



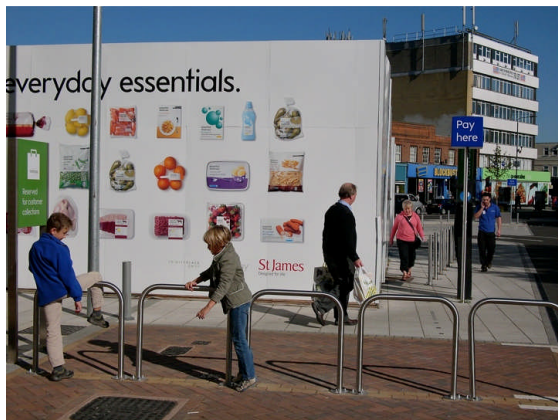
Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group



Some thoughts on Households and Sustainable Lifestyles

CASSE event: London & SSE

October 7th 2014



Presentation

- Researching sustainable lifestyle change: what we know
- Messages from three recent projects
- Households and SSE transition



Other things we could discuss

- My colleague Tim Jackson's current work on sustainable economy
- Proposed work led by University of Surrey on sustainable living and prosperity in SSE
- New work at Surrey on cities and industrial ecology



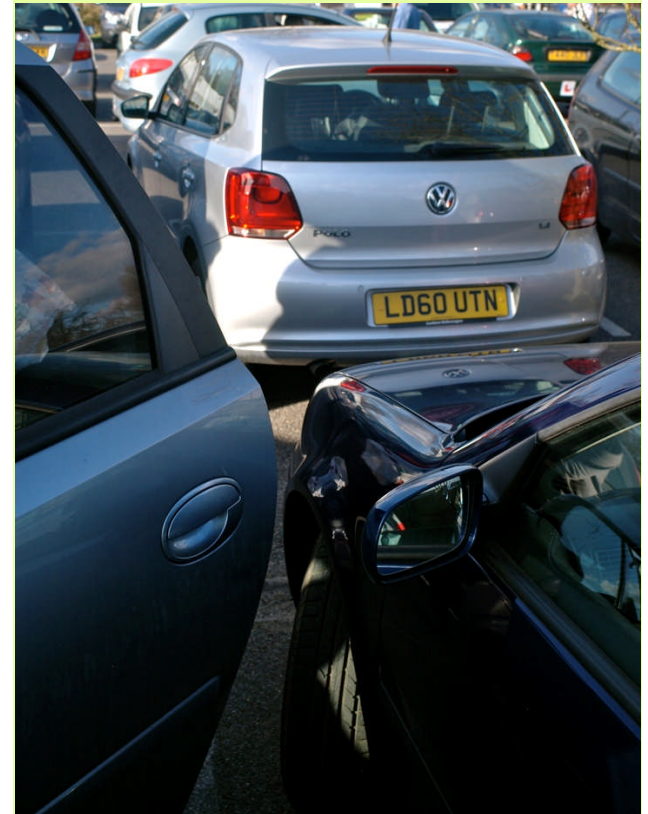
Households and sustainable living

- **David Fell, Brook Lyndhurst, in Guardian Sustainable Business, 7/3/2013:**
- Sustainable consumption consists at present almost entirely of "supply push" rather than "demand pull". On the supply side, a combination of regulatory and legislative obligation, business-to-business peer pressure and, slowly, a developing cultural norm mean that a growing number of enterprises are taking sustainability seriously.
- Turn to the consumer side of the equation, however, and the story is very different. **The number of people taking sustainability seriously has remained stubbornly low for the past 20 years.**
- Perhaps two or three consumers in every 100 are actively trying to minimise their environmental footprint on a consistent, across-the-board basis. The majority find it too hard, too overwhelming, too complicated - too much hassle given all the other things they need to think about.



Why is 'sustainable living' rare?

- **Lack of positive incentives and collective stories**
- **Lack of supporting infrastructure**
- **Clashing values and desires**
- **'Lock-in' to existing behaviour, eg travel for work and school**
- **Association of consumerism with real benefits as well as peer pressure**
- **Association of SD and 'Green' behaviour with cost, negativity, inconvenience etc**
- **'Threatened identities': RESOLVE research**



What works?

