

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (21090) - ACTING LOCALLY: INTERMEDIARY ACTORS AND THE TRANSITION TO A LOWER CARBON ECONOMY

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Background and objectives

The transition to a more sustainable future is a challenge that requires action on many levels, and involves many actors. The concept of intermediary actors in sustainability transitions is well-established (Kivimaa et al, 2019) but often focused on how intermediary actors act to stimulate socio-technological change through professional organisations and industry associations that mediate between the local and the global level. In this presentation we draw on insights from multi-level governance and sustainability transitions to consider how organisations create and take on a role as intermediary actors, most actively at the local level, to facilitate change in areas such as the transition to a circular economy and climate change adaptation.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

In this presentation we draw on empirical research in the north-east of Scotland based on semi-structured interviews with representatives of environmentally-focused organisations. Taking a place-based approach, we investigate how local contexts can contribute to creating or hindering change, and show how individuals seeking to achieve a more sustainable society act within organisational settings to adopt an intermediary role for their organisation.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

We argue that intermediary actors have a vital role in the delivery of a more sustainable society, and crucially, that place- and locally-based organisations are key to this transition. We highlight how local government actors work to adopt an intermediary role at the organisational level, working as 'go-betweens' to overcome some of the barriers to action, and drawing on transdisciplinary approaches and partnerships to facilitate change.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Understanding the role that people and organisations can adopt as intermediary actors at the local level can be crucial to our ability to move to a more sustainable future. With lessons for researchers, policy and practice, our work builds existing research to provide additional insights into how intermediary actors adopt place-based approaches and adapt to their local and organisational contexts to deliver change.

Palavras-chave : sustainability, climate adaptation, circular economy, intermediaries, transitions, organisations