the topics were presented (by J. Kasmire) at the SAMS workshop on Responsible Innovation.

Title: Urban platforms: corporate or civic digital transformation?

Team: Mike Hodson and Andy McMeekin

Description: This project supports research visits to Toronto and London, in 2018-2019. The aim of the visits is to undertake fieldwork on digital platforms in two different urban contexts. Digital platform development in Toronto by Google represents a corporate view of the future of the city, transformed by digital platforms. By contrast, in London, work by Transport for London appears to suggest attempts to build a more civic understanding of the role of urban platforms in transforming the city. The focus on digital platforms matters as contemporary cities and processes of production and consumption are being transformed through new digital infrastructures. Who is governing these processes, for what purpose and with what effects are critical issues. This work contributes an innovative new idea in the context of the SCI's developing agenda on cities and (post-)sustainability.

Outputs: Hodson, M., and McMeekin, A., (journal article under development) 'If someone would just give us a city and put us in charge': experimenting with systemic digital platforms as new urban infrastructures of control, (potentially for) Environment and Planning A.

Invited talk, Hodson, M., and McMeekin, A., (2019) 'If someone would just give us a city and put us in charge': experimenting with systemic digital platforms as new urban infrastructures of control, Centre for Regional and Economic Research invited seminar, Sheffield Hallam University, 15th May.

Research Funding, Hodson, M., and McMeekin, A., Open Research Area (to be submitted September 2019), with collaborators in Toronto and Toulouse, as PI.

Hodson, M., and McMeekin, A., 'Is there a role for digital platforms in achieving urban sustainable mobility?' AMBS Doctoral student – Awarded January 2019.

Hodson, M., Boons, F., and McMeekin, A., (2018) Innovating urban ecologies of business models: the role of digital platforms. AMBS Research Support Fund, £8,638.20. To support strategic project collaboration with Lund University. Awarded November 2018.

Kevin Ward (University of Manchester), Theresa Enright (University of Toronto), Michael Hodson (University of Manchester), Hamil Pearsall (Temple University), Jonathan Silver (University of Sheffield) and Alan Wiig (University of Massachusetts, Boston), 'Infrastructural futures across cities of the global north', application to Urban Studies Foundation Seminar Series, £19,516. Awarded November 2018.

International workshop

We organised, with colleagues in the SCI and Manchester Urban Institute, an international workshop, 'Urban platforms and the future city: Transformations in infrastructure, governance, knowledge, and everyday life', between 28 February – 1 March (see p.10). The focus of the workshop was on the role of urban platforms in the production of new ways of understanding and shaping urban futures, and how more democratic configurations of platform urbanism might be possible. The workshop brought together leading scholars from across the globe – including from India, Australia, the US, Canada and various European countries – for a focused set of paper sessions organised around four core themes: infrastructure, governance, knowledge, and everyday life. The workshop was organised by the SCI's Mike Hodson, Julia Kasmire, Andy McMeekin and John Stehlin, alongside MUL's Kevin Ward and involved contributions from SCI Fellows Richard Heeks and James Evans.

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Interview with Manisha Anantharaman about #climate #justice #intersectionality

A short interview with Associate Professor Manisha Anantharaman, keynote speaker at the SCI sponsored Healthy Cities 2019 conference.



a) What do you research?

My work examines questions of representation, inclusion and power within “sustainability” scholarship and movements, primarily within and from Indian cities. Sustainability researchers and proponents have to be very attentive to these questions, given the exclusive and exclusionary histories of elite-led environmental movements. In a recent publication, I call on researchers in the field of sustainable consumption to pay more attention to the conditions of oppression that make unsustainable consumption possible and normal, and to examine the ways in which sustainability initiatives reproduce or dismantle raced, classed and gendered oppression.

b) You were talking earlier about Berkeley students responding to the whiteness of the US environment movement – could you recap on that?

The Students of Color Environmental Collective created an amazing campaign and wrote a letter speaking to the environmental research and teaching community at UC Berkeley (where I got my PhD), calling out the “whiteness” that pervades the movement and articulating a set of demands around fore-fronting questions of racial justice in the environmental movement. You can read the letter here: <https://serc.berkeley..> A recap of the campaign here: <https://emalis6.wixsite>.

c) your thoughts on the current state of the environment/climate justice movements (in which ever countries you choose to answer?

I’m going to reflect on the movement in Geneva, where I am based right now. When I am at some of the climate protests and saw signs about “protecting the future of our kids and grandkids”, I always want to ask the sign-holders, who is the “our” here? I sincerely hope that they are thinking about the kids and grandkids in India and other parts of the majority world, where climate change will compound already existing suffering in terrible ways. I think the environmental/climate justice movement should not assume that inclusion is implicit or “given”, but rather activists should make explicit

their commitments to thinking beyond their immediate communities. This also involves being very attentive to history and educating oneself on the histories of imperialism and its contemporary manifestations.

d) what do you think Minority World/Western activists could or should learn from struggles in the majority world?

I don’t feel like I am equipped to answer this question, but I believe that movements should be lead by those most oppressed by the situation. This doesn’t mean responsabilizing the people of the majority world or indigenous people or people of color to fix the problem, but rather being willing to listen and be in solidarity. We (people like me, elites) have to practice humility. Solidarity for me is about struggle and radical love, and this is something that liberatory activists in the majority world have long emphasized.

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Manisha Anantharaman

Across a two week visit in April and May 2019 Dr Manisha Anantharaman (Assistant Professor in Justice, Community and Leadership at Saint Mary's College, California) visited the Sustainable Consumption Institute to participate in exchanges and discussions with our research staff at the SCI, as well as delivering a SCI sponsored keynote lecture at Healthy Cities 2019. This visit was hosted by Dr Alison Browne (Senior Lecturer, Human Geography, SCI), alongside the SCI researcher, early career and PhD research community.

Manisha's work examines questions of representation, inclusion and power within "sustainability" scholarship and movements, primarily within and from Indian cities. Sustainability researchers and proponents have to be very attentive to these questions, given the exclusive and exclusionary histories of elite-led environmental movements. Recently Manisha published a paper entitled "Critical sustainable consumption: A research agenda" which has been of substantial interest to colleagues within the Sustainable Consumption Institute and across sustainable consumption and production research and policy communities.

It was this paper that Manisha presented as the SCI sponsored keynote speech to the Healthy Cities 2019 Conference. The Healthy Cities conference, hosted by Dr Deljana Iossifova (Senior Lecturer in Urban Studies University of Manchester) and Dr Alison Browne, focused on research and policy approaches that place everyday life at the centre of accounts on urban, infrastructural and environmental transformations. Manisha presented alongside other eminent keynote presenters such as Prof Clara Greed (Emerita Professor of inclusive Urban Planning, University of the West of England), Professor Nikolas Rose (Prof of Sociology, Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, King's College London), Prof Michael Keith (Director of the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford, and co-ordinator of the ESRC Urban Transformations portfolio) and Prof Diane Mitlin (Director, Global Development Institute, Prof of Global Urbanism, The University of Manchester).

On the 30th April Manisha also took part in an SCI 'open space' workshop where we came together as an SCI community to discuss the significance and importance of engaging with critical sustainable consumption perspectives within the Institutes research, writing and policy

work. During this session we discussed questions such as "What does it mean to adopt a critical perspective to sustainable consumption (and production) in our own work?", "What is the significance of looking at relational and structural power within sustainable consumption research and policy?", and "What would it mean to 'decolonise' or create 'anticolonial' sustainable consumption and production scholarship, theory, empirical research, methods and scholarly praxis including teaching?". Throughout the visit these discussions continued with Manisha participating in Shut Up and Write sessions with the Society Environment Research Group (Geography) and SCI colleagues, as well as making space for writing on collaborative projects between Dr Ali Browne (Manchester), Dr Manisha Anantharaman (St Mary's) and Tullia Jack (Lund).

Manisha will also feature in the new large MOOC style University College of Interdisciplinary Learning (UCIL) course "Creating a sustainable world: 21st century challenges and the sustainable development goals". This course will be available to students from the 2019/20 academic year, and Manisha's reflections on critical approaches will be included in module on Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG Goal 12) led by Dr Alison Browne & Cecilia Alda Vidal (both in the SCI and Geography).

About Dr Manisha Anantharaman: Manisha received her PhD from the Department of Environmental Science Policy and Management at the University of California, Berkeley in 2015. She is a founding member of the Global Research Forum on Sustainable Consumption and Production. In Spring 2019 she was also the Alba Viotto Visiting Professor in Sociology at the University of Geneva.

Healthy Cities 2019 was generously supported by the Hallsworth Conference Fund, Sustainable Consumption Institute, and the Confucius Institute at The University of Manchester; Complexity Planning and Urbanism at the Manchester School of Architecture; and Beijing Normal University.

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Dr Manisha Anantharaman Keynote Presentation at Healthy Cities 2019



Education for sustainability, action-oriented research and the value of building bridges

In March 2019 the Sustainable Consumption Institute held a series of activities around sustainability education. The SCI hosted Rachel Trajber, education lead of the Brazilian government research institute Cemaden (National Monitoring and Early Warning and Centre of Natural Disasters) and used Rachel's visit to build bridges with the Manchester Environmental Education Network.

Rachel's visit was initiated by SCI Research Associate Catherine Walker and builds on a series of international research interactions around Education for Sustainability (EfS), described by Rachel, Catherine and others in an article for a recent special issue of *Action Research* journal on *Climate Change Transformations*.

In the special issue, Rachel, Catherine and co-authors call for researchers to 'create conditions for public educational policies – and educators – to become part of strategies for realising transformations for sustainability and resilience in the face of climate change, disaster[s] and resource insecurity.' At just such a time when international youth climate activism is raising critical questions, Rachel's visit enabled SCI researchers to engage our research on un/sustainable consumption with EfS, as a research area in its own right and a means of disseminating research.

From the outset, Rachel's visit was envisaged as an opportunity for the SCI to build bridges with and between Cemaden Education's Network of Schools and Communities for Disaster Risk Prevention and the Manchester Environmental Education Network (MEEN). The work of both organisations – in geographically-distant contexts and in response to differing manifestations of socioenvironmental vulnerabilities – is consistent with the action-oriented transformations approach set out by the editors of *Action Research*. Cemaden Education's work aims to contribute to more sustainable and resilient societies by building curriculum skills and research competencies in schools. The team has equipped schools to become micro-risk monitoring and prevention

centres in regions where increasingly unpredictable weather is resulting in flooding and landslides. Much of MEEN's recent work has centred on working with pupils to research their school's soil quality, which often reveals contamination and impoverishment. Heavy rains, which experts predict will be one outcome of climate change, could expose impoverished soils and this is one reason why MEEN is simultaneously delivering a social action project on climate change through intergenerational carbon classrooms.

Cemaden and MEEN share an understanding of climate-related hazards as socio-environmental, requiring responses 'from top down and bottom up, involving multiple stakeholders in dialogue and collaboration at every stage of the process', as argued by Rachel Trajber and colleagues. For MEEN this works as a three-stage process: learn, act, share. Both organisations seek to cultivate spaces for intergenerational learning: taking young people's concerns and knowledge seriously without making them solely responsible for action, as MEEN Coordinator Raichael Lock writes with Susan Brown.

Having called the collaboration between the SCI, Cemaden and MEEN 'Building Bridges', we reflect on the bridges built and those remaining to be built through a series of questions that have grown out of our work together.

'Do people in Brazil have climate change like we have climate change?'

This question, raised by a pupil at a primary school where we planted trees to offset Rachel's flights, sums up the enquiry at the heart of our collaboration. Rachel responded that we (humanity) are in the same boat, but on different parts of the boat, some of which are more vulnerable than others.

This is being illustrated through the social cartography work that we are undertaking with schools in Manchester, Santarém (Pará, Brazil) and São José dos Campos (São Paulo, Brazil). Students are mapping hazards, areas of risk and vulnerable populations onto aerial maps of the areas around their schools. They are creating

overlays on these maps to show alternative scenarios: one overlay showing the risks that could be heightened by climate change, another showing ways that the communities can become more resilient to climate risks. The three schools are in dialogue about similarities and differences in risks and potential responses that the mapping is helping them to see.

At an intergenerational conference on climate change, risk and resilience on 22 March 2019, students from all three schools presented (live or through a video-link up) their work-in-progress and discussed some of these emerging similarities and differences.

Is the city a context for deliberation or a site that innovation gets done to?

This question, part of a series of questions orienting the SCI's Cities and (Post)Sustainability working group, provided a platform to discuss with the working group the ways that young people are frequently affected by city innovations – for good or ill – yet are much less frequently consulted on these innovations. Recently, there have been proposals to build schools in Greater Manchester and elsewhere on reclaimed land (which, as former waste collection or industrial sites, may contain harmful contaminants). It is worth considering what suggestions young people – who will spend the most time in these 'sites of innovation' – might make if they were consulted in a meaningful way on such plans.

Our social cartography work offers one way to build bridges between classrooms and decision-making spaces. Our aim is that, in addition to building bridges between young people in different geographical contexts, the work will prompt schools to contact local politicians, community groups and researchers to propose actions for more resilient communities. Student social cartographers at the Manchester school are keen to show their work to MP Afzal Khan, and to tweet photos of their map, overlays and action plan to the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham.



Nonetheless, events such as the young people's platform at the Manchester Mayor's Green Summit and the Strike for Climate – both of which happened during Rachel's visit – suggest that it is when young people go outside of school that they have the greatest impact. As adults at these youth-led events, we were on the receiving end of a bridge extended by young people, a rallying call to action, much of which must be led by adults as young people's poems from the strike make clear.

Is it enough to learn together? How do we build together?

In institutional terms, our collaboration bridges an academic institution (SCI), a government research institution (Cemaden) and a non-governmental institution (MEEN). As individuals we have different ways of positioning ourselves as researchers, activists and practitioners and how we see ourselves depends on the contexts in which we work. Our work together and the range of activities carried out (seminars with academics, tree planting and assemblies in schools, supporting after-school eco-clubs, hosting an intergenerational conference, participating in a climate strike, attending a policy summit) have perhaps blurred boundaries as much as they have built bridges.

As those privileged with the vocation of working with knowledge, our responsibility to bridge research, action and practice takes on a new urgency at a time of climate crisis. As the authors of the Action Research editorial calling for action-oriented research for transformations write, 'the times demand it'. Our collaboration enables us to think together about how we build critical understandings and responses to the climate crisis with those who are not only the subjects of our research but also fellow (global) community members.

Catherine Walker is a Research Associate at the Sustainable Consumption Institute.

Rachel Trajber leads the education work of the Brazilian government research institute Cemaden (National Monitoring and Early Warning and Centre of Natural Disasters).

Raichael Lock is the co-ordinator of the Manchester Environmental Education Network.

Further reading

Trajber, R., Walker, C. et al. (2019) "Promoting climate change transformation with young people in Brazil: participatory action research through a looping approach" Action Research Volume: 17 issue: 1, page(s): 87-107 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750319829202>.

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Workshop on 'Consumption Work in the Circular Economy'

A two day workshop (28 February and 1 March 2019) was held at the SCI to examine the place of consumption in models and visions of the Circular Economy. In 2015 the European Commission reframed its commitments to sustainable consumption and production largely in terms of the Circular Economy, centred on moving away from the current, linear economy of "make, use, dispose", and closing "material loops" through innovations in production, provision and consumption. However, current models of Circular Economy fall short in their understandings of consumption and in lack of attention paid to the domestic sphere, where so much consumption takes place. A fertile entry point to this gap is Miriam Glucksmann and Katy Wheeler's concept of "consumption work" – the distinctive form of labour "necessary for the purchase, use, re-use and disposal of consumption goods and services" (Wheeler and Glucksmann 2015: 37). Models and visions of the Circular Economy commonly assume more arduous or engaged forms of consumption work in order to complete "material loops" between production and consumption, often with limited understanding of how these significant

changes in consumption practices will be defused and normalised.

The workshop – the first of two – was funded by the SCI as part of a scoping project to lay the groundwork for agenda setting research into the role of consumption work in the Circular Economy, led by the SCI's Helen Holmes (Research Fellow, Sociology) and Dan Welch (Lecturer, Sociology). As part of the project, SCI doctoral researcher Harald Weiser produced an extensive literature review which formed the basis for discussion at the workshop. Helen, Dan and Harald were joined by Katy Wheeler (Co-director, Centre for Economic Sociology and Innovation, University of Essex), and Kersty Hobson (Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, Cardiff University), as well as the SCI's Tally Katz-Gero (Sociology), Wouter Spekkink (AMBS) and Sheryllyn MacGregor (Politics). Following the success of the workshop, Katy and Kersty will be returning to the SCI in September for a follow on workshop, with the goal of developing a major research project on 'Consumption work in the Circular Economy'.

