



**International Workshop on
“Sustainable Production-Consumption Systems: Research Frontiers”,**

1-3 October 2004

Chiang Mai, Thailand

Agenda as of 2 September 2004 (Version 2)

Rationale and Purpose

The purpose of this workshop is to arrive at an improved framework and agenda for research on the sustainability of production-consumption systems that increasingly stretch across disparate parts of the globe.

There are two key reasons for framing the challenge as one of sustainability of “production-consumption” systems rather than the more conventional focus on production technologies and regulation. The first is the need to bring attention to the processes closer to the decisions and actions of final consumer when undertaking analyses of the underlying reasons for environmental impacts at remote, more primary, “production”, parts of commodity chains. The second is that a commodity chain itself can be thought of a series or network of many production-consumption relationships. For each linkage we can ask questions from both a production perspective (how could this industrial process be made more resource efficient?), and, in addition, a consumption perspective (What are the underlying drivers of downstream demands in the network or value chain?). Consumption and production perspectives are complimentary but not alternatives.

Over-consumption is clearly one of the root causes of unsustainable production-consumption systems. But what drives over-consumption? Has globalization through the “stretching” of commodity chains and “masking” strategies of corporations made environmental and social impacts of consumption less visible? Or can the improved information sharing and knowledge creating infrastructure that comes with globalization become part of the solution by making feedbacks more visible?

Under-consumption, on the other hand, may also be a symptom or cause of unsustainable development. How can environmental protection concerns be incorporated into poverty alleviation strategies? What role does increasing consumption have in improving well-being, and when do the returns start to “level-off”? Do efforts at improving sustainability of production-consumption systems, for example, through international health and environmental standards or trade-related measures and structural adjustment programs, really help producers in developing countries? Or do they keep them poor?

We note that the split between over- and under- consumption does not fall neatly into south-north, or “developed” – “developing” categories. Elites and wealthy of cities in the third world have life styles that parallel those of the majority in the developed, and conversely, the homeless in the big cities of the U.S. may be no better off than many slum dwellers in the mega-cities of Asia. Ultimately, questions about sustainability of production-consumption systems under the transformations wrought by globalization lead to questions about justice, rights and responsibilities. Which innovations in governance mechanisms and institutional arrangements are needed to drive production-consumption systems along more sustainable trajectories that are also fair?

To address these kinds of questions (see Agenda) we are bringing a small group of researchers from around the world, from both developing and developed countries, to debate and discuss priorities for research in the next decade. The workshop will be based on facilitated discussions. These will take as their starting point the concise briefs (2 page max) submitted by participants on two themes of their choice. There will be no long formal presentations.

As a starting point, we propose for this workshop, an initial focus on production-consumption systems involving significant use of natural resource inputs or ecosystem services, for example, to process or store wastes, and for which substantial fraction of the inputs, primary commodity or intermediate goods and services, are traded internationally. Systems that immediately come to



mind are export-oriented agriculture, but other manufacturing and service-oriented commodities may also have these properties when looked at more closely. Apart from considering the insights that can be gained from studies of production-consumption systems around single or clusters of related commodities, we also encourage consideration of multi-commodity relationships.

This small workshop will build on the results of an earlier web-based conference (see www.sea-user.org/e_conferences.php) we organized last year and on several other recent meetings and publications prepared by other groups. We believe that research on sustainability of production-consumption systems is at nearing some very exciting scientific frontiers and we would like to be involved and contribute to it. We hope you will too.

PROGRAM

Overview of Agenda

The workshop lasts for three days. The first two days are organized around thematic sessions (see Agenda). The third and final day will include a half-day field trip around Chiang Mai. Altogether we anticipate there will be 20 participants. The program is divided into thematic sessions during which both empirical case study work and more conceptual debates will be encouraged.

Facilitators for each session will choose their own formats (around the table, writing on pin-up cards, whiteboard tracking of key themes, staged debates....). USER will provide rapporteurs for each session to help the facilitators and overall synthesis of the meeting.

The tabulated agenda on pages 3 and 4 is a 2nd draft after some initial feedback from participants. We hope to improve and refine this through feedback in the final month. Please send suggestions to louis@sea-user.org.

Pre-meeting briefs

All participants should submit at least two 1 page briefs addressing topics in the workshop program. The text should not be longer than 1 page, but a figure or table may be included as a "second page". These documents can be uploaded directly the web community pages (www.sea-user.org/communities.php) or sent to us by email (jesse@sea-user.org). Please submit your pre-meeting contributions by the 25 September 2004 at the latest. These one pagers may include a short list of key references including to authors own publications. These 1-pagers will form the starting point of discussions for all sessions removing the need for lengthy presentations and allowing us much more time for constructive discussion during the meeting.

Post-meeting output

As an immediate output of the meeting participants will be provided with a CD before they leave with a copy of all briefs and electronic off-prints and other documents provided by participants. We will also produce a draft synthesis of the discussions in each of the sessions based on staff rapporteur reports within 2 weeks of the end of the meeting and circulate this to all participants for comments and revisions before finalizing.

