

For the RIFS Conference “Tough Conversations in Tough Times”

3 – 5 December 2025

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### *Strategic Springboards for Consumption Corridors*

Consumption corridors, which Fuchs et al. (2021) describe as “a space between minimum consumption standards that provide every individual with the ability to live a good life, and maximum consumption standards that keep individuals from consuming in quantities or ways that hurt others’ chances to do the same,” are a necessary and contentious component of any path to a better future. Necessary because of the social, ethical, and ecological violence arising from deeply asymmetrical and continuously expanding levels of consumption. And contentious because of resistance by vested interests that benefit from an economic logic of expansion and appropriation, supported by powerful narratives about the imperatives of growth and the efficacy of technological innovation.

Efforts to overcome political and social opposition to consumption corridors will need to be strategically incremental, focusing on places and ways in which small wins and shrewd policy sequencing (e.g. Meckling et al. 2017) create positive feedback loops of expanding political support and policy implementation, echoing Levin et al.’s 2012 model of “applied forward reasoning.” No preliminary reconnaissance of these possible “places and ways” – where elements of consumption corridors are already supported, accepted, or pursued – yet exists in the scientific literature. This panel is conceived as a first step toward remedying this deficiency.

Consumption corridors as currently theorized do not yet exist. But their precursors do, in the form of existing or emerging norms, participatory governance practices, specific consumption-focused policies and practices, larger institutional forms, and the like. Identifying these precursors, understanding their evolution and operation, and strategizing about appropriate interventions (research, advocacy, organizing, storytelling, etc.) to escalate their salience and power could produce potent springboards for robust corridors while dodging unnecessary political struggle.

Fuchs, D., Sahakian, M., Gumbert, T., Di Giulio, A., Maniates, M., Lorek, S., & Graf, A. (2021). *Consumption corridors: Living a good life within sustainable limits*. Routledge

Levin, K., Cashore, B., Bernstein, S., & Auld, G. (2012). Overcoming the tragedy of super wicked problems: constraining our future selves to ameliorate global climate change. *Policy sciences*, 45(2), 123-152.

Meckling, J., Sterner, T., & Wagner, G. (2017). Policy sequencing toward decarbonization. *Nature Energy*, 2(12), 918-922.