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Frank Geels Researcher of the Year

Congratulations to Frank Geels, Professor of System Innovation and Sustainability, who has been named as one of The University of Manchester's researchers of the year for his outstanding performance and significant contribution.

He received the award at the University's 2019 Distinguished Achievement Awards. The criteria against which nominations are judged state that the nominee should be "someone whose most recent research has successfully challenged dogma, created a new field of research, elucidated a new paradigm, made a fundamental change in thinking, or impacted significantly on society".

Professor Geels was described as having demonstrated himself to be a "transformative intellectual", being the chief proponent of the so-called 'socio-technical transition theory' which covers large scale system changes in energy, food and transport that involve technical, socio-economic, political and cultural processes.



As his citation remarked: "His work is highly cited and his research has generated broad impact to the academic community and society. His reach is clearly truly global."

Commenting on his award he said: "I am truly honoured to receive this award and see my work praised in this way. Changing energy, mobility and agro-food systems in sustainable, low-carbon directions is one of today's grand challenges, and to bring my work to the attention of a wider audience and to policymakers is extremely important to me."



Urban platforms and the future city workshop

From the 28 February to 1 March, the Sustainable Consumption Institute, with support from the Manchester Urban Institute and the University of Lund, hosted an international workshop entitled, Urban platforms and the future city, organised by Michael Hodson, Julia Kasmire, Andrew McMeekin, John Stehlin, and Kevin Ward, with essential support from Katrina Farrugia. The workshop brought in seventeen participants from institutions in six countries (UK, US, CA, NL, IN, and AU), working in field sites across Latin America, East and South Asia, Africa, and the North Atlantic, to discuss and debate the emerging phenomenon of platform urbanism, a term coined by Sarah Barns and others to describe the co-constitution of digital platforms and urban space.

The goals of the workshop were twofold. First, we wanted to stimulate a set of conversations around the urbanisation of platform capitalism, bringing in both key thinkers and early-career researchers in the fields of digital geographies, media studies, innovation studies, and urban planning. Our second goal was to feed into the emerging work programme on digital transformations and urbanisation within the SCI, focusing specifically on urban platforms, and in concrete terms to produce an edited volume of workshop papers informed by the conversations that occurred there.

Based on their current research, we recruited participants according to four main themes – infrastructure, governance, knowledge, and everyday life – and requested short presentations on these themes. At the same time, a core aim of the workshop was also to stage a conversation about the varying meanings of “platform urbanism” itself. With this in mind, we opened the workshop with a more informal roundtable featuring a participant from each subsequent paper session, with the prompt of “What does platform urbanism mean in your own research?” This more conversational opening set a convivial tone that stimulated more wide-ranging discussions, fostered by ample coffee breaks, over the course of the two days.

At the core of these discussions was the relationship between the platform – a mode of digital intermediation of economic activity, political debate, and social interaction that is

powered by rent-seeking and market capture – and urbanisation – a mode of constructing human environments driven by the conversion of space into property. This overarching question manifested across a number of different discussions.

The infrastructure session posed both the ways in which digital platforms form a new kind of infrastructural overlay, based on the capture of data, onto existing urban spaces, such as the South Lake Union district of Seattle where Amazon is headquartered, profiled by Dillon Mahmoudi. At the same time, they highlighted the disjunctures of how these infrastructures connect, and the “glitches,” as Agnieszka Leszczynski put it, that have become increasingly endemic to the platformised city.

The governance session stressed how the largely private ownership of platforms means a shift toward proprietary interfaces to access the data required to govern, whether this is data on a user’s location, consumption patterns, or political discourse. Simultaneously, with the coming move to 5G networks and blockchain, the collection of information has become more horizontal and distributed. Clancy Wilmott argued that this raised the importance of proximity rather than Cartesian location, and “ambient participation,” in Maroš Krivý’s words, rather than top-down hierarchical ordering. This introduces new quandaries regarding processes of biopolitical government. These conversations continued more informally through a guided tour of Manchester’s industrial history and the curry dinner that followed.

Day two deepened these themes, beginning with a session on how platformisation has changed how urban knowledge is organised, and, for Richard Heeks, how “data justice” might be enacted. One key issue cutting across these papers was the role of data – how it is gathered, who controls it, and how it is used – as a field of (asymmetrical) political struggle in which large corporate actors like Airbnb, which David Wachsmuth analyzed, the local state, discussed by Scott Rodgers and Susan Moore, and “bottom-up” actors like informal settlement dwellers, in Andrés Luque Ayala’s work, are engaged.

The final session examined how these issues materialised in everyday life and labour, among both platform users and platform workers. Here the paradoxes of platformisation became apparent, as they generate new (and sometimes more inclusive) forms of sociality, such as in the WeChat “super app” profiled by Yujie Chen, political participation, and economic opportunity, for instance among women Uber drivers in India previously excluded from taxi work, as Anurag Mazumdar discussed. But this still occurs within a platform architecture that projects these forms of sociality into a future that is disembedded from present attachments like polity, community, and kinship. The second day concluded with a light lunch and excitement about upcoming collaborations.

We are currently in the internal peer review stage of an edited collection for Routledge containing a number of contributions from workshop participants, and edited by members of the SCI, the MUI, and the Department of Geography. Along this same direction of work, Mike Hodson and Andy McMeekin are finalizing two major funding proposals to support a three-year programme of work building both on conversations and collaborations fostered by the workshop. More broadly, the workshop contributed to raising the SCI’s profile in scholarship at the intersection of digital transformation and urbanisation, two important threads of the SCI’s future research agenda.

We would like to conclude with a final note on inclusion. In designing the workshop, we were explicit about working toward improving gender balance and ethnic, racial, geographic, and career-stage diversity. We feel we were relatively successful in terms of gender balance and career-stage diversity, and less so in our other diversity goals. Nevertheless, several conference participants noted the positive impact of our efforts, which shows that such clear, intentional pursuits yield an improved workshop experience, while also highlighting the need to consistently work toward more inclusive scholarly spaces.

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Imagined futures of consumption

Last year SCI researcher Dan Welch (Lecturer in Sociology) won a £300,000 funding award from the Economic and Social Research Council to conduct a two-year project on “Imagined Futures of Consumption”. The project – running until September 2020 – explores how the future of the consumption of goods and services is imagined by both the general public and by experts, such as professional practitioners of forecasting or ‘futures’ techniques.

The project’s starting point is that representations and expectations of the future play a critical role in the present. Imagined futures can come to serve as visions guiding public or corporate policy, channelling funding and influencing technological design, or can motivate political activists and orient social movements. Visions of collective futures embody expectations of future states, pragmatic beliefs about the way the world works, and beliefs about the nature of ‘the common good’. Imagined futures of consumption have played an important role politically and economically since the end of the Second World War in the form of the promise of ‘prosperity for all’ realised through mass consumption in the consumer society. More recently, imagined futures of sustainable consumption have been promoted by social movements, NGOs, think tanks, corporations and public bodies.

Today, in the wake of the financial crisis and in the context of climate change, the central promises of twentieth century consumer society – of prosperity for all and ever rising living standards – have been fundamentally challenged. With the loss of faith in one dominant imagined future of consumption, cultural and political space has been opened up for competing imagined futures of consumption. It is within this social and political-economic context that the project will explore how such futures shape, and are shaped by, social processes.

Dan Welch is working on the project with Ulrike Ehgartner as Research Associate. Ulrike was awarded her PhD with the SCI earlier this year (see page 2). In the current, first phase of the project Dan and Ulrike are analysing data on individuals’ expectations and imagination about the future of consumption – their own, that of future generations, and of society as a whole.

This data has been collected through collaborating with the Mass Observation Archive (MOA) based at the University of Sussex. In December 2018 the MOA sent out a ‘directive’ on ‘The Future of Consumption’ to its panel of 400 volunteers. MOA ‘directives’ consist of questions and prompts concerning an area of research that elicit written responses from the volunteers. The data provides rich reflections from volunteers on everything from the future of the high street, to future environmental constraints on consumption, to expectations of the next generation’s living standards, to the future of food and fears and hopes around how Brexit will impact everyday consumption. Ulrike presented on this work in progress at the European Sociological Association’s Conference in Manchester (21 August 2019). Dan and Ulrike will then present the final results of the analysis at the Third International Conference on Anticipation, in Oslo in October 2019.

In the second phase of the project Dan and Ulrike intend to work alongside professional ‘futures’ practitioners, to explore how think tanks, corporations and futures consultancies produce and circulate visions and models of the future of consumption. In preparation for this work, Ulrike has recently undertaken an intensive week long training course on “Futuring for Sustainability” at the Urban Futures Studio, University of Utrecht, learning ‘futures’ techniques such as scenario building and backcasting.

Dan has presented on the ideas behind the project to the European Sociological Association’s Consumption Network conference in Copenhagen last August, and earlier this year was invited to present on the project to the Consumption, Culture and Communication group at the University of

Southern Denmark, Odense, and to the University of Bristol’s School of Economics, Finance and Management. Dan has also teamed up with project advisor Prof Giuliana Mandich, an expert in sociology of the future at Cagliari University in Sardinia, to organise a Research Stream at the European Sociological Association’s 2019 Conference on ‘Practicing the Future’. The Research Stream received the highest number of abstract submissions of any of the conference Research Streams, and saw 24 papers presented over six panels.

Phase two of the project promises knowledge exchange workshops with professional futurists, public engagement through an exhibition and an international academic workshop on the sociology of the future.

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Radio controlled vacuum cleaner, American National Exhibition, Moscow 1959

Photo credit: Marcos Rivas on Unsplash

Visitors



▲ Sacha Manik is a PhD fellow at the Centre for Health Promotion Research, Roskilde University, Denmark, where she has been affiliated to the PhD program "Health and Society" since December 2017. Sacha's research is exploring the challenges people face in the process of change towards a sustainable diet with low or no meat, seen in a sociological and critical food consumption perspective. Sacha is visiting Manchester University for three months as part of her PhD education with the purpose of enhancing her qualifications as a food consumption researcher. Her aim is also to get acquainted with the research environment at the SCI, as well as to create a network with likeminded researchers. Dr. Alan Warde will be Sacha's supervisor during her visit at the institute.



▲ Filippo Oncini (PhD) is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento. His research interests lie in the fields of consumption, health and cultural sociology, with attention to social stratification dynamics, food inequalities and urban poverty. He is currently working on project PLATEFORMS, which aims to produce in-depth knowledge on how food practices are affected by innovations in food provisioning. From October he will be joining the Sustainable Consumption Institute for two years as a Marie Curie fellow with a mixed method project on food poverty and food bank use in Greater Manchester.

Alan Warde



Prof Alan Warde was awarded this year's British Sociological Association's Distinguished Service to British Sociology award.

Prof Warde, was given the award by the President of the BSA, Prof Susan Halford, at its annual conference in Glasgow in April 2019.

Prof Halford said Prof Warde's contribution to sociology "stretched across all areas of academic endeavour" including an "increasingly powerful analysis of consumption and environmental change."

Also, she said, "Alan has been generous with his time and his ideas to the people he works with."

Prof Warde said he was "honoured, surprised and pleased" to receive the award.

Save the date: **SCI Festival** **December 5, 2019**

The Sustainable Consumption Institute will hold a half-day event to celebrate over a decade of cutting edge research and to launch a new research agenda for our new phase as an institute. The theme is *'Materialising sustainabilities, reimagining futures'*, which captures our aims to both deepen and extend our thinking about the urgent socio-technical and political challenges of our time. The event will involve a series of short talks about ideas, practices, strategies and innovations for changing dominant modes of provision and moving towards more sustainable societies. The speakers will include academics working in the SCI and high profile guests drawn from policy, enterprise and activist sectors.

Confirmed external speakers include: Corin Bell (Lead, Plastic Free Greater Manchester and Director of Open Kitchen MCR), Euan Mills (Head of Digital Planning at Connected Places Catapult), Martine Postma (Founder of the Repair Café Movement) and Magid Magid (former Lord Mayor of Sheffield and Green Member of European Parliament). Their talks will be pitched to an interested lay audience and designed to provoke discussion and debate. The event will be followed by a wine reception.

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