The Nexus project: a case study of scenario planning methodology applied to food system planning

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The Nexus project

Multi-stakeholder scenario planning - exploring potential impacts of climate change and future energy scarcity on food security in Northern Ireland
Nexus project aims

- To explore how global climate change and future energy availability might affect food and agriculture in Northern Ireland
- To create opportunities for collaborative policy learning and action
- To generate new learning about how to manage societal transitions
Overview of presentation

• ‘Nexus thinking’
• Nexus project description
• Scenario planning
• Findings to date: interviews & scenario planning workshop 1
‘Nexus’ thinking

• ‘Water-energy-food security nexus’

• Inter-linkages require integrated governance across sectors and scales

• Population growth as implicit driver

• Omits inequalities in distribution, access to resources & power
Nexus project schematic

- Advisory group
- Expert speaker programme
- Interviews

Scenario planning workshops

Follow-up to develop collaborative initiatives

Project report launch + ‘Open Space’ event
What does scenario planning involve?

• Analysing existing and emerging trends affecting a specific policy area or system
• Identifying a range of plausible futures
• Creating narrative descriptions of alternative future scenarios
• Testing existing or proposed strategic options within alternative scenarios
• Adapting/fortifying strategy, developing new options and contingency plans
Scenario planning workshops

• ‘Stakeholders’ = members of *issue network*

• Envisioning ideal food system + back-casting to identify strategic pathway.

• Scaling down global scenarios to create NI region scenarios:
  
  • *Extreme weather events*
  
  • *Fossil energy scarcity*

• ‘Wind-tunnel' vision & pathway within NI scenarios

• Proposals for collaborative initiatives
Interviews: initial findings

- Environmental protection + farm sector viability
- Quality of produce + environmental standards
- NI ‘Origin Green’
- Post-Brexit farm subsidy to reward environmental stewardship
- ‘Public money for public goods’

Common themes:
- Brexit
- Extreme/unseasonal weather
- Communicating climate change
- RHI
- Leadership
- Governance

Local, non-intensive food production
- Food security
- Food poverty
- Health
- Food waste
- Food Footprint

Production growth + sustainable intensification
I think there’s a movement out there of people who want to promote quality, added value, a sustainable market, but who don’t see Northern Ireland having a future as one of the big players in town…Northern Ireland, it could fit into a decent-sized field in Poland or Brazil…

…productivist culture just seems to be a race to the bottom and everybody ends up competing on price…Why would you take a beautiful region [and] make it the same as everywhere else?’
Proposed models of good practice

- DAERA’s GHG stakeholder group and Climate NI’s engagement with non-government stakeholders.
- Community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Agricultural colleges in the Netherlands
- Energy self-sufficient/exporting towns in Austria and Sweden.
- Development of ‘Right to Food’ legislation in Scotland.
- FareShare and Bia’s holistic model of addressing food poverty
Scenario planning workshop 1: Envisioning exercise

- Diversification of farming; diversification of subsidies
- Support for exemplars/models of best sustainable practice
- Reduction in intensive farming; prioritisation of environmental management
- Fair farm gate prices and farm business viability
- Sustainable Land Management Strategy supporting development of sustainable farming, not just mitigating environmental harm.
- Government policy and training provision to support transition to sustainable farming
- Stronger research base closer collaboration between DAERA, AFBI and universities.
- Broad, independent stakeholder forum bringing together NGO, academic, government, agrifood, and farming sectors.
### Workshop 1: Scenarios & NI impacts & risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extreme weather events</th>
<th>Global energy crisis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• High food &amp; feed prices</td>
<td>• Rising cost of food, 3 F’s, etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cereal growers gain; livestock &amp; dairy lose</td>
<td>• Farms struggle to harvest crops or feed livestock</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Panic buying</td>
<td>• Food shortages</td>
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<td>• Increased food poverty</td>
<td>• Social disorder or ‘Dig for Victory’ response?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social disorder or community solidarity?</td>
<td>• Shift to post-carbon, labour-intensive, mixed farming</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Shift to cereal growing &amp; mixed farming</td>
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Conclusion

- Possible shift towards greater strategic emphasis on quality of produce and environmental standards

- Scenario planning is a valuable strategic tool for policy-makers
  - in contexts of uncertainty and change
  - engaging a wide range of stakeholders
  - addressing the challenges and uncertainties posed by Brexit?
Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland