

Care vs. control in agri-food system transformations

Panel session at the event [Pathways to sustainability: knowledge, politics and power](#)
8 December 2021 at 13.00-15.00 UTC

Speakers: Divya Sharma, Nadia Sitas, Per Olsson, Dominic Glover, John Thompson

Agri-food systems are vulnerable to perturbations (Covid-19; climate change; Brexit). They can also adapt, but what are the limits and costs to that adaptive capacity?

STEPS researchers have explored contrasting approaches to governance: those which emphasise an ethic of care, and those which aspire to top-down control. An example is this open-access paper by [Arora, van Dyck, Sharma and Stirling](#), which refers to cases from the agri-food domain.

We invite participants to get involved before the conference, by contributing to [an online discussion board](#), where we will attempt to sort real and hypothetical cases along two axes: governance approaches (from caring to controlling); and degrees of resilience (from low to high).

Participants are encouraged to bring real-world cases or hypothetical examples and use them to explore the pros and cons of 'caring' vs. 'controlling' approaches to governing, managing and transforming agri-food systems. What are their respective implications for enhancing resilience (or resilience capacities) in response to food system shocks and stresses, and what are the wider implications for values such as democracy and inclusion?

With the help of three invited panellists, we will use the discussion board to stimulate discussion and reflection during the live session. Guiding this exercise is the question: How may resilience be achieved at scales from personal to systemic, using different kinds and mixtures of caring and controlling approaches?

The session has a twofold ambition:

- (1) to generate examples of caring vs. controlling approaches to agri-food system resilience across scales;
- (2) to problematise the care vs. control dichotomy, including its implicit value bias in favour of care and resisting control.

The [discussion board is now open](#) and will remain open until the conference ends.

Convenors: John Thompson and Dominic Glover (Institute of Development Studies / STEPS Centre)

Panel

Three panellists will contribute to the online discussion board and help to stimulate discussion in the live session.

- [Divya Sharma](#) (SPRU, University of Sussex and STEPS Centre)
- [Nadia Sitas](#) (Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University)
- [Per Olsson](#) (Stockholm Resilience Centre)