We would also like to prepare a multi-author synthesis article drawing on the deliberations at the meeting. We will be seeking expressions of interest to join such an endeavor at the meeting.

Sponsorship

The activity is a direct contribution to the Initiative on Science and Technology for Sustainability (<http://sustainabilityscience.org/ists>). The meeting is funded through a grant from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation to Harvard University and was organized and hosted by USER (Unit for Social and Environmental Research) at Chiang Mai University. As such we are also expecting that the outcomes of this workshop will be a contribution to the initiative and its consortium with ICSU (International Council of Scientific Unions) and TWAS (Third World Academy of Sciences) in developing a stronger research agenda for sustainability science, and in particular, on production-consumption systems.

Draft Agenda

	Theme and Purpose	Format
1 October		
0830 - 0900	Introductions – informal introductions of participants	Early morning tea-coffee break
0900 - 1030	<p>Distancing – stretching – masking</p> <p>The expansion of international trade and investment has created huge opportunities for profits, employment and new livelihoods. It also greatly expanded the choices available to consumers. Certain goods, like strawberries, tomatoes or apples may now be available all year around in defiance of local climates, through the global reach of a handful of large transnational retail corporations. Information flows about potential markets and producers has never been greater. Has globalization through the “stretching” of commodity chains and “masking” strategies of corporations made environmental and social impacts of consumption less visible? What is their to prevent “roving bandit” strategies in the exploitation of natural resources, for example, fisheries for fish meal to feed aquaculture-reared shrimp, or timber for construction and paper? If resources are being depleted or degraded how do we as consumers know? How much does price tell us, when most externalities are not included, when many key ecosystem goods and services are obtained virtually for free and with limited responsibilities?</p>	
1030 - 1100	Break	
1100 - 1230	<p>Media – advertising – choice - consumer sovereignty myth</p> <p>A small but growing body of work on the political economy of consumption, for example, is unpacking some of the more common myths like consumer sovereignty. Consumer choice is constrained by many factors; producers don't just make what consumers want! Consider the role of advertising, the size of marketing budgets, television programming, and the media in defining what is a desirable, or normal, “household”. Corporations have a vested interest in widening the <i>aspiration gap</i> – the distance between what people currently have and what they feel they need. Could mass media be used to promote sustainable production-consumption systems? Or is this a contradiction in terms?</p>	<p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Rapporteur:</p>
1230 - 1330	Lunch	
1330 - 1500	<p>Under- and -over consumption, rich and poor, developed and developing</p> <p>How can environmental protection concerns be incorporated into poverty alleviation strategies? What role does increasing consumption have in improving well-being, and when do the returns start to “level-off”? Do efforts at improving sustainability of production-consumption systems, for example, through international health and environmental standards or trade-related measures and structural adjustment programs, really help producers in developing countries? Or do they keep them poor?</p> <p>Research on consumption and global environmental change provides some splendid opportunities for reversing the traditional teacher-student relationships of the north and south. Researchers with “south” values are very much needed to help analyze and explain the behaviour of “north” societies and suggest policies for improving well-being. Ultimately “value-transfers” may be more important for sustainability of the earth system than “technology-transfers”.</p>	<p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Rapporteur:</p>
1500 - 1530	Break	
1530 - 1700	<p>Sustainable markets – linking production and consumption</p> <p>The consumption decisions of businesses, state agencies and households all matter. What kind of market-like institutions already mediate production-consumption relations? How could they be improved to incorporate concerns with environmental sustainability and social responsibility? What assumptions about markets do schemes like those addressed in the previous sessions on labeling make, and are they realistic? What is in it for producers?</p> <p>Is the structure of markets a potential source of value change? Or are they just a reflection of value and norm changes that may take place for other reasons?</p>	<p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Rapporteur:</p>
1830 – 2000	Group Dinner at the Venue	

2 October			
0830 - 0900	Informal walk-around and tea/coffee to review posted summaries from day 1 sessions		
0900 - 1030	<p>Certification, traceability, eco-labelling and fair trade</p> <p>Can the improved information sharing and knowledge creating infrastructure that comes with globalization become part of the solution by making feedbacks more visible? Can schemes be used to reward good production-consumption relations in a commodity network? Many new institutional tools have been proposed and a few tried for specific commodities. There are many challenges of implementation including quality control and institutional interplay with the international trade regime. It could be argued that most of the success so far has been addressing concerns with health of wealthy consumers and issues of sustainability and fairness (as opposed to freeness) are still far away from mainstream.</p>		Facilitator: Rapporteur:
1030 - 1100	Break		
1100 - 1230	<p>Institutional Arrangements and Governance Mechanisms</p> <p>What are the main constraints and opportunities of different institutional arrangements encourage more sustainable production-consumption systems? How important are the mechanisms by which rules are derived and adjusted over time?</p>		Facilitator: Rapporteur:
1230 - 1330	Lunch		
1330 - 1500	<p>Role of expertise and research agendas</p> <p>Why has consumption been largely absent from most environmental change research agendas? Do the leading researchers in western society have a convenient blind-spot to keep the lifestyles of their society beyond scrutiny? What would a group of developing country researchers conclude after a 2 week field trip to a wealthy US suburb studying sustainable livelihoods?</p> <p>Despite, or because, of the concerns above we could argue that research-based knowledge can and should make a much bigger contribution to transforming production-consumption systems onto pathways that are more sustainable. Moreover, to do so effectively would benefit from critical reflection on the historical roles of science and technology expertise in production-consumption policy. How effective has research been? Have policy-relevant sustainability issues been addressed and if so how?</p>		Facilitator: Rapporteur:
1500 - 1530	Break		
1530 - 1700	<p>Diagnostics: indicators, measures of success, network structures and points of intervention and leverage</p> <p>A key problem for policy is coming up with reproducible measures of success against which efforts can be evaluated. Research is also struggling with re-conceptualizing sustainability and what it means for production-consumption systems. What diagnostic tools are there for comparing relative performance and assessing progress over time across production-consumption systems?</p>		Facilitator: Rapporteur:
1700 - 1730	<p>Workshop Conclusion</p> <p>What is the view of participants on the most desirable way to follow-up this meeting?</p>		Facilitator: Rapporteur:
1830 - 2130	Group Dinner in Chiang Mai City		
3 October			
0800 - 1300	Field Trip – Rural livelihoods	Optional Writing Time (Meeting Facilities Available)	
1500 - 2100	Field Trip – Handicrafts industry City Centre and Markets	Optional Writing Time (Meeting Facilities Available)	



MEETING LOGISTICS

Venue

The meeting will be at the Suan Bua Hotel a landscaped resort at the base of Doi Suthep – Doi Pui National Park. The organizers will book accommodation for all confirmed participants and arrange transfers between meeting venue and Chiang Mai airport. The journey takes 30 minutes. During the day and evenings transport can be arranged between the resort and Chiang Mai town for accompanying friends and spouses.

Airport transfers

For those arriving at Chiang Mai airport we have arranged transfers from the airport to the meeting venue. There will be students or staff waiting to meet you at the domestic and international arrival exits. They will be holding signs “USER Sustainable Consumption-Production Systems Workshop”. Please keep a look out for them. They will help you get into the right minivan.

Please make sure that we have your latest arrival information. If for some reason you don't meet anybody at the airport, a reliable taxis service is also available, directly near the domestic arrivals gate.

Meeting Facilities

In the main meeting room there will be a high quality LCD projection unit available to hook up to laptops. The SONY unit I have usually doesn't require re-booting between switches of computers, so it is a convenient way to update and present material. An overhead projector, flip-charts and a slide projector will also be available. If you need anything else please let us know beforehand.

We will set up all small computer room with desktop computers, printers and internet connection for use by participants. A small secretariat team will be on hand to help with ticketing and arrange optional visits to other offices and scenic locations around Chiang Mai.

The USER Office can be contacted

Tel: 66-(0)53-265-103 or 66-(0)53-854-347
Fax 66-53-265-103
Mobile 01-892-9647 (Louis Lebel); 07-1764602 (Phimphakan Lebel)
Email: llebel@loxinfo.co.th OR louis@sea-user.org OR phimphakan@sea-user.org

Financial Support and Reimbursements

We will pay for accommodation, meals and local transport of all participants during the meeting. We will also be happy to consider reasonable requests for covering an extra days accommodation for those traveling large distances. Accommodation and meals of spouses and partners or children will also be covered as long as share same room! Our staff will also be happy to help suggest and arrange programs for their stay.

If we have agreed to support your air-travel, in part or in full, and you have purchased your own tickets, then please bring receipts and bank account details so that we can reimburse you swiftly. You may also forward us this information beforehand by e-mail.

Please note that no additional per diems will be issued. Participants are expected to pay their own departure taxes and local taxi and other expenses in their own countries.

Organizing Committee

Dr. Louis Lebel	<i>Chairman</i> USER, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, louis@sea-user.org
Dr. Ooi Giok-ling	<i>Scientific Program Committee</i> Institute of Policy Studies, Singapore, glooi@nie.edu.sg
Dr. Anand Patwardhan	<i>Scientific Program Committee</i> Indian Institute of Technology, India, anand@iitb.ac.in
Dr. Jesse Manuta	Meeting logistics: program content, facilitation and rapporteurs USER, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, jesse@sea-user.org
Mrs. Phimpakan Lebel	<i>Meeting logistics: accommodation, air-tickets, secretariat</i> USER, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, phimpakan@sea-user.org

Participants

Confirmed

Anand Patwardhan, Indian Institute of Technology, India
Antonio Contreras, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, De La Salle University, Philippines
Charunee Chirangworapot, Unit for Social and Environmental Research, Chiang Mai University, Thailand
Clive Hamilton, Australia Institute, Australian National University, Australia
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Wang Rusong, RCEES- Chinese Academy of Sciences, China

Pending

Chung-Huang Huang, Department of Economics, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan ROC
Emily Matthews, World Resources Institute, USA



Frans Berkhout, Institute for Environmental Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
Jill Jaeger, Sustainability Science Consortium, Austria
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Cannot attend (some have forwarded materials)

Alex de Sherbinin, Population-Environment Research Network (PERN) Columbia University
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