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Implementing more effective tools to analyze the sustainability of social-ecological systems in relation to the water-energy-food nexus



October4-8,2017 Dubrovnik, Croatia 1. WHY - the context - the EU H2020 MAGIC Project A new approach to the Nexus: a quality check on the process of production and use of scientific information for governance is essential (co-production)

2. WHAT - the theory: new concepts for the analysis of the metabolic pattern of social-ecological systems,

3. HOW – the methodology - relational analysis of the metabolic pattern of societies to study of the water, energy and food nexus

The new approach to the nexus proposed by the MAGIC project – co-production of knowledge about the nexus.

It implies:

- 1. a quality check on the pre-analytical choice of narratives; and
- 2. a quality check on the analytical choice of formal representations used for the integrated assessment

The nexus as a biophysical problem

nature climate change

PERSPECTIVE PUBLISHED ONLINE: 25 JUNE 2013 | DOI: 10.1038/NCLIMATE1789

Integrated analysis of climate change, land-use, energy and water strategies

Mark Howells^{1*}, Sebastian Hermann^{1*}, Manuel Welsch¹, Morgan Bazilian¹, Rebecka Segerström¹, Thomas Alfstad², Dolf Gielen³, Holger Rogner⁴, Guenther Fischer⁴, Harrij van Velthuizen⁴, David Wiberg⁴, Charles Young⁵, R. Alexander Roehrl⁶, Alexander Mueller⁷, Pasquale Steduto⁷ and Indoomatee Ramma⁸ ig the Nexus. Background Paper for the Bonn2011 security Nexus. Stockholm Environment Institute,

:urity Nexus. Stockholm Environment Institute,



The nexus as a scientific challenge



The nexus as a problem of governance

J Environ Stud Sci (2016) 6:192–199 DOI 10.1007/s13412-016-0378-5



Present and future of the water-energy-food nexus and the role of the community of practice

Rabi H. Mohtar¹ • Richard Lawford²





What is generating the entanglement

Handling non-equivalent descriptive domains, non-reducible models and large doses of uncertainty The NEXUS represents a challenge to the conventional system of governance because it requires considering simultaneously:

- different purposes (WHY do we need action);
- different narratives (HOW can we solve the problem), and
- different representations (WHAT is the problem and WHICH targets should be used)

When discussing the text of EU directives any decision about targets (WHAT to achieve) and problems to be solved (WHAT has to be fixed) reflects/depends on a given choice of narratives about of the issue (HOW to eliminate the problem).

But what if by eliminating a problem defined using a given narrative reflected in models referring to a given scale we will generate another Problem defined in a different narrative referring to a different scale?

Narratives as explanations of causality

Challenge #1

how to identify "the right" narrative for "the right" story teller? Event to be dealt with: THE POSSIBLE DEATH OF A PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL

NARRATIVE	Story-Teller	
EXPLANATION 1> "no oxygen supply in the brain" Space-time scale: VERY SMALL Example: EMERGENCY ROOM	Doctor in the emergency room	
	<u>رح</u>	
EXPLANATION 2> "affected by lung cance Space-time scale: SMALL Example: MEDICA'	Pharmaceutical researcher	
SIUSIO		
EXPLANATION SEFECULAI is a heavy smoker" Space-time Reserve Example: MEETING AT HEALTH MINISTRY	Tax expert	
FO		
EXPLANATION 4> "humans must die" Space-time scale: VERY LARGE Example: SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES	Philosopher	

Event to be dealt with: THE POSSIBLE DEATH OF A PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL

NARRATIVE	Story-Teller	
EXPLANATION 1> "no oxygen supply in the brain" Space-time scale: VERY SMALL Example: EMERGENCY ROOM	NGS expert	
EXPLANATION 2> "affected by lung control of the scale: SMALL Example: MED' STOR	Philosopher	
EXPLANATIC USE Ividual is a heavy smoker" Space UR I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I	Doctor in the emergency room	
EXPLANATION 4> "humans must die" Space-time scale: VERY LARGE Example: SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES	Pharmaceutical researcher	

Scale as a lens through which observe the world

Challenge #2

how to identify "the right" scale for "the right" purpose?





Perception/Representation of space = globe

You see a space which is the surface of a sphere



Federation (whole country)/State

The validity of "evidence based policy" depends on the choice of story-telling





Which one of these two cars will generate more harm to the atmosphere in terms of emissions?

Willliam Stanley Jevons The coal question - 1865



Out of production since May 2010

The Jevons' Paradox

More efficient cars will imply more consumption of gasoline!



SMART: 10,000 US\$ Fuel economy: 14 km/liter

More than 1.6 million and counting



The challenge for MAGIC: would it be possible to move from "policy based evidence" to "quantitative story-telling"?



2. WHAT - the theory: new concepts for the analysis of the metabolic pattern of social-ecological systems,

Definition of a societal-economic system

A set of functional and structural components operating in the technosphere (processes under human control) within a prescribed boundary. The components are linked through a pattern of expected interactions determining a dynamic interdependence over their identities.

The goal of a societal-economic system is that of reproducing and maintaining its identity while learning how to become more adaptable. Definition of a societal-ecological system

A set of functional and structural components operating both in the *technosphere* (societal processes) and in the *biosphere* (ecological processes) within a prescribed boundary.

The components are linked because of a pattern of expected interactions determining a dynamic interdependence over their identities.



The situation in the past







The social perception of primary sources of relevant flows **before the industrial revolution**







PRIMARY ENERGY SOURCE



The situation after the industrial revolution









after Vaclav Smil 2003 Energy at the Crossroads, The MIT press (Fig. 5.2 and Fig. 5.3)

The social perception of primary sources of relevant flows **after the industrial revolution**



PRIMARY FOOD SOURCE





The narrative about economic growth in the post-truth world



The dangerous attractor of "Ponzi Scheme Economics"!





Printing money in the USA...

Eunopole	DE O	Enc	
Europes			CL

Battles Over Bond Buying By Jana Randow | Updated Dec 4, 2015 6:48 AM EST

Q	search								dating more - International -
									theguardian
ball	opinion	culture	business	lifestyle	fashion	environment	tech	travel	\equiv browse all sections
s	banking	retail	markets	eurozone					

Quantitative easing ain't so easy to quantify

The EU bank is going for 1.1 Trillion € just to start

Global debt has increased by \$57 trillion since 2007, outpacing world GDP growth



http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/economic_studies/debt_and_not_much_deleveraging

Change in debt-to-GDP ratio,¹

2007-14, percentage points



Debt-to-GDP ratio, Q2 2014,¹ %

Why is oil below 60 US\$/barrel?



The social perception of primary sources of relevant flows **among urban elites** . . .



PRIMARY FOOD SOURCE





MIT Technology Review

HAS QUANTUM COMPUTING FINALLY ARRIVED? Upfront p24

TOMORROW'S STARTUPS WILL BE FUNDED Business Report p75

HOW

TECH TRANSFORMS MUSIC, ART, AND PROSE Reviews p87

Buzz Aldrin, Apollo 11 moonwalker, would like a word with you.

You Promised Me Mars Colonies. Instead, I Got Facebook.

We've stopped solving big problems. Meet the technologists who refuse to give up. p26





12,700 jobs

Market capitalization: 300 billion US\$

24 MUS\$ $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ 1 job

 $0.4 MUS\$ \leftrightarrow 1 job$

344,000 jobs

Market capitalization: 150 billion US\$

apitalization: 150 billion US\$

In 2015





http://www.vaclavsmil.com/wp-content/uploads/Spectrum.manuf_.pdf

3. HOW – the methodology - relational analysis of the metabolic pattern of societies to study of the water, energy and food nexus

EXAMPLE #1

A quantitative characterization of the nexus requires a different approach to quantitative analysis . . .

It is not about handling individual numbers one at the time

BUT

it is about handling relations over profiles of numbers (patterns) across scales

Illustrating the entanglement over flows: the example of the diet

3 flows considered: Energy Water Protein (kcal) (grams) (grams)

These 3 flows are entangled in an expected patterns associated with the dietary requirement of a person – a profile of quantities per day needed by an adult



Characteristics of the requirement

Illustrating the entanglement over flows in metabolic patterns: the example of the diet



These 3 flows are entangled in expected patterns associated with the typologies of food inputs in the diet – a profile of quantities per 100 grams of food type







Intensive variables measuring patterns as profiles of "quantities per 100 grams"

When preparing a diet you cannot use models looking at:

(i) the requirement and supply of energy;(ii) the requirement and supply of water; and(iii) the requirement and supply of proteins;

one at the time!

You have to study the implication of the entanglement of these flows across non-equivalent descriptions of processes referring to different scales

EXAMPLE #2

A quantitative characterization of the nexus must consider different aspects of sustainability of the metabolic pattern

FEASIBILITY – what are the external limits determined by processes outside human control (e.g. available resources)

VIABILITY – what are the internal limits determined by process under human control (e.g. affordability)

DESIRABILITY – compatibility with normative values and stability of institutions

LEVEL OF EXTERNALIZATION – how much are we exploiting the activity of other Societal-Ecological-Systems?

The nexus between water, energy, food, money and land in agricultural production in the great plains, USA, in 1930



A 33 HP animal powered harvester (controlled by 5 workers)

Integrating data across dimensions and scales: agricultural production in the great plains US in 1930

Quantities required per year by 1,000 people cultivating 2,500 ha

r-----

GRAINS (for FOOD)	400 tonnes for the diet \rightarrow	200 ha	– for grains
GRAINS (for CASH)	2,850 tonnes for the market \rightarrow	1,600 ha	– for grains
ENERGY	activity of 364 horses/mules → (required power for cultivating 2,500 ha)	700 ha	– for oats
	TOTAL	2,500 ha	- cropped land

Requirements of 1,000 people per year



The metabolic pattern of a social-ecological system describe how a society is producing and using the flows of food, water and energy required to express its functions:

In human societies this pattern is determined by different factors that can be studied only by adopting different scales and dimensions of analysis: economic analysis, social and institutional analysis, technical analysis, ecological analysis

Rather than trying to collapse such a rich characterization into a single model, it is wiser to establish relations across different levels and dimensions of analysis A quantitative characterization of the nexus requires the ability to handle **impredicativity** (chicken-egg paradoxes)

It is not about determining unique directions of causality and deterministic relations such as "A because of B" . . .

When studying complex systems self-organizing across different levels and scales it is impossible to identify a simple direction of causality: it depends on the special circumstances, the history, the relations with the context Compatibility with institutions and normative values

Is it acceptable according to our values? **DESIRABILITY**

Do we like it?

Good soil? Enough land? Appropriate climate? Enough water?

FEASIBILITY

Compatibility with processes outside human control

EXTERNAL BIOPHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS

Is the profit OK? Are the costs affordable?

Do we have the required know-how and the appropriate tecnology?

VIABILITY

Compatibility with processes under human control

INTERNAL BIOPHYSICAL ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS



Intensive farming US plains 1930

Compatibility with institutions and normative values

DESIRABILITY

40% of land used for feeding animals!!!

MAXIMIZING ECONOMIC RETURN

> 3 tonnes of grain per capita

DECREASING RETURN

ncreasing production costs

VIABILITY

Compatibility with processes Inder human control ERNAL BIOPHYSICAL AND NOMIC CONSTRAINTS

INTERNAL CONSTRAINT



Subsistence society in Nepal

Compatibility with institutions and normative values

DESIRABILITY

SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

400 kg of grain per capita

SHORTAGE OF AGRICULTURAL

< 0.2 ha of arable land p

FEASIBILITY

Compatibility with processes outside human control

EXTERNAL BIOPHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS



ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

EXTERNAL CONSTRAINT



Buddhist community

Compatibility with institutions and normative values

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

DESIRABILITY

400 of grain p.c./year

CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS



CASE #4

Hong Kong

SHORTAGE OF WATER AND E < 0.01 ha (

FEASI

Compatibility with processes outside human control

EXTERNAL BIOPHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS



Compatibility with processes under human control

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INTERNAL BIOPHYSICAL & ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

EXTERNALIZATION



ASSUMING THAT THE SUPPLY OF NEEDED INFLOWS IS AVAILABLE "BY DEFAULT"

characteristics and proper

interactions of the parts

VIABILITY

"the view from inside"

COMPATIBILITY WITH INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

PROCESSES UNDER HUMAN CONTROL

ASSUMING THAT THE NEEDED SINK CAPACITY FOR OUTFLOWS IS AVAILABLE "BY DEFAULT" Values, Taboos, Cultural Identity Path Dependence (history matters . . .)





COMPATIBILITY WITH NORMATIVE VALUES KEEPING TOGETHER SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS



EXTERNALIZATION

Domestic consumption



In relation to the missing parts of the presentation . . .

Coursera: Massive Open On-line Course (MOOC)



https://www.coursera.org/learn/sustainability-social-ecological-systems

https://www.coursera.org/learn/sustainability-social-ecological-systems



The deliverable 4.1 of MAGIC (300 pages!) provides:

- 1. A critical appraisal of narratives used right now in sustainability science;
- 2. An illustration of the analytical tool-kit for analyzing the metabolic pattern of SES;
- 3. A detailed illustration of six case studies in which the method is applied



http://www.magic-nexus.eu/documents/d41-report-nexus-securityusing-quantitative-story-telling This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No. 689669.

Moving towards Adaptive Governance In Complexity



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https://www.facebook.com/MagicNexusEu/



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