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Politicising the study of sustainable living practices

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Abstract

In studies of consumption, social theories of practice foreground the purchasing and use of resources not for intrinsic pleasure but rather in the routine accomplishment of 'normal' ways of living. In this paper we argue that a key strength of theories of practice lies in their ability to expose questions of power in the construction of normality, but that this has been largely overlooked. Since practice theories are leveraged in understanding urgent questions of climate change, we use ethnographic data of a sustainable community in England to examine the normative dimension of sustainability. Using Michel Foucault's approach to practice, we elucidate the social technologies operating in the community that govern sustainable practices in the absence of a singular cultural authority. We illustrate how shared understanding guiding normative sustainable practice was negotiated and maintained through *collective ethical work*, the paramount importance of *interpersonal harmony*, and the *continual formation of ethical subjects*.

Introduction

Spurred by concern regarding environmental degradation, pollution and the threat of catastrophic climate change, consumption scholars over the last twenty years have investigated local and global problems associated with current consumption levels. This has led to a proliferation of approaches and analyses of issues around sustainability (see Geels et al. 2015 for an overview), spanning macro-institutional, policy-driven research (e.g. Jackson 2006; Fuchs and Lorek 2005; Spaargaren 2003), the development of sustainable marketing frameworks (e.g. Gordon et al. 2011; Van Dam and Appeldoorn 1996), and micro-level socio-cultural research on anti-consumption, ethical consumption and consumer-citizenship (e.g. Kozinets,

Handelman and Lee 2010; Harrison, Newholm and Shaw 2005; Johnston 2008). Yet, conceptualising sustainable consumer behaviour remains problematic. To date, there is no fixed, universally agreed definition of sustainable practice (Geels et al. 2015; Shove and Spurling 2013) nor indeed one way of conceptualising normalised sustainable behaviours in the academy (Warde and Southerton 2012; Spaargaren 2011). In the absence of consensus then, it appears to us that it is more useful and desirable to explain this fluidity – of what comes to count as 'sustainable' in practice and what does not – rather than seeking ways to theorise sustainability in order to arrive at an abstract and general definition. Indeed, practice-focused studies into sustainable behaviours have brought into question the likelihood, and the value, of arriving at a universal definition of sustainable practices (e.g. Hand and Shove 2007; Shove 2003; Strengers 2011; Hand, Shove and Southerton 2005).

One of the key contributions of these works, and practice studies in general, has been to show the persistently dynamic status of the object-in-use and assembling of constitutive elements (including materials, meanings and skills) by individual practitioners, so that practices appear only precariously stable. As such, most research has tended to cohere on a tripartite heuristic of material objects/technology, practical know-how/skills, and socially sanctioned objectives/meanings/images assembled by individual practitioners (Reckwitz 2002; Shove, Pantzar and Watson 2012). However, an unintended consequence of this emphasis has been that we only have an opaque understanding of the normative dimension of practices that underwrite both socially sanctioned objectives and shared knowledge that make up what are deemed as appropriate ways of living sustainably. This has not gone unnoticed by sociologist Elizabeth Shove, who has more recently reiterated her call for analysis on the construction of normality in practices as central to understanding transitions in ways of living necessary to mitigate and adapt to the threats of climate change (Shove and Spurling 2013: 2). Shove and colleagues also recognise that serious consideration of related questions of power – such as normative judgements and values, and who is to 'manage' such transitions (Shove and Walker 2007: 764) – have tended to be neglected in practice-theoretical accounts that are easily 'cut short' (Shove and Spurling 2013: 10) in studies of the immediacies of situated performance (doing cooking, doing heating etc.). Furthermore, whilst norms, shared understanding and standards of performance are widely seen to epitomise those theories associated with the 'practice turn' (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005; Shove 2003), current

applications to empirical contexts have tended to neglect detailed examination of the processes that lie behind their creation (Warde 2014). These shortcomings chime with other theoretical criticisms that practice theories are politically conservative (Rouse 2001), and may be ill equipped to deal with issues of power and political economy (Sayer 2013, 176).

In this paper, we politicise the study of sustainable living practices by exposing how relations of power shape normative practices among members of a small intentional community in England. We do this by using Michel Foucault's related concepts of regimes of practice and dispositives to put forth a situated account of how power-knowledge governs the various ways in which different elements, such as people, knowledge, discourses, rules, material artefacts and competencies, come together in practices. Theoretically and methodologically, we add to the study of consumer practices by offering a localised account of how certain knowledges prevail over others in governing everyday practice, and the dispositives – the ensemble of discursive and non-discursive constituents that enhance and maintain the exercise of power - through which they are implemented. Where previous work has shown how different elements in practice - objects, doings and meanings - are held together by virtue of its teleoaffective structure (Arsel and Bean 2013; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould,2009; Schatzki 1996, 2001), we draw attention to the power-infused processes that create and maintain the shared understandings needed to govern these alignments. In doing this we extend the current focus on the regulation of practices in situations where a singular source of cultural authority dominates (e.g. Arsel and Bean 2013; Schau et al.2009) by providing an account of the means by which shared understandings, that link heterogeneous elements in practices, emerge and are negotiated in distributed and egalitarian ways.

By drawing attention to how normativity is constructed and sought within a community, rather than framing sustainable practices and concomitant identity work primarily as forms of resistance to conventional market-based consumption, we also make a unique contribution to consumer research on sustainable communities. In addition, we also enrich critical marketing and consumer research that uses Foucault's theoretics. Thus far, attention has been placed on the formation of consumer subjectivity (Karababa and Ger 2011; Giesler and Veresiu 2014), their practices (Arsel and Bean 2013), their government (Beckett 2012; Beckett and Nayak 2008; Bokek-Cohen 2016) and their resistance towards power-regimes to which they are

subject (e.g. Shankar, Cherrier, and Canniford 2006; Denegri-Knott 2004; Yngfalk 2015). More specifically, we extend Arsel and Bean's (2013) use of Foucault's regime of practice by drawing attention to the power relations that operate through the dispositives that hold different elements of practice together.

In the following sections we briefly review relevant studies of sustainable communities in consumer research. We then outline contemporary definitions of practice and delineate Foucault's approach to practice which, whilst not incompatible with other approaches available in the many papers written by Shove and colleagues, more overtly permits the analysis of power. We start our analysis by considering the socio-historic aspects of the empirical context in order to consider the conditions of historical possibilities that grant the permission to think about sustainability in particular ways. We then draw from our ethnographic empirical inquiry to examine how shared understandings come to take precedence in the community and in what ways 'correct' sustainable practice is maintained. In doing so, we seek to devote attention to the dispositives that have a determining effect on the regimes of practice of sustainability being enacted in the community.

Practising sustainability

In consumer research, sustainable communities have tended to be conceptualised as sites of resistance to dominant market or consumerist ideologies. Inspired by De Certeau (1984), Bekin, Carrigan and Szmigin (2005, 415) detail the micro-level 'simplifier strategies' in New Consumption Communities - such as buying second hand goods, recycling products, avoiding processed or non-organic food, growing their own fruit and vegetables and sharing one car - that allow members to restructure their production systems so as to redefine their position in the marketplace. Similarly, Moisander and Pesonen (2002, 337) draw on Foucault's technologies of the self to show how life on a Finnish eco-commune can be seen as a refusal to accept a received consumer subjectivity that may be ordinarily involved in life in 'western materialistic consumption culture'. More recently, Casey, Lichrou and O'Malley (2016, 3) have illustrated the constant reflexivity and self-appraisal of members of an Irish eco-village as they individually and collectively build and rebuild a coherent sense of identity through enactment of an 'abstract eco-discourse of "sustainability"' in everyday life.

By interpreting sustainable consumption communities as characterised by reflexive identity work, these studies reveal how community living is believed to offer the means and scope for individuals to forge a self as a moral agent in a collective, even though negotiation of this 'ethical self' can be problematic if personal and community goals are not aligned (Moraes, Szmigin and Carrigan 2010). However, an emphasis on the individual consumer in understanding these communities has somewhat underplayed matters of materiality, institutional social relations and the processes that lie behind the creation of shared understandings that guide sustainable practice (Warde 2014). In contrast, practice theoretical approaches emphasise how a sense of shared understanding or knowledge outlines an end goal for a practice; there is a normative, preferred way of cooking, gardening, motoring and do-it-yourself (DIY) for example that defines how a practice *should* be carried out. Shared knowledge or understanding of how to be a good parent or a responsible citizen as in Schatkzi's (1996, 2001) concept of teleoaffective structure, serves to govern the practice itself. This is often straightforward for practices in which there may be documents, rules and guides delimiting a recognisable entity (Shove and Spurling 2013). Others are more ambiguous or complicated, as in Warde's (2013: 18) 'compound practice' of eating. It is clear at this point that in this conceptualisation, sustainable 'practice' actually constitutes a bundle of potentially highly complex discrete practices (eating, moving/transport, cooking, growing vegetables, heating, cooling etc.) that may or may not share a common end goal and may or may not be normalised. Indeed, Barr, Gilg and Shaw (2011: 1228) illustrate how contestation of different knowledges (about climate change for example) poses a formidable challenge to individuals, who must also then consider the implications of new and contested knowledges in adopting 'appropriate' practice.

A normative model of practice

Although power has received little explicit attention in empirical studies of consumer practices following the practice turn (Schatzki et al. 2001), there has been growing attention to issues of inequality, injustice, agency and political agendas in theoretical debate on contemporary applications. Sayer (2013, 170) argues that practice theories, in reducing individuals to mere carriers of practices that unthinkingly reproduce norms, fail to adequately conceptualise individuals' 'dynamic, normative or evaluative relation to practices', resulting (ironically) in de-normativizing and de-

politicizing their conduct. Whilst Sayer makes the case for bringing a political economy perspective of power relations into practice-theoretical approaches, Walker (2013) recognises the bias towards the analysis of successful and skilled accomplishment of social practices rather than the failure to perform them, as in the reproduction of poverty, social inequality and injustice. Walker highlights how variety and differential (uneven) patterns in the performance of practices tend to be missed when recruitment to a hobby for example, is presented as uncontentious, as if rules, norms and material/physical requirements do not delimit who may participate.

This does not mean the political dimension of normativity is unaccounted. Normalisation in Hand and Shove's (2007) study of freezing practices appears as a fractious, tenuous ongoing achievement requiring iterative integration of material, skills and discourses. Such integration, however, is subject to a particular idiom of acceptability that establishes a parameter or standard for carrying out a practice (Warde 2008). Such idiom, as Schatzki (2002, 80) has shown, is inflected by a practice's teleoaffective structure - its 'range of normativized and hierarchically ordered ends, projects and tasks, to varying degrees allied with normativized emotions and even mood'. Such structure provides an impetus to performing practices by aligning end-goals, like being a nurturing mother or living sustainably, to projects and tasks (see Hand and Shove 2007), but also by providing an internal logic or normativity enabling what *ought to be done*. Normativity incorporates, as Schatzki (1996) highlights, both what is correct and what is acceptable, and is sustained in social life through sanctions and incentives that make some ways of doing easier to perform.

Normative practice is thus produced through the ongoing regulation of consumption acts enabled by a teleoaffective structure that orders objects, meanings and doings. Here it is often a central or singular point of cultural authority, like an influential blog (Arsel and Bean 2013) or brand (Schau, Muniz and Arnould 2009) that generates and disseminates a shared understanding, whether it is design aesthetic, or a brand's values, norms and mythologies, that determine how elements should come together in practice. For example, the kind of understanding that constitutes the normal, preferred way of incorporating a 'soft modernist' aesthetic of home decoration is propagated by the website Apartment Therapy studied by Arsel and Bean (2013) that provides an essential blueprint of action, or script to guide how objects are to be handled. A shared understanding is described as acquired via

continuous engagement with the advice generated by cultural authority figures. What is less known is how that understanding is arrived at and the various other ways, besides that of following expert advice, through which it comes to regulate or govern practices.

Here a Foucauldian analytic of power can express the processes through which norms regulating practice emerge and become sedimented, as well as the range of technologies of power (e.g. correction, imitation, punishment, reward, ethics, etc.) that affect the normative significance of other actions (Rouse 2007). It enables us to go beyond the current acknowledgement that 'the exercise of power in the shaping of definitions of justifiable conduct [is important]' (Warde 2005, 140) to show how what is to count as normative practice is formed and dispensed within a specific context. Foucault explained the co-dependence between knowledge and 'proper' ways of thinking and doing as a function of power: 'there can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association' adding that 'we are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth' (Foucault 1980, 93). At the heart of this is the interface between power and knowledge, establishing a truth that structures the field of action for a free agent and what is to count as normal (Foucault 1982). The norm itself is entwined to broader fields of truth production: it is derived from knowledge pronouncing truths about human behaviour, namely social sciences like medicine, economics, social sciences, law, psychology and psychiatry. Normality inscribed in these knowledge systems operates in a totalizing but decentralised or capillary way across society, in schools, prisons, politics, medicine, family, law, religion, entertainment, the media, and communities like the one we study here.

This understanding of power means we should view practices as political products, bound to their own historical milieu and legitimated within domains of normality. This can be done by unearthing the conditions that made the production of knowledge and their accompanying artefacts possible and by considering the whole range of social technologies of power that are brought to act upon individuals to produce a certain type of normative practice. It is also about understanding the ethical work of self governance (Foucault 1984) carried out by individuals who recognize and interpret themselves against a given normative ideal. As Foucault (1994/1982,

146) explains through technologies of the self, people, with the help of others, can 'effect a number of operations over their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being so as to transform themselves'. From this perspective, an ostensibly self-sufficient community can itself appear as a contemporary form of 'prison' in which residents and volunteers police each other, maintaining their own 'imprisonment' through the internalisation of correct behaviour and subsequent ethical pursuit of taking care of oneself (Foucault 1984).[1]

Below we use two of Foucault's concepts that have not featured prominently in previous consumer research, *regimes of practice* and the *dispositive.* The dispositive – as in the verb to dispose or incline towards – serves as a useful tool in enabling us to bring into sharper focus those discursive and non-discursive elements that interrelate to produce a certain kind of subject with correlative practices. At present, consumer research offers only a dim appreciation of the political constitution of practices rather than questioning why they come together in certain arrangements.We remedy this by borrowing Foucault's concept of the dispositive – which has determining effects on the creative programmes of conduct Foucault terms regimes of practice - to help us illuminate *why* certain elements in practice come together in the way they do. Where the teleoaffective structure helps to account for how practices *ought* to be carried out, our approach to dispositives and regimes of practices enables us to question how this 'ought' attains its preferential status and how it is implemented. We therefore seek to account for how shared understandings are formed and the range of connected social technologies of power deployed to sediment normative alignments between meanings, objects and doing in practice.

Regimes of practice and the dispositive

Foucault defines regimes of practices as programmes of conduct through which veridiction (what can be known) and jurisdiction (what can be done) are implemented and thus exert power on individuals (Foucault, 2000). In a roundtable discussion published as 'Questions of Method' (2000), Foucault states the focus of his work at that time was to analyse practices. To understand what is punished and why, Foucault asked how does one punish, and thus historicised and analysed the practice of

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[1] With thanks to two of our reviewers for this apposite observation.

imprisonment, with the aim of:

> 'grasping the conditions which make these [practices] acceptable at a given moment; the hypothesis being that these types of practice…possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and "reason". It is a question of analyzing a "regime of practices" - *practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done*, rules imposed and reasons given…I was aiming to…show how this way of doing things…was capable of being accepted…[as] altogether natural, self-evident and indispensable' (Foucault 2000, 75, emphasis added)

By examining the interplay between a code which rules ways of doing and classifying things (i.e. rules about what is 'sustainable' or not), and the discourses which provide the rationale for these ways of doing (e.g. the combustion of fossil fuels is causing global temperatures to rise), 'singular ensembles of practices [are made] graspable as different regimes of jurisdiction and veridiction' (79). So on one hand there is the code that regulates discipline and on the other, the discourse or knowledge needed to help justify it. Regimes of practices are thus creative; discipline and training produce new gestures, actions, habits and skills, and this then produces new kinds of people, certain subjectivities. Moreover, the individual actively governs him or herself to this moral authority, engaging in self-forming and self-disciplining activities - technologies of the self (Foucault [1976] 1998) - that constitute an autonomous ethical agent.

Regimes of practices allow us to bring to the fore the various dispositives deployed to shape and govern what is to count as the correct way of living sustainably. As of late Foucault's use of the term dispositive has begun to gain traction as an analytical concept to understand the range of social technologies that govern how we relate to each other. Within organizational studies (e.g. Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer and Thaning 2016; Collier 2009; Dillon 2007; Villadsen 2008), in relation to studies of governmentality (Braun 2014) and pastoral power (Waring and Latif 2017), and more broadly in social research (e.g. Agamben 2009; Bussolini 2010), the concept has been discussed as a crucial component comparable to Foucault's better known concepts such as power/knowledge, governnmentality and technologies of the self. Its key appeal is that, to cite Raffsnøe et al. (2016, 274), it

allows us to 'lay bare a social formation and transformation of the conditions for human agency, which have a determinate impact on how we think, feel, act, and imagine our future without determining what we do completely'. This makes possible a more politically-minded examination of the conditions under which shared understandings (of what constitutes how practices should be carried out) can be apprehended and also the various connected social technologies (different dispositives) through which the governing of practices takes place. Foucault (2003, 194-195) defines a dispositive as a:

> 'heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions which are mobilized to produce and maintain power — in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus [dispositive]. The apparatus itself is the network that can be established between these elements … By the term 'apparatus' I mean a kind of formation, so to speak, that at a given historical moment has as its major function the response to an urgency. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function'.

In clarifying the potential value of dispositive, Raffnsøe et al. (2017) retrace the utilisation of the term in Foucault's lectures and key works to distil five important characteristics to help attain some definitional precision. First, dispositive refers to an ensemble of different elements, both discursive and non-discursive, situated within an arrangement. Second, the notion also and at the same time refers to 'the network [*réseau*] that can be established between these elements' (Foucault 1977b cited Raffnsøe et al. 2017, 10). The set of connections between these elements reflects Foucault's primary interest in the ways the elements interrelate; his use of dispositive seeks to capture something relational rather than a substantial 'thing'. Third, the dispositive refers to the specific nature of the connection between elements, whilst noting that these elements may alter and distribute new effects within social reality. Fourth, abstractions or reinterpretations of how a dispositive functions is referred to by Foucault as the 'diagramme' of a dispositive, a mapping of an ordered formation of components that can be transposed to other situations (e.g. the panopticon). Lastly, the relations between elements in the dispositive support, and are supported by regimes of practice (Foucault 1977, 1980). The point of analysing dispositives is to

account for how objects, practices, events and experiences that are usually taken for granted or taken as pure physical realities are actually constructed. It is through, and from, a connection of practices that the dispositive has real effects for social reality. Because the dispositive emerges through a range of interactions it is always in an ongoing state of emergence; they are always-immanent structures that are in constant reorganisation and alignment (Rouse 2006). New levels of normativity evolve from 'our ways of interacting, while simultaneously effecting this interaction' (Raffsnøe et al. 2016, 4).

Drawing on Foucault's Collège de France lectures (2004a, 2007) in which he analyses history as a history of dispositives, Raffnsøe et al. (2016) reconstruct three particularly important prototypical dispositives as designated by Foucault - law, discipline and security - which we apply here to afford greater analytical precision to our examination of power in sustainable practice. The *legal* dispositive attempts to establish sharp differentiation between the forbidden and the permitted (the normative order), supported by punishments and codifying unwanted acts for all legal subjects. Analytical constituents of this dispositive include for example law, internment, representation, public punishment and confinement of madness. The most famous due to Foucault's (1977) historical account of the prison, the *disciplinary* dispositive does lay down a binary order but exists to prevent unwanted acts and produce wanted acts, moulding individual bodies to act in the desired manner. Here the heterogeneous ensemble includes elements such as asylums, crime rates, educative imprisonment, timetabling of activity, examination, military parade, pedagogy, surveillance, schools and workshops (Foucault 1977). Foucault describes how the workshop, the school, the monastery and the army 'were subject to a whole micro-penalty of time (absences, interruptions of task) of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal) of behaviour (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence) of the body (incorrect attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness) of sexuality (impurity, decency)' (Foucault 1977, 178). The point of all this discipline was to optimise forces and aptitudes in subjects in order to meet predetermined goals and ends to extract value, and to do so efficiently. Lastly, dispositives of *security* aim to facilitate the self-regulation of a population, exercising power through facilitation to normalize conduct rather than removing the unwanted. Foucault demonstrated this dispositive with reference to neo-liberalism, technologies of self, statistics, economic imperialism and pastoral power.

It is therefore imperative, as we do in this paper, to study, as Foucault (1994, 318) urges us, 'the devices and techniques that are used in different institutional contexts to act upon the behaviour of individuals taken separately or in groups, to shape, direct and modify their behaviour'. Regimes of practice therefore, is not only a useful conceptual category as Arsel and Bean (2013) show because it draws our attention to how elements in practice are held together, but perhaps most notably, because it integrates the role of power in producing the shared understanding needed to enact preferred alignments at a methodological level. It requires us to examine the interplay between *jurisdiction*, which rules ways of doing sustainability and classifying what is sustainable or not, and *veridiction*, the discourses which provide the rationale for these ways of doing. In order to fully politicise the study of practices, we must then also study *what is done* to produce those effects, how linkages between various heterogeneous elements are themselves formed. We do this by borrowing Foucault's concept of dispositive to help us better understand why and how certain elements in practice come together and to better capture the range of social technologies that shape relationships between objects, meanings and doings in practice.

Methods

Following an interpretive practice approach which draws upon the foundations of ethnomethodology and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Holstein and Gubrium 2005), we conducted a year long study of a small intentional community in the south of England from October 2010 to October 2011. The advantage of interpretive practice is that it engages both how people construct their experiences and the configurations of meaning and institutional life that shape their apprehension and constitution of reality (Gubrium and Holstein 2000). Pragmatically, this required us to first conduct a historical analysis to examine the socio-historic context of the site's emergence and to consider the institutional discourses on sustainable living operating in the community, which involved familiarization with the community's documentation and monitoring of their website, including online articles and blog entries over the duration of the study. Second, and following an initial site visit to secure access, we joined the community for four days of ethnographic observation during February 2011, where we observed everyday dealings, audio-recorded 360 minutes from semi-structured interviews with eight individuals at the community which were later transcribed

verbatim, and engaged in shorter field interviews with eight community members, three tenants and five volunteers which were detailed in a field diary. We collated written material from the community's 'Common Code' that outlined the community aims and ethos, took photographs to capture daily routines and architectural forms for illustrative purposes, and recorded observations and descriptions of behaviours and autoethnographic field notes. Analysis began by using a 'back and forth' process to relate part of the text (individual spoken and physical actions) to the whole (structural elements and socio-history of the institution) (de Coverly et al. 2008; Holstein and Gubrium 2005). We adopted an analytic attitude through employing Moisander and Valtonen's (2006, 115) interpretive tools by focusing upon norms and we acknowledged Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto's (2009, 387-388) 'cultural talk' approach to interpretive analysis. This views the interview as a text where 'social practices, visibilities, institutional structures, flows of knowledge as well as specific forms of power' (Moisander et al. 2009, 10) are available through linguistic structures and modes of representation. We gained written permission from the community to publish work resulting from our research. The tenants, members and volunteers have been given pseudonyms.

Socio-historical context

The main building of the community was built in the 19th century as a rectory in the south of England. According to available institutional records, the rectory was transformed into a co-educational boarding school in the early 1940s by two pioneering educationalists. The couple promoted co-education, practical skills and personal freedom, and the ambition of the school was to let the children learn for themselves (online community documents). The community registered as a charity in the 1960s and these educational ideals are continued today within the Steiner-style kindergarten.

In the 1980s, the school closed and a few teachers took it on as a centre for sustainable education. In the same year, the building and associated land became an intentional egalitarian community where members would run the charity together as a centre of sustainable education in return for accommodation and food. The running of the community is overseen by a board of Trustees. Its status as an intentional community coincided with a period where the notion of intentional communities began to gain traction in the UK (Shenker 1986). At the time of our fieldwork, it was

not only the members' home but also their full-time job, raising funds through numerous educational courses (e.g. permaculture design, eco-building, sustainable land use, bee keeping), bed and breakfast accommodation, conferences and gatherings. In addition to the full-time members or 'residents', the community also consists of tenants and volunteers: tenants pay rent, usually in the form of skills or food and do not involve themselves in the running of the community, whilst volunteers live and work only for a week at a time. The residential community is vegetarian and avidly supports local suppliers through a co-operative system for those items not produced on their own farm.   Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a detailed socio-historic contextualization of sustainable communities, it is useful to consider some of the cultural narratives, popular mythologies and historical contingencies that have allowed intentional communities to develop: in Foucauldian terms (Foucault [1972] 2002, 1984, 2000), the conditions of possibility. Notions of simplicity and simple living that were both implicit and discursively expressed at our research site appear in the beliefs and daily practices of the English Quakers and Puritans of the 16th and 17th Centuries (Shi 1985; Rudmin and Kilbourne 1996). The egalitarian principles of groups of people opposed to the privatization of land such as the Diggers (Duncombe 2002; Fairlie 2009), and later, more widespread critical reactions to the material productivity of the industrial revolution typified in texts such as Henry David Thoreau's 'Walden' ([1854] 2002), also offer the ideological basis for practices of sharing and simplicity in daily life. In the 21st Century, the notion of simple living tends to be less about religious conformity and rather more attractive in its potential as an alternative way of life to that stereotypically suffered by the stressed-out, consumption-driven and time-impoverished workaholic (McDonald et al. 2006; Thomas 2008). In this way, the Romantic response to the modern machine age and associated ideals of utopian escape from its 'inauthenticity' also ground knowledge and discourses of simple living (Arnould 2007).

The Second World War brought the necessity of harsh rationