

Nexus of the Urban: Interactions between water, energy and food provision for sustainable cities

SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex
Brighton, UK | Thursday-Friday 12th – 13th May 2016



Venue: Bramber House Conference Centre, University of Sussex
Brighton. BN1 9QU

Cities are dynamically connected with other urban and rural localities, both distant and proximate. Most critically perhaps, cities rely on an elsewhere to produce much of the food, water and energy they consume. And as cities grow and extend their boundaries, this reliance on an elsewhere generally expands, despite the emergence of activities such as peri-urban agriculture and community energy installations. Thus we need to look beyond the boundaries of cities at processes of *urbanisation* to develop an understanding of social, cultural, environmental and economic dynamics of provisioning food, water and energy for and by urban inhabitants.

Workshop participants will take stock of what kind of plural understandings of ‘*urban nexuses*’ are emerging, produced by (partnerships between) activists, communities, think tanks, corporations, and multilateral organizations, natural scientists, humanities scholars and social scientists. We will particularly reflect on the contribution that different social science perspectives might make in understanding urban nexuses, and how social scientists might effectively participate in inter- and trans-disciplinary initiatives. We will consider what kind of policy mechanisms and events might support the pursuit of the partnerships that may be required for developing new understandings.

The workshop will be structured around the following orienting questions:

1. What divergent framings and understandings of ‘urban nexuses’ are emerging and why are they important, in what ways and to whom?
2. What are the implications of these understandings and their foci for governance of nexus interactions by public, private and hybrid arrangements?
3. What implications do these understandings hold for political-economic action by, and for alliances between, civil society organizations, businesses and social movements striving for sustainability and justice?
4. What kind of relations (inter- and trans-disciplinary alliances, engagements with the material world) underpin the making of the emerging understandings of ‘urban nexuses’?
5. What new inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches (and concepts) do we need to further understand interactions at ‘urban nexuses’, including the interdependent vulnerabilities associated with access to food, water and energy in cities?



@uk_nexus
#urbannexus

Programme

DAY 1		THURSDAY
09:00	Coffee and registration	Bramber House Conference Centre, University of Sussex
09:20	Setting the scene	Saurabh Arora Nexus Network co-investigator, SPRU, STEPS Centre
09:30	The urban nexuses of social (in)justice	Dunu Roy Hazards International, Delhi
10:10	Urban nexuses on the ground	Emily O'Brien Brighton and Hove Food Partnership Bella Wheeler Brighton Unemployed Families Project Andre Viljoen University of Brighton Saurabh Arora <i>Chair</i>
11:30	COFFEE	
12:00	Conceptualising the urban infrastructure nexus	Vanesa Castan Broto University College London Timothy Moss Humboldt University, Berlin Liz Varga Cranfield School of Management Jean Grugel <i>Chair</i>
13:15	LUNCH	
14:15	Researchable problems I	Setting out issues and framing research problems, as a first step toward transdisciplinary alliance building. Problems may be empirical, practical, theoretical, conceptual, political...
15:00	Disparities of the urban nexus	Adriana Allen UCL Kavita Ramakrishnan University of East Anglia Ralitsa Hiteva University of Sussex Jake Barnes <i>Chair</i>
16:15	COFFEE	
16:45	Governance encounters at the urban nexus	Jean Grugel Open University Pedro Roberto Jacobi University of Sao Paulo and President ICLEI South America Pritpal Randhawa Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi Ruth Welters <i>Chair</i>
18:00	End of the day.	
19.30	Dinner	Dinner location: Silo, Brighton See further information about the dinner elsewhere in this pack.

DAY 2		FRIDAY
09:00	Coffee	Bramber House Conference Centre, University of Sussex
09:15	Revisiting the scene	Saurabh Arora Anni Beukes Stellenbosch University
09:30	Funding alliances	Michael Keith COMPAS, University of Oxford
09:45	Making alliances 1 <i>Research council mapping</i>	Cian O'Donovan Nexus Network
10:00	Making alliances 2 <i>Challenges in forging transdisciplinary alliances</i>	David Wolff University of Brighton
10:15	Researchable problems II	Building upon and shaping problems set out on day one.
10:50	COFFEE	
11:10	Walkshop pitches	Walkshop leaders will introduce the topic of their walk. Alternative arrangements will be made in case the weather does not permit outdoor activities. Please bring suitable footwear for accessible paths.
11:30	Walkshops University campus and South Downs National Park	Green buildings Charlotte Koch Security Jaideep Gupte Cities as Growth Engines Gordon McGranahan Grassroots approaches to the nexus Adrian Smith Nexus as democracy Andy Stirling
13:00	LUNCH	
14:00	Researchable problems III	Bringing together problem sets and alliance building to chart a course for future transdisciplinary collaborations.
15:45	Good-bye drinks Bramber House foyer	A drink for those who can stay and round off the workshop with some informal chat.

Brief descriptions of talks

Day One

Opening keynote: The urban nexuses of social injustice

Dunu Roy, Hazards International, Delhi

This presentation is, by sheer necessity, a biased view of the nexuses of injustice. Using the broad canvas of Indian cities, I try to follow the trajectory of how working communities in these cities begin by responding to specific threats to access to shelter and services. As participatory research links these to entitlements, they also widen their horizons to incorporate issues of livelihoods, citizenship, labour value, and urban planning. These organically lead to making conscious linkages between issues and organisations and developing alliances to intervene in governance. But inevitably, they also begin to pose a threat to established concepts and institutions. The politics of patronisation, appropriation, division, and suppression follow, and communities have to struggle anew to learn how to create a politics of their own, with or without sympathetic intellectual support from academia.

Session 1. Urban nexuses on the ground

Issues and challenges associated with Brighton and Hove City Food Strategy.

Emily O'Brien, Brighton and Hove Food Partnership

Emily's talk will focus on key issues and challenges associated with Brighton and Hove city food strategy. These issues range from access to sustainable and healthy food, urban resilience, waste reduction and management, availability and effective use of natural resources including land and water, and contributing to climate change mitigation.

Bella Wheeler, Brighton Unemployed Families Project

Neoliberal discourse puts emphasis on individual behaviour change as the solution to issues of poverty and sustainability but in an increasingly interconnected world ideas of 'the individual' are inadequate for addressing what are understood to be systemic issues. How might we think differently about networks, relationships and ideas of community in developing alternative narratives?

Visualizing Nexuses of the Urban on the ground and as processes.

Andre Viljoen, University of Brighton

Interactions between water, energy and food in relation to urbanisation have material and spatial consequences that affect qualitative and quantifiable aspects of a city. In order to understand these consequences with respect to the making of desirable places for inhabitation, arts and design practices have been at the forefront of making visible spatial, environmental and social scenarios for more integrated "cradle to cradle" urban systems. Taking the Continuous Productive Urban Landscape concept as an example it will be proposed that design based thinking and practice can be used to build alliances between unlikely partners to facilitate a new understanding of what cities could be and try to understand pathways to policy in support of more sustainable and equitable urban food systems.

Session 2. Conceptualising the urban infrastructure nexus

Urban infrastructure landscape and the politics of dwelling.

Vanesa Castan Broto, University College London, UK.

This paper represents an attempt to rethink theoretical approaches to understand how infrastructure relates to processes of urbanization in the city. Taking a landscape perspective on dwelling practices, and taking a comparative urbanist approach, this paper will explore the ways in which infrastructure- particularly energy infrastructure- becomes embedded in everyday life but yet visible as ready-to-hand artefacts.

Unpacking and re-assembling the 'urban nexus': a socio-technical perspective on urban infrastructures.

Tim Moss, Guest Professor in the Integrative Research Institute on the

Transformation of Human-Environment Systems at the Humboldt University of Berlin.

My input to the workshop focusses on the role of urban infrastructures in nexus thinking, currently and potentially. Infrastructures connect, by definition. The connectivity required of them is not simply material – e.g. transporting or transforming natural resources – but also institutional, financial, political and cultural. I draw on recent socio-technical readings of urban infrastructures to elaborate the multiple interfaces characteristic of their work (e.g. region/city; energy/water; provider/user) and to reflect on how nexus research and practice can benefit from these insights.

A scale perspective on the 'urban nexus': the integration of different scales of infrastructure system.

Liz Varga, Cranfield University, UK.

Infrastructure systems have unique design characteristics that often lead to inertia and constrained future innovation. Is there potential for new forms of integration that can bring together different scales and define better pathways supporting sustainable innovation? Examples of innovations raising scaling and scale integration challenges are: energy system innovation using renewable energy sources; food system innovations into protein alternatives; and conservation innovation in water systems. The issue of scale and scale integration is an emerging area of research highlighted by the movement toward sustainability; it requires more elaboration and research.

Session 3. Disparities of the urban nexus

Beyond urban risk traps? Seeking the nexus through the everyday.

Adriana Allen, Professor of Development Planning and Urban Sustainability, University College London, UK.

It goes without saying that the nexuses of the urban need to be constructed not just through the material world but also and foremost by weaving immaterial links through the ways in which a sizeable number of women and men struggle to access water, energy and food on an everyday basis. Their struggles and trajectories through the city are shaped by the complex and often exclusionary architecture of endowments, entitlements and capabilities that defines the life of those living in 'informality'. Drawing on a series of action-research projects undertaken in Lima - the second largest metropolis in the world situated in a desert area - this presentation explores how ordinary citizens living in conditions of marginalisation carve individually and collectively material and political spaces to cope,

challenge and at points transform the risk accumulation cycles or 'urban risk traps' in which they live.

Inclusive infrastructure and active users.

Ralitsa Hiteva, SPRU, University of Sussex, UK.

This intervention seeks to question what is the role of customers, end users, and citizens in accessing and interacting with intelligent urban infrastructure? How these categories of actors are expected to interact with and within intelligent infrastructure through the medium of data production? The discussion/intervention aims to open up questions about the interpretation of access, inclusiveness and where does the value of infrastructure comes from?

Positionality and the 'urban nexus': articulations of difference, access, and vulnerability on the margins.

Kavita Ramakrishnan, University of East Anglia, UK.

The ever-extending boundaries of cities such as Delhi are due in part to state-led eviction and resettlement of the urban poor. Using the nexus perspective, I re-center the 'margins' by highlighting how identity and gender shape experiences across the 'urban' and 'rural'. This reflection on differentiated experiences of urban-rural interfaces opens up questions of social justice, agency, and movement, and in what situations people are able to make connectivity work for them. Furthermore, it enables us to interrogate how and if nexus research can lend insight into grounded and modest understandings of the 'good life'.

Session 4. Governance encounters at the urban nexus

Governance from the Left and State-Civil Society Relations: The Experiences of Latin America.

Jean Grugel, Professor of Global Politics, Open University, UK.

Considerable academic attention has been paid to the role of different civil society actors (slum dwellers, the poor, communities, NGOs) in the provision of well-being and in the struggles against dispossession, deregulation and the multiple forms of inequality that characterise cities in the global South, as well as in demanding participation and substantive democracy. This focus is the logical outcome of neoliberalism and the roll-back of the state. What happens to social struggles when the left takes office - and, in the case of much of Latin America, has been in office for a decade or more? Civil society mobilisations continue but contentious politics now take place in a changed political environment, shaped by different patterns of distributive politics, new offers of welfare and new discourses of human rights. I raise here some of the complexities around state-civil society relations that result from these changed circumstances, including: differing political economy visions; new patterns of clientelism and co-optation; welfare promises (and policies) that may go some way to meeting some demands from civil society but that also generate expectations that are difficult to fulfill.

How to promote Urban Governance and overcome insustainability in Brazilian Cities?

Pedro Jacobi, Professor, Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil; President ICLEI South America.

In the Brazilian metropolitan urban context, environmental problems have swelled and aggravated, and their slow resolution has helped to characterize a frame that causes concern. A complex set of problems generates conflicts that manifest themselves in different ways, and configure appropriation practices of the territory and its resources

permeated by a determinant that complicates progress towards the sustainable management of cities.

Managing urban waste from nexus perspective for resilient and sustainable cities

Pritpal Randhawa, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

Urban waste in India is viewed as an environmental policy issue, to be resolved through capital-intensive techno-managerial solutions. This linear understanding overlooks the complex socio-economic and political interactions within the flows of waste. If understood from the nexus perspective these interactions provide various opportunities (eg. jobs, health, safe food, energy etc.) for rethinking urban waste, which could contribute in building resilient and sustainable cities.

Day Two

Funding Alliances: An introduction to Urban Transformations Programme and related support through ESRC

Michael Keith, Director COMPAS, University of Oxford, UK and Co-ordinator ESRC Urban Transformations Portfolio.

Making Alliances 1: Research Council Mapping

Cian O'Donovan, Nexus Network

Making Alliances 2: Challenges in forging transdisciplinary alliances

David Wolff, Community University Partnership Programme, University of Brighton, UK.

Walkshops

Led by Arabella Fraser, Charlotte Koch, Jaideep Gupte, Gordon McGranahan, Adrian Smith and Andy Stirling.

Thursday's workshop dinner at Silo

The evening meal is taking place at Silo, in Brighton's North Laine area. The restaurant is one of the city's more environmentally sensitive establishments, with an emphasis on local food sourcing and almost zero waste production.

Getting there:

The easiest way to get to Silo is by train from campus. Take the Brighton train all the way to Brighton Station. There is a train every 15 minutes from the Sussex stop, Falmer, the train journey takes nine minutes.

It is approximately five minutes downhill walk from Brighton Station to Silo.

Address: 39 Upper Gardner Street, Brighton, BN1 4AN

Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/3oG78iFDfrm>



About Silo

In their words: "Silo was conceived from a desire to innovate the food industry whilst demonstrating respect: respect for the environment, respect for the way our food is generated and respect for the nourishment given to our bodies. this means that we create everything from its whole form cutting out food miles and over-processing whilst preserving nutrients and the integrity of the ingredients in the process."

For more about Silo see <http://www.silobrighton.com>