- Positive incentives and collective stories
- Supporting infrastructure
- Consistent messages from Government, Business and everyday institutions
- Trusted networks and congregational places
- Making 'SD' *normal*
- Overcoming perceptions and reality of additional cost of sustainable action
- Safety in numbers





Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group

SLRG, 2010-14

- **Funded by DEFRA with ESRC & Scottish Gov't**
- **Network: Universities of Surrey, Edinburgh, Sussex, Bath, IFS**
- ***Aims* -**
- **to develop new and relevant understandings of the processes which lead to changes in people's behaviours and practices**
- **to build a sound conceptual basis for understanding and influencing change processes aimed at sustainable living;**
- **to provide advice on realistic strategies to enable more sustainable lifestyles**
- **to build on existing research in sustainable living - eg Surrey's RESOLVE programme**



SLRG portfolio: project clusters

Community

Edinburgh: Sustainable Living in Remote Rural Scotland

Sussex: Resilience of community food projects

Sussex: Greener Living – grassroots initiatives for change



Economy

Surrey and Sussex: Mapping Rebound Effects

IFS: Price Responsiveness - Demand for Sustainable Food



Change processes

Bath: Large survey of urban house movers

Surrey: Qualitative study of households in transition

Synthesis

Surrey and Bath: links between research and policymakers

Network-wide: What are the foundations for a transition to sustainable living at household and community levels?



Resilience/innovation in community food-growing projects

University of Sussex
Andy Stirling / Rebecca White /
Rachael Durrant



Diversity of motivations and values at work in community food projects - not all in line with 'official' definitions and goals for 'SD'

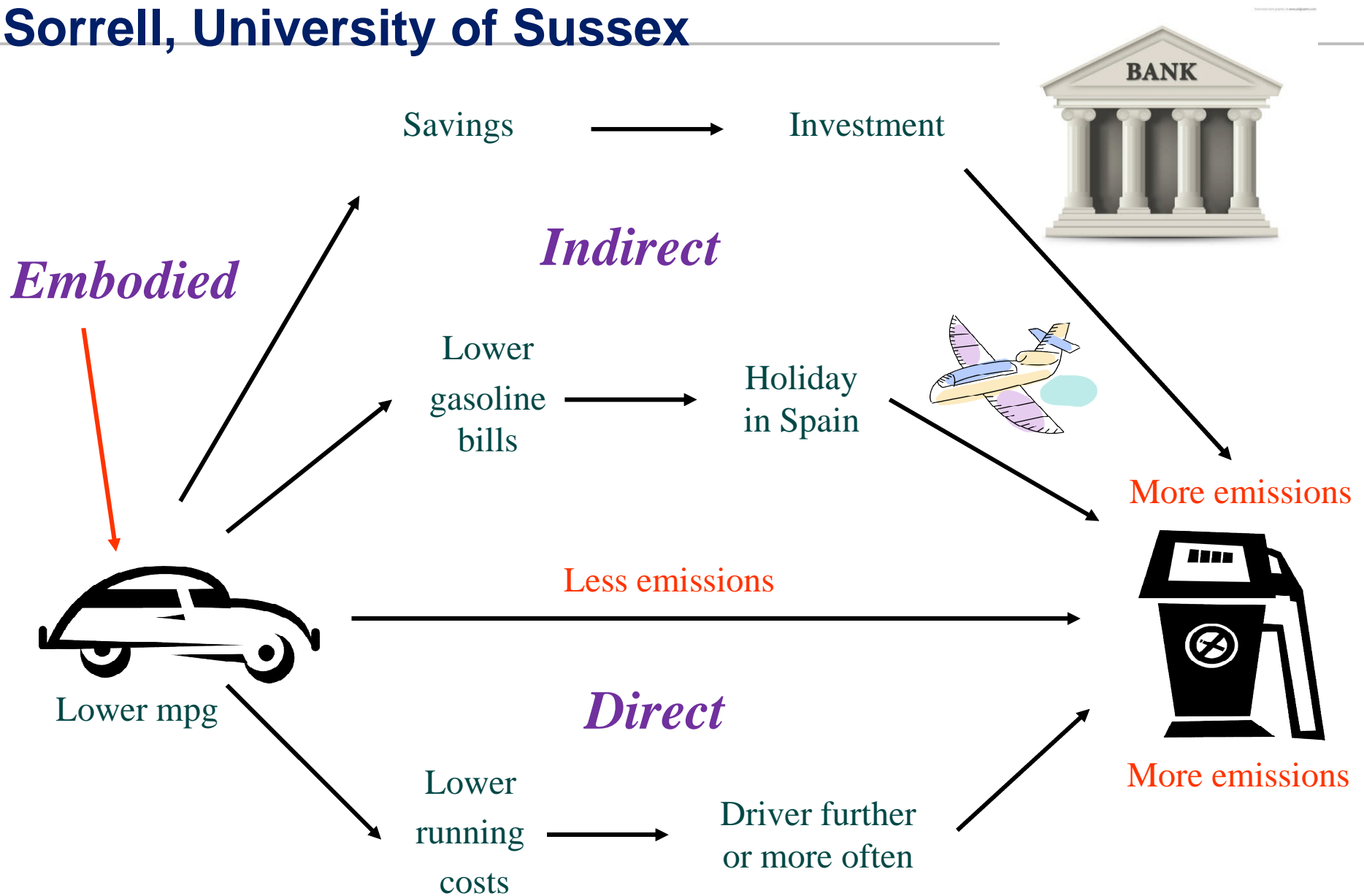
More stability in funding needed, along with less imposition of top-down metrics and targets

Process of exploration of community goals and ideas is as valid and valuable as outcomes for 'SD'

Civil society organisations need to be supported as spaces for experimentation, diversity and resilience

Is 'scaling up' appropriate ?

Rebound effects for households: modelling study led by Dr Steve Sorrell, University of Sussex



Rebound modelling: results

- Rebound effects are (currently) **modest (0-32%)** for measures affecting domestic energy use, **larger (25-65%)** for measures affecting vehicle fuel use and **very large (66-106%)** for measures that reduce food waste
- Rebounds **larger for low income groups** – because GHG-intensive ‘necessities’ form larger % of total (re)spending
- Income effect (**re-spending**) is much more important than embodied GHGs of energy efficiency measures
- **Results emphasise the need to handle emissions reduction as a global policy problem and an ‘upstream’ systemic issue**



Moments of change: openings for SD?

Significant points of transition open up opportunities for change, including self-conscious revision of practices, ie lifestyle adaptation

‘Habit Discontinuity’

Exposure to new social networks, norms, physical spaces and services

New consumption goals, choices, pressures, constraints, narratives



Photos: I Christie

HABIT project

University of Bath

Bas Verplanken / Debbie Roy / PECT

Habit Disruption - an idea with intuitive appeal in thinking about lifestyle change for sustainability...

- SLRG project in Peterborough - survey of 580 households to test this effect
- Initial analysis suggests that there *is* an effect on receptiveness to change for movers
- But still only a minority of householders are motivated to make significant changes
- How do we magnify the effect?



ELiCiT: household transitions

University of Surrey

Kate Burningham / Sue Venn / Birgitta

Gatersleben / Ian Christie

3-year study of 80 households - half experiencing arrival of first child; half experiencing transition to retirement



- Emergence of family lifestyle: more pro-environmental values but less pro-environmental action
- *Opposite* effect seems to be the case with decline of family lifestyle
- Self-reported values, behaviours and identities contain many inconsistencies

Households and SSE

- **‘Growth isn’t working’**
- **Cities are central to SD transitions**
- **Density of infrastructure: potential for economies of scale**
- **Density of real and virtual social networks**
- **Households in transition**
- **Households need ‘safety in numbers’, which city life can provide**
- **SSE and desirable lifestyles: sociability, time, meaningful work**



Thank you for listening

Contact details



Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group

- For more information, please contact:
- Gemma Birkett (PA to Prof. Tim Jackson)
- g.birkett@surrey.ac.uk
- Ian Christie (Fellow)
- i.christie@surrey.ac.uk
- 01483 689612
- SLRG website:
- <http://www.sustainablelifestyles.ac.uk/>

Director: Professor Tim Jackson
Centre for Environmental Strategy
University of Surrey
Guildford
Surrey GU7 5XH



defra

Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs

