

The Domestic Nexus

Interrogating the interlinked practices of water, energy
and food consumption

Workshop 1

Understanding domestic practices and their dynamics across the nexus

- Our intention was to focus on the nexus, the home and **transition moments**
- Disruption and de-routinization
 - A chance to do some 'nexus thinking'?
 - A window of opportunity for intervention?
- Continuities and the reproduction of domestic practices
- Age and cohort effects?

The discussions took a number of interesting turns...



Getting to grips with ‘The Nexus’

What is it and why should social scientists care?

- Certain claims reveal a predictable/healthy degree of **cynicism and skepticism**:
 - *‘The Nexus’ is not a concept*
 - *There is no such thing as nexus thinking*
 - *It is just a way of labelling what social scientists are doing anyway*
 - *The Nexus fails to attend to issues of power and politics, class and gender, and so on*
- Similar claims were once made about the naming of ‘Sociology’ – and are still made about the analysis of ‘social practice’!
- More productive to note the **convergence between nexus thinking and good social scientific analysis**
 - Complexity and heterogeneity
 - Interdependencies and interconnections
 - Alignments, conflicts, trade offs

Getting to grips with ‘The Nexus’

What is it and why should social scientists care?

- Are we already thinking (or **thinking enough**) about the food-energy-water nexus in our analysis of domestic practices?
 - A lot research is domain specific
 - What insights emerge when **comparing** food with water with energy?
 - What happens when food **research expands its remit** and attends to energy and water?
- Acknowledging ‘The Nexus’ has the potential to **thicken and deepen social scientific analysis**, and to engage with **broader debates** related to **sustainability** and **resource use**
- It opens and maintains spaces for **conversation and collaboration** across academic disciplines
- It is incumbent on ‘us’ to engage with the nexus in order to think about ‘real world’ **responses** to **grand societal challenges**

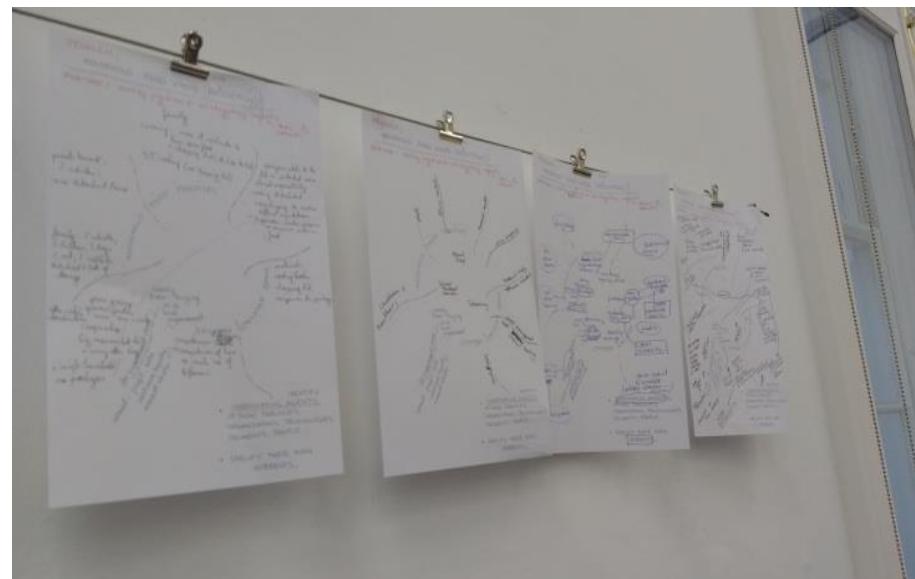
Workshop 2

Reshaping the domestic nexus: analytical insights and methodologies

- Theoretical perspectives and **ways of encountering or knowing** the domestic nexus
- Qualitative/mixed methods **beyond the 'gold standard'** of participant observation
- 'Mid-sized' data to capture **larger patterns and the social organization of domestic practices**, e.g. time use surveys
- 'Big' data and **proxies for domestic practices**

What counts as evidence?

What do we do with the vast proliferation of 'social' and 'transactional' data? (Savage and Burrows 2007)



Possible contribution

Problematizing 'the domestic'

- Households and individuals are not the same thing
 - It is important to acknowledge **intra-household dynamics**
 - Households contain a **complex array of relationships** between humans and non-humans
 - There are important questions to consider related to **power and gender**
- The boundaries of the household as **porous membranes**
 - Household members are embedded in **relationships outside of the household**
 - Domestic practices are shaped (and can be shaped by) myriad **external factors**
 - Domestic **practices travel** across and between discrete households
 - Who fixes the boundary of 'the household', why, and with **what consequences?**

Possible contribution

Problematizing 'the domestic'

- Households are neither fixed nor self-evident
 - Household **composition varies radically** across space and time
 - The relationship between household composition, domestic practices, and sustainability?
 - An **expanded definition** of 'the domestic'?
 - What can we learn from experimentation **beyond 'normalization'**?
- Domestic practices can be **provisioned elsewhere**
 - Do **activities currently associated with the domestic sphere** have to remain there?
 - Eating out, showering at the gym, taking clothes to the launderette
 - Feminist design, the 'domestic revolution' (Hayden 1982) , and relocation to **sites and spaces outside the home**
 - Sustainability implications?