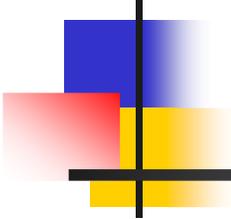


SCORAI:

Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative in the USA and Canada



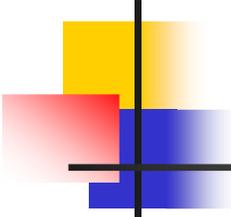
Presentation for CSD

May 5, 2011

Prof. dr. Philip J. Vergragt

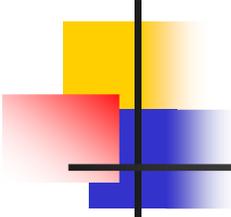
Tellus Institute, Boston, USA

Clark University, Worcester, MA, USA



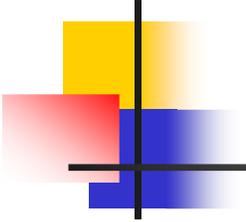
History of SCORAI 2008-...

- In 2008, a small group started to think about a SCORE!-like network in N. America.
- However, this could not be a copy of SCORE!; it should be home-grown
- We started with a series of lunch meetings at Tellus Institute, Boston.
- Tellus is a sustainability NGO “....for a Great Transition” and was both host and sponsor of those lunch meetings.
- The meetings attracted local scholars from the NE, some of them very prominent like Juliet Schor



History 2

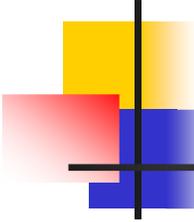
- These lunch meetings fit in Tellus lunch meeting tradition, where prominent papers are discussed, and sometimes speakers are invited.
- Soon a core group emerged which started to think about organizing an international N-American workshop
- Members included the present steering group with Maurie Cohen (NJIT), Halina Brown (Clark), Jeffrey Barber (ISF), John Stutz (Tellus), and myself.



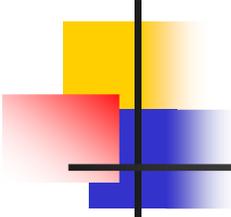
SCORAI mission

- The Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative (SCORAI) evaluates and encourages new pathways to sustainability at the interface of material consumption, human fulfillment, lifestyle satisfaction, and technological and macroeconomic change.
- The network seeks to facilitate the production and diffusion of theoretical and practical knowledge and to forge connections between scholars and communities of practice in North America in order to contribute to the policy dialogue on sustainable consumption.

Inaugural workshop October 2009



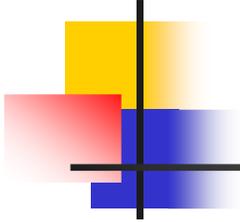
- After a call for papers to a selected group of 60-80 people, mostly academics; 15 abstracts were selected.
- The title was ***Individual Consumption and Systemic Societal Transformation***
- The workshop took place Oct 15-17, 2009, at Clark University in Worcester, MA, with 40 participants
- It was opened by Provost David Angel and the keynote speaker was the macro-economist Peter Victor from Toronto (Ca)
- Other luminaries were Bill Rees, Juliet Schor; John Gowdy, John Ehrenfeld, David Hess, Mike Maniates, Tom Princen, Rick Wilk, and others.
- There was also room for young researchers and PhD students, and a few Clark master students



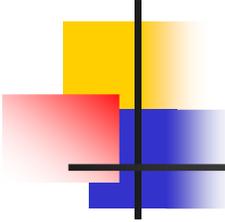
Sessions in the workshop

- Localism and Ethical Green Consumption
- Local Information, Institutional Contexts, and Intervention Strategies
- Framings and Metaphors
- Well-Being
- Poverty, Households, and Communities of Practice
- Institutional Change and Political Action



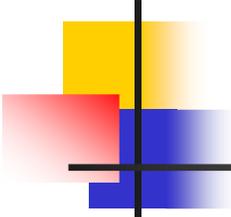


- The workshop was a great success, thanks to the participants and the careful organization
- The formula of $\frac{3}{4}$ academics and $\frac{1}{4}$ NGOs seemed to work quite well.
- However, it was organized on a shoe-string budget; support by Clark, Tellus, and ProQuest is gratefully acknowledged



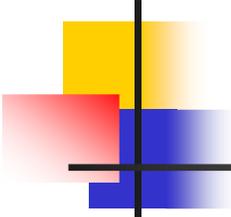
From the press release....

- A central conclusion of the workshop was that because of the scale and the urgency of the changes needed, households cannot significantly advance sustainable consumption on their own, but require systemic solutions and coordinated actions by many stakeholders, including grassroots initiatives, institutional changes, government policies, and political reforms.
- Another conclusion was that life fulfillment and well-being are not dependent on economic growth and increase in Gross National Product (GDP), but could be better achieved by shortening the working week, more leisure time and switching to less energy- and material-intensive lifestyles.



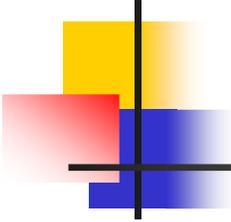
Phase 2: 2010-2011

- SCORAI created an executive board, which has bi-weekly conference calls
- SCORAI created a website (www.scorai.org), a listserv, and a newsletter.
- Our membership is growing fast and is now 250+, including members from Europe
- We created a special issue with workshop papers in Sustainability, Science, Practice, and Policy (2010)
- We have advised the NY State Energy R&D organization (NYSERDA) on its long-term energy conservation plan
- We have organized the 2nd by-invitation workshop, April 15-16, 2011, in Princeton, NJ



Workshop April 2011

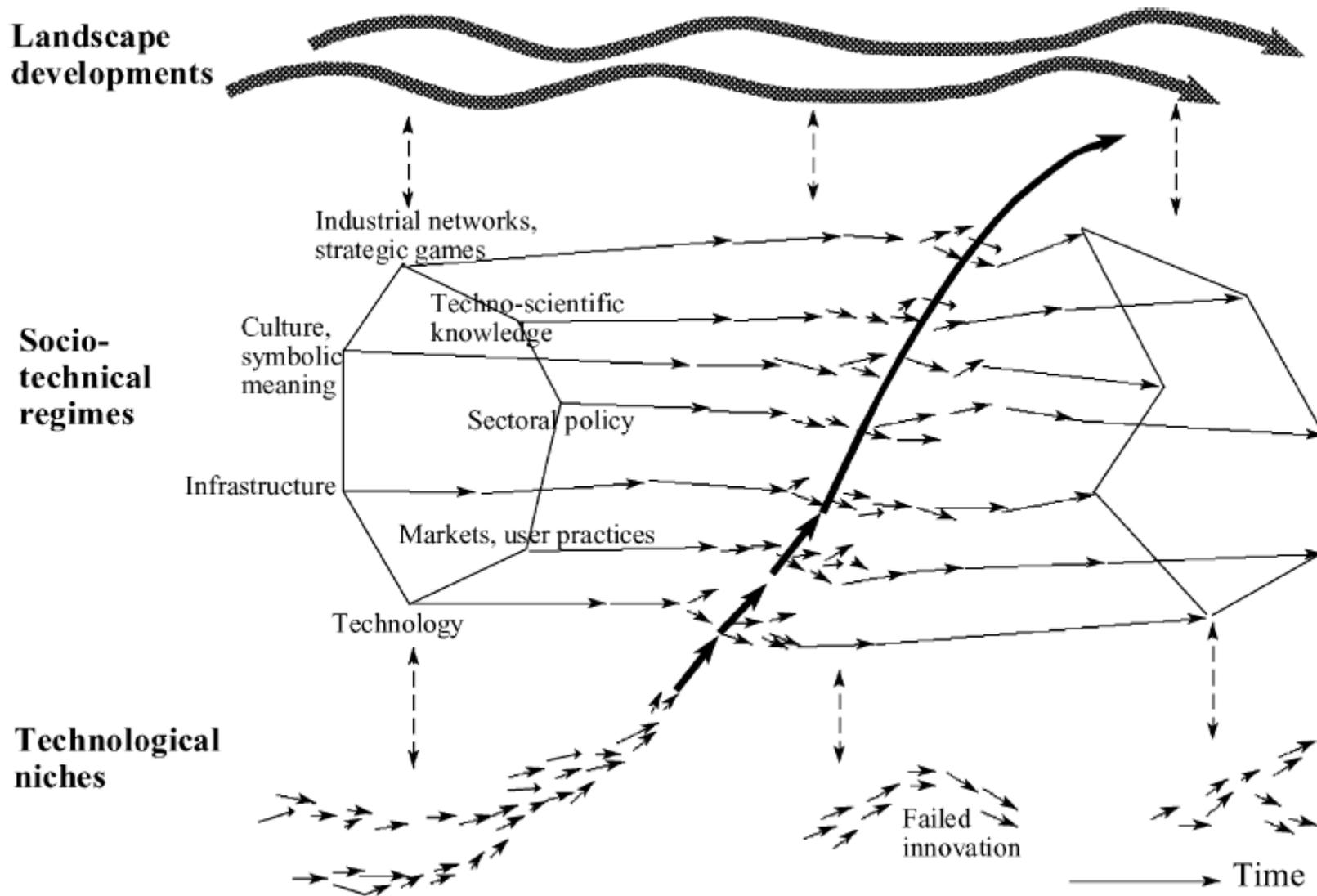
- The title of the 2nd workshop was:
“Socio-technical Transitions, Social Practices, and the New Economics: Meeting the challenges of a constrained world”
- The workshop had 40 participants; 8 from Europe; and 20 research papers
- The aim was to develop intellectual bridges between the 3 perspectives; and to help create a dialogue between researchers and practitioners/ policy makers

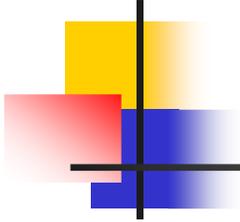


Socio-Technical Transitions

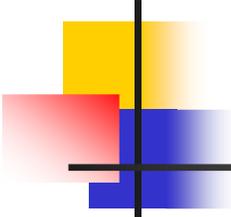
- The Multi-level Perspective (MLP) on Socio-Technical Transitions conceptualizes change as interplay between emerging niches, incumbent socio-technical regimes, and the landscape level
- Regimes are for instance transportation; housing; food and agriculture
- Landscape pressure on regimes, combined with experiments in niches, could lead to a transition to a more sustainable regime

Socio-technical transitions



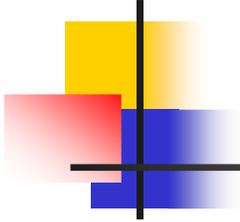


- Theories of practice take daily life as the unit of analysis
 - Practices are embedded by technologies and culture
- New economics question the economic growth paradigm, and GDP as main indicator
 - They advocate zero-material and energy growth; shortening of the working week; and shifts from personal consumption to green investments

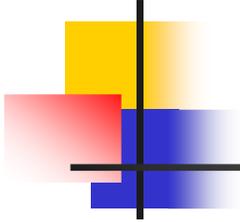


Main outcomes

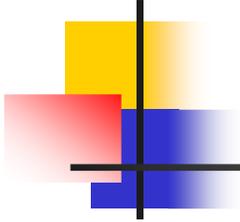
- The workshop analyzed both the entrenchment of consumption habits, and possibilities for change
- Socio-technical transitions and social practice theories see change as incremental; emerging from experimentation in niches and alternative practices
- New economics should be seen as new *political* economics: addressing both people's wants, the limitations of the ecosphere; power relationships; and an alternative set of values (including shorter working hours and self-provisioning, as well as sharing)



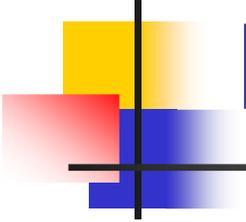
- New social movements could help experimentation in niches and possibly accelerate change
- More acceleration could be conceptualized as resulting from non-linear systemic feedbacks and tipping points
- The roles of the governments is deeply contested; governments are captured by incumbent interests; and lack capacity to view consumer beyond a rational actor model
- Thus the role of traditional economic instruments for change is limited



- Framing, communication, and education are key ingredients for change
- There is a disconnect between individual consumer's knowledge, attitude, and action
- In addition, consumers are in many ways locked-in in unsustainable lifestyles
- New social media and advertisement could help, including appealing on the emotional level

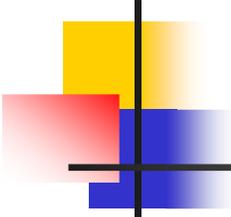


- There is still a deep divide between theories, empirical knowledge; and practice and policy
- SCORAI needs to address this divide in its next workshop
- How to device strategies for change, based on theory, addressing systemic issues
- The smart CSO paper by the WWF-UK is a good starting point



Phase 3: 2011-2012

- The workshop papers will be published in a book
- SCORAI will organize a workshop in 2012 (possibly at Clark University) to address the theory-policy gap
- SCORAI also aims to organize a workshop in Europe
- SCORAI will help to organize a GRF conference in Rio 2012



Readings

- Maurie J. Cohen, Halina Szejnwald Brown, & Philip J. Vergragt, "Individual consumption and systemic societal transformation: introduction to the special issue", Sustainability: Science, Practice, & Policy <http://sspp.proquest.com> Fall 2010 | Volume 6 | Issue 2, pp 6-12
- www.scorai.org