How do we align our personal desire for a better life, with a shared need for a better future?

Consumption is a hugely powerful force

The sustainability challenges we face stem largely from an explosion in consumption, and the corresponding exploitation of finite resources. To successfully respond to these challenges, we must now radically reduce the resource intensity of everyday lives.

This may mean consuming less, or it could mean consuming differently. Either approach requires big leaps in our understanding and our actions – not simply how we produce and distribute goods and services, but how we organise our societies, government policy, and our lives.

Our mission at the Sustainable Consumption Institute is to bring insight and clarity to a key part of the sustainability challenge: the role of consumption and how it needs to change.

We take original insights from the Social Sciences, insights that often challenge orthodox thinking, and subject them to critical empirical scrutiny. This, we believe, is essential for advancing fundamental understandings about processes of consumption and social change.

Our approach to research is one that develops novel methodologies for addressing key research questions, including the use of a wide range of data and comparative methodologies that recognise sustainable consumption is an international challenge.

Through an ambitious research programme we tackle head-on the scale and urgency of societal responses required to address sustainability – responses that require collaboration between a wide-range of stakeholders, including businesses and policy-makers, who can both benefit from and contribute to our research.

Our mission at the Sustainable Consumption Institute is to bring insight and clarity to a key part of the sustainability challenge: the role of consumption and how it needs to change.

Professor Dale Southerton
Director, Sustainable Consumption Institute

Esteem highlights

SCI research staff are invited members of four Research Council commissioning panels (including ESRC Centres and Large Grants) in the UK, Denmark, France, and Sweden.

Professor Alan Warde has been elected ‘Trustee of the British Sociological Association’, and appointed Visiting Research Professor at Uppsala (Sweden, 2013-16) and Aalborg (Denmark, 2014-17) Universities.

Thomson Reuters selected Professor Frank Geels for the list of Highly Cited Researchers 2014 under the ‘Business and Economics field’. Geels was identified in ‘The World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds 2014’; and was appointed to the ‘Distinguished Scientist Fellowship Program’, King Abdulaziz University (Saudi Arabia, 2013-16) and Visiting Research Professor at Stuttgart University (Germany, 2013-14).

Engage with SCI researchers at: www.sci.manchester.ac.uk/people/all/staff
A focus on consumption
Consumers are not just purchasers of green products or the end of a production supply chain. They are enactors of ways of life, in which sustainability is usually only one consideration among many. Placing consumption in the foreground of research allows us to focus on understanding human needs, values, practices and habits so as to inform and strengthen action to achieve a transition to sustainable consumption.

Linking consumption to production
Placing consumption in the foreground must not mean neglecting questions about the production, supply and distribution of goods and services. The challenge is to understand how consumers use products and services in the course of engaging in everyday practices. In particular it raises the question of how sustainable product and service innovations disrupt and are absorbed into everyday practices – and how understanding this process can in turn shape innovation.

“
The SCI explores how consumption and production systems can be ‘reconfigured’ in order to transition towards less resource intensive ways of life.

Professor Andrew McMeekin
SCI Research Director

"