



# Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group

An overview

CES Seminar

26th January 2012

Ian Christie, CES and SLRG



# Presentation

- Introducing SLRG
  - context, aims, themes, methods, projects
- Summary of SLRG projects
- Transitions in SLRG:
  - HABIT: Habits and Behaviours in Transition
  - ELiCiT: Households in Transition
- Challenges of method and analysis

# SLRG and RESOLVE

- Precursor to SLRG: ESRC-funded programme RESOLVE 2006-2011
- Lifestyles, Values and Environment
- Projects now drawing to a close
- Major issues arising from RESOLVE:
  - *Power of Context*
  - *Limits to individualism in 'Behaviour Change' policy*
  - *Ambivalence and tensions in changing lifestyles*
  - *Escalation and Rebound Effects*

# SLRG, 2010-13



Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group

Funded by DEFRA and Scottish Gov't

Network: Universities of Surrey, Edinburgh,  
Sussex, Bath, Brunel, IFS

*Aims -*

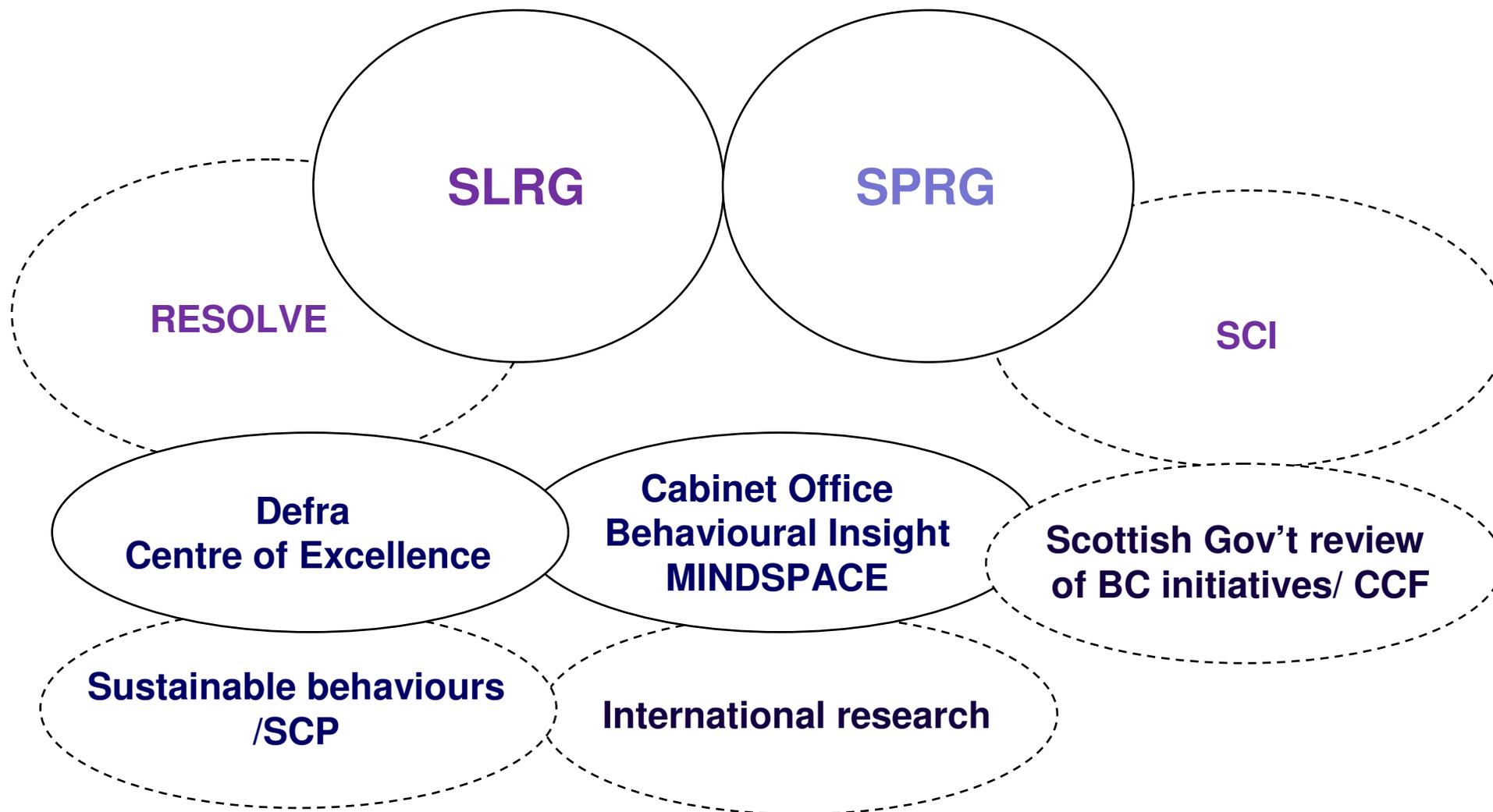
to develop new and relevant understandings of the processes which lead to changes in people's behaviours and practices

to build a sound conceptual basis for understanding and influencing change processes aimed at sustainable living;

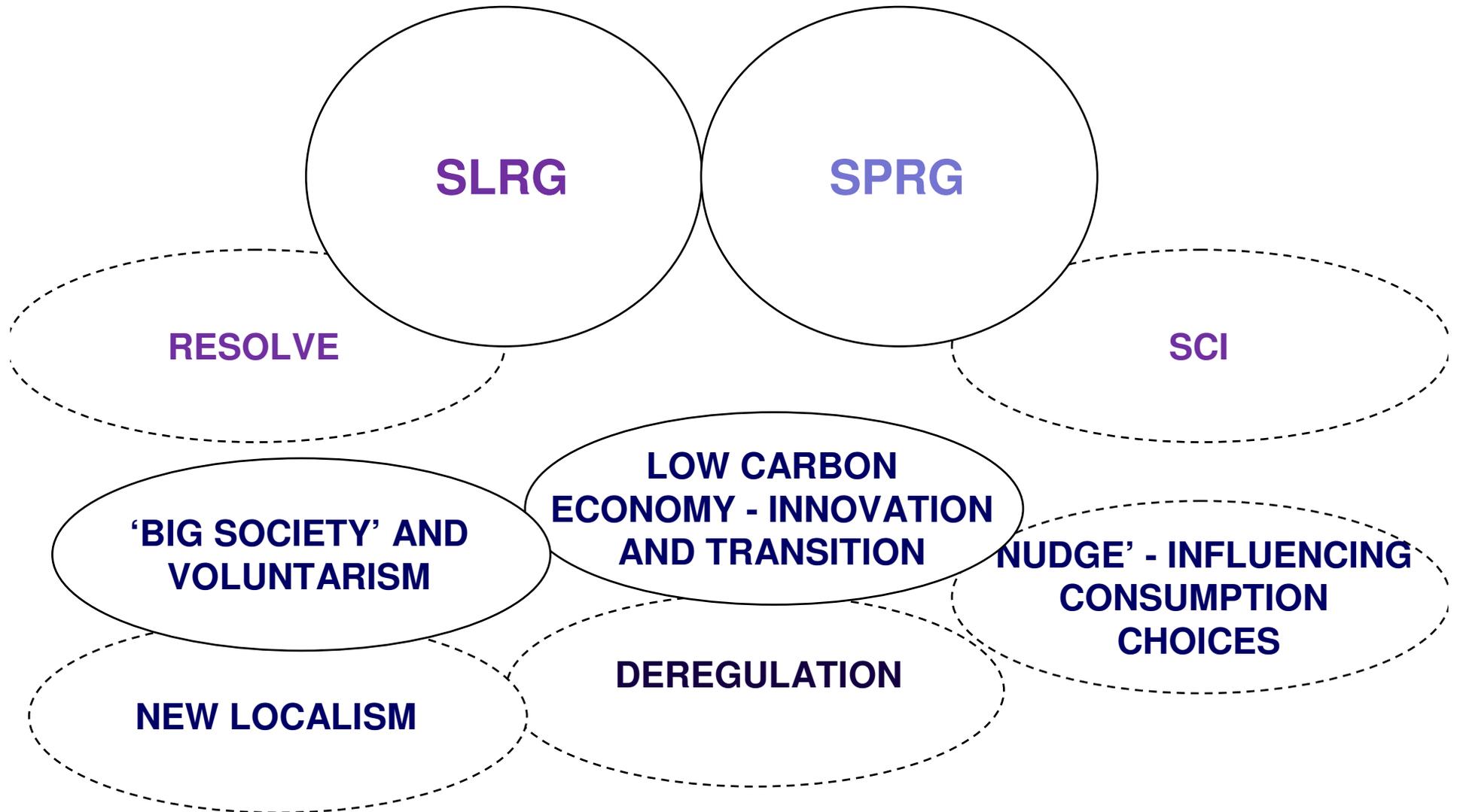
to provide advice on realistic strategies to enable more sustainable lifestyles;

to develop cross-programme understanding and policy messages

# The research and policy context for Sustainable Behaviours Groups



# The research and policy context for Sustainable Behaviours Groups



# SLRG methods

- an **integrated, inter-disciplinary** understanding of the relationship between human behaviour, social practices, technological systems and sustainability;
- **multi-site inquiry** with different units of analysis: individual, household, social group, community, demographic
- **multiple methods**: ethnographic, econometric, psychometric, case studies, participant observation, action research, expert informant interviews, multi-criteria mapping interviews

# **SPRG: sustainable practices**

- Like SLRG, a multi-institute network
- Research hub - University of Manchester
- Director - Prof. Dale Southerton
- See [www.sprg.ac.uk](http://www.sprg.ac.uk)
- **Projects:**
  - **changing eating habits**
  - **bottled water consumption**
  - **keeping cool**
  - **patterns of water consumption**
  - **zero carbon habitation**
  - **engagement and influencing**
  - **theoretical development**

# Lifestyles and Practices

- Common focus on behavioural patterns and the nature of change...
- **Practices (habits, routines) are structured patterns of behaviour embedded in and conditioned by systems of provision, norms, infrastructure, technical systems, institutions**
- **Practice theory: emphasis on structures and shaping of behaviour by macro- and meso-level factors**
- **Challenge to focus on ‘individual choices’**

# Lifestyles and Practices

- Practice theory is valuable but is not the whole story
- We are not the sum total of our practices
- Change comes from shifts in identity, values, relationships, policies
- Practice theory and structural perspectives need to be supplemented by perspectives on individual and collective values, relations and narratives
- Need to consider sustainable consumption not just through lens of practices but also in relation to larger patterns of action and change
- Micro, meso and macro levels

# What's a lifestyle?

**PRACTICES**

**CONSTRAINTS FROM  
EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND 'LOCK-IN' TO SYSTEMS  
OF PROVISION, PLACES,  
PRACTICES, HABITS**

**DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS,  
VALUES: OFTEN AT ODDS  
WITH WHAT WE ARE  
'LOCKED INTO' IN  
EVERYDAY LIFE**

**IDENTITY  
AND NARRATIVE**

**RELATIONSHIPS**

**CAPACITIES**

# Promoting change



- **The power of context**
- **Social norms, mimesis**
- **Lock-in effects**
- **Efficiency against Scale**
- **Agency against Structures**
- **Political framing and policy constraints**
- **What can promote change given the powerful effects of context, habitual practices, 'lock-in', and incentives embedded in physical, economic and social systems?**
- **Potential: 'Moments of change' theory**
- **Caveats: Rebound and Backfire Effects**



# SLRG portfolio: project clusters

## *Community*

**Edinburgh: Sustainable Living in Remote Rural Scotland**

**Sussex: Dynamic Mapping of Community Resilience**

**Sussex: Greener Living – grassroots initiatives for change**

## *Economy*

**Surrey and Sussex: Mapping Rebound Effects**

**IFS: Price Responsiveness of Demand**

## *Change processes*

**Bath: Habit and Habit Discontinuities**

**Surrey: ELiCiT - Longitudinal Qualitative Household Study**

**Surrey / Canterbury (NZ): Children's Cohort Project**

## *Synthesis*

**Surrey and Brunel: Directions of Policy Dialogue**

**Network-wide: Foundations for Sustainable Living**

# Mapping Resilience projects

University of Sussex  
Andy Stirling / Rebecca White /  
Rachel Durrant



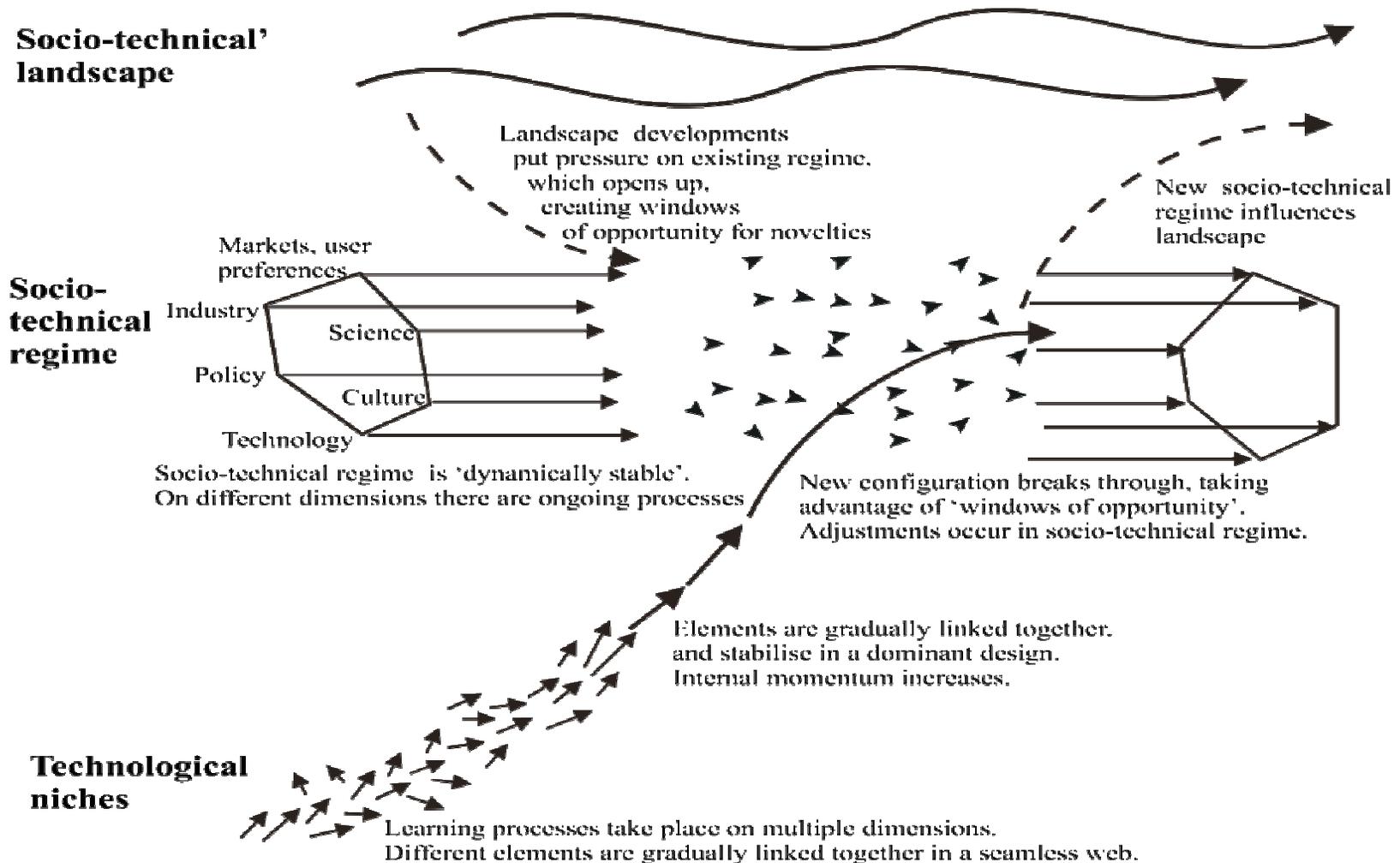
Understanding how  
civil society  
organisations  
contribute to  
resilience of  
sustainable  
developments

Elaboration of  
'Dynamic  
Sustainabilities'  
framework for  
analysis

Application to study  
of food systems and  
civil society  
innovation

Use of Multi-Criteria  
Mapping methods

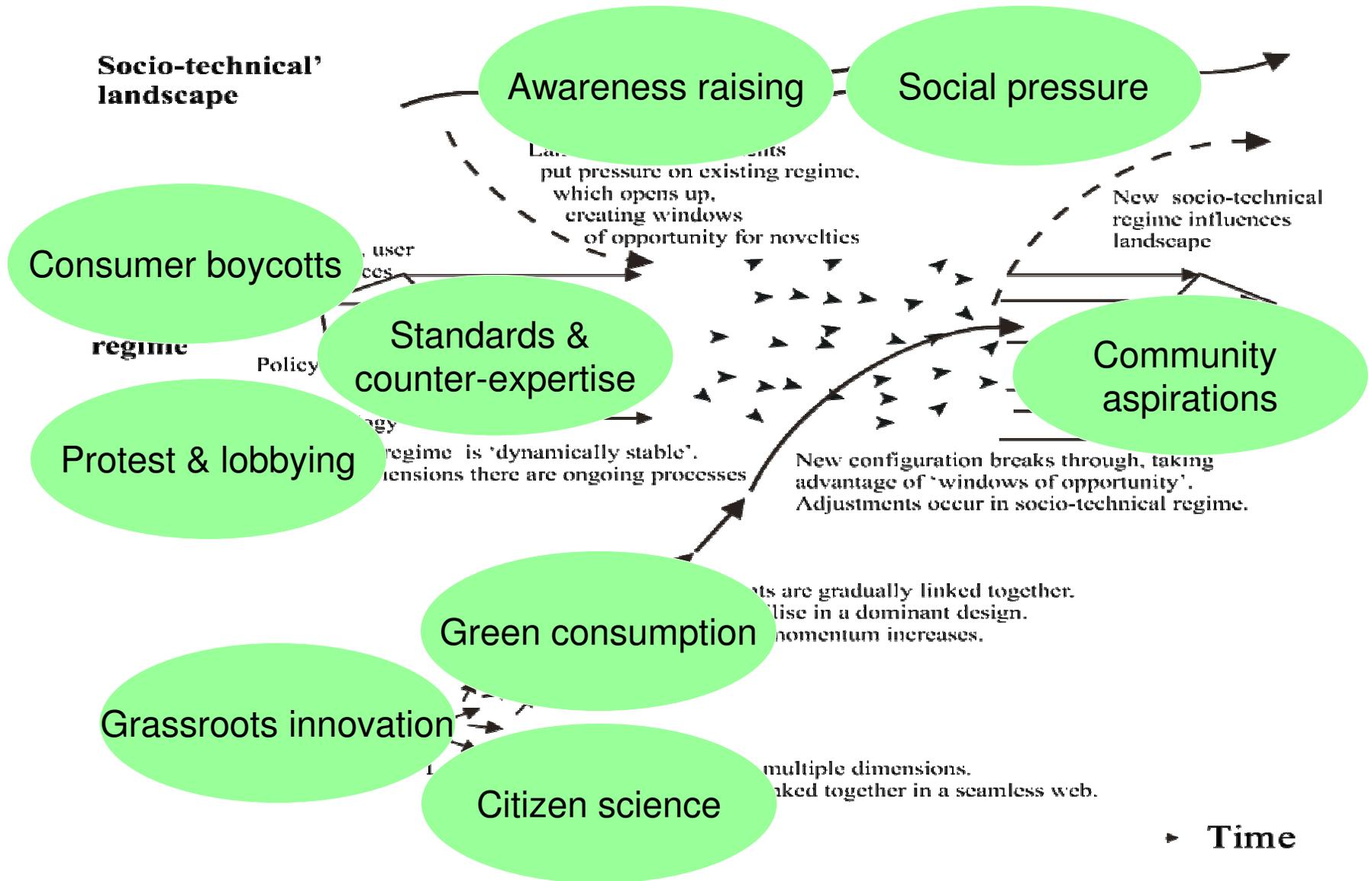
# Civil society in sustainability transitions



► Time

Source: Geels (2002)

# Civil society in sustainability transitions



Source: Geels (2002)

# Remote Rural Scotland project

University of Edinburgh  
Simon Allen / Emily Creamer



In-depth study of  
change in rural  
communities  
developing projects  
funded by Scottish  
Government's CCF

3 x 3-month case  
studies in  
communities, starting  
with N Uist

Key informant  
interviews, focus  
groups, observation

Coverage: island,  
mountain and  
lowland communities

# Mapping Rebound Effects project

Universities of Surrey and Sussex  
Angela Druckman / Steve Sorrell / Mona Chitnis /  
Tim Jackson



Modelling rebound effects in consumption: how far expected emission reductions are affected by direct and indirect rebounds

Refinement of existing models for analysis of rebound

Focus so far on modelling effects in relation to household energy efficiency measures

Revised proposal in progress for extra analysis

# Price Responsiveness project

Institute for Fiscal Studies  
Laura Blow / Andrew Leicester



Modelling price sensitivity of demand in relation to household use of energy and travel

Refinement of existing models for analysis of price responsiveness

Project under revision: plan is to focus analysis on price sensitivities of demand in relation to sustainable food products (eg organics)

# HABIT project

University of Bath  
Bas Verplanken / Debbie Roy



Large survey to assess effect of house move and intervention pack on attitudes and reported behaviour

Work in Peterborough with PECT using tested intervention pack

Target sample expanded to 800

Pilot study done; recruitment in progress for main survey

Team considering expansion of the recruitment area to speed up proaress

# ELiCiT project

University of Surrey

Kate Burningham / Sue Venn / Birgitta

Gatersleben / Tim Jackson / Ian Christie

Longitudinal qualitative survey to assess lifestyle change in major transitions

Focus on arrival of first child and on retirement

80 households: 40 in each sub-sample

Recruitment in South London, Kent, Lancaster, Fife

First wave of interviews, diaries and questionnaires almost complete; initial analysis is underway



# Children's Cohort project

Universities of Canterbury (NZ) and Surrey  
Bronwyn Hayward / Tim Jackson



Pilot study on experiences, attitudes and values of children and young people in 'Google Earth' generation

Scoping report and review of media opportunities for a proposed long-term study

Joint research workshop with UNEP (9th Nov. 2011) to discuss scope for proposed project

# Policy Dialogues project

University of Surrey / Brunel University  
Ian Christie / Julie Barnett



Study of nature of demand from policy makers for research into sustainable lifestyles and behavioural change

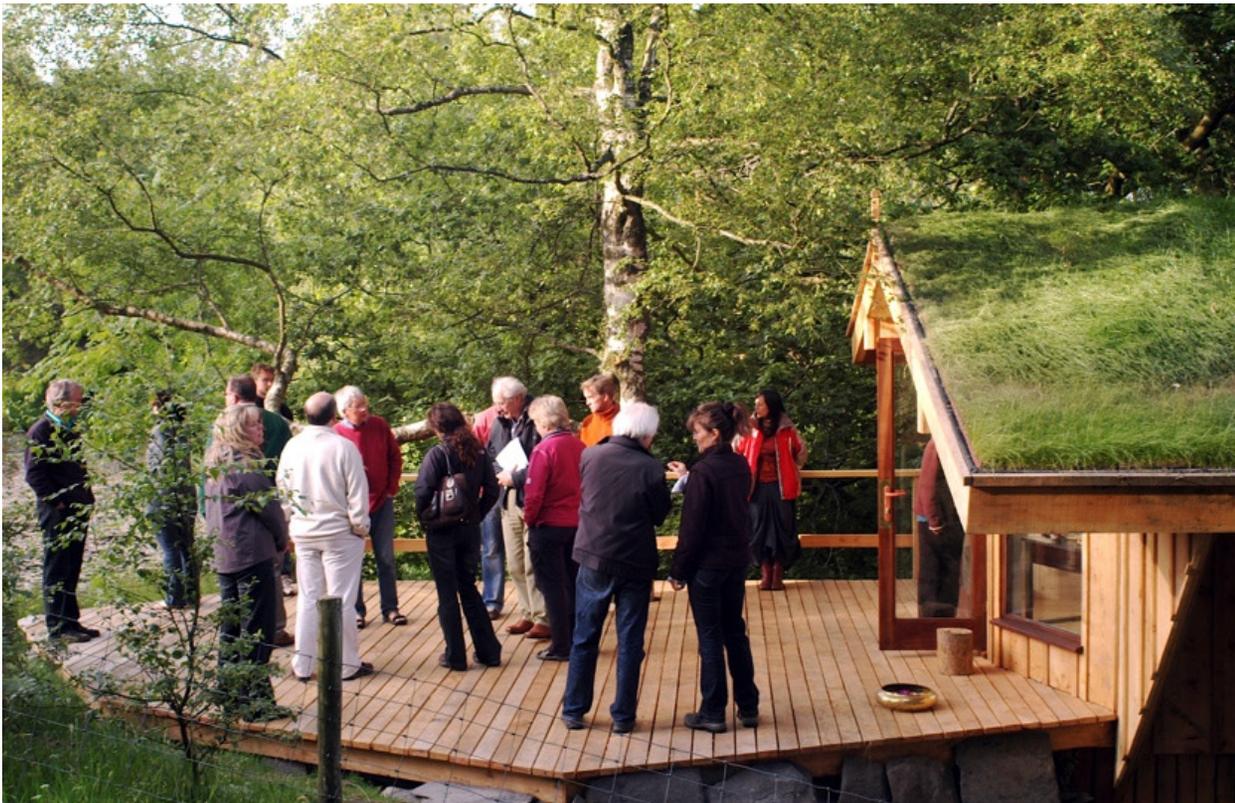
Motivation for research, use of findings, impact in policy design and implementation, aims of researchers and research users

Revised proposal in progress: focus likely to be on Reward and Recognition / Transitions

# Foundations project

Network-wide

Tim Jackson and lead researchers



Synthesis of findings and analytical frameworks across SLRG

Synthesis with findings and frameworks in SPRG

Methods: continuous reflection in cross-network seminars; joint SLRG-SPRG workshops ; Advisory Board seminars and other stakeholder events

# Promoting change



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# Moments of change?



# Moments of change: HD theory



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

Ruptures in habitual practices

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

New consumption goals, choices, pressures, constraints, narratives

# **Bath: Habit Discontinuities study**

- ***Aim: to test the HD theory in relation to house-movers / non-movers and exposure to sustainable living information/activity***
- **Intervention study with controls**
- **Collaboration with Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT)**
- **Target sample: 800 households in Peterborough area**
- **Sample divided between movers and non-movers (owners and private renters)**
- **Sub-samples divided between those receiving PECT intervention and those not**
- **Main dependent variables: range of practices relating to energy, water, waste and travel**
- **Theoretical models in question: HDH, Planned Behaviour, Value-Belief-Norm theory**
- **Baseline questionnaires: practices, attitudes**
- **Repeat questionnaires after 12 weeks**
- **Focus groups halfway and at end; ‘soft’ data collection**
- **Issues: housing market, recruitment, retention, matching, ‘contamination’, self-reporting**

# Surrey: Households study (ELiCiT)

- *Exploring Lifestyle Changes in Transition*
- Longitudinal qualitative study of 80 households
- Tracking attitudes and activity over 3 years
- Focus on major transitions: *first child* and *retirement*
- Interviews (3 waves, 8-month intervals) before and after transition; diaries (7 days)
- Households: South London, Kent, Lancaster, rural Scotland (Fife, Cupar)
- Exploration of practices, changes in lifestyles, values, aspirations, motivations for change and resistance to it; and variations by age, place, gender and socio-economic group
- Conceptions of 'good life' and how these relate to ideas and issues about sustainable living

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# Challenges : methods and analysis



- **Mixed methods**
- **MCM, ethnography, models**
- **Comparison of results**
- **Integration of findings**
- **Isolating factors in change**
- **Assumptions and evidence base for economic modelling**
- **Complexity of data analysis: ELiCiT, HABIT, Remote Rural Scotland, MCM study**
- **‘Real time’ interaction: research and policy**
- **Translation of findings for policy audiences**



# Thank you for your attention

- Website coming soon for SLRG
- For more information, please contact:
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- [www.surrey.ac.uk/resolv](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/resolv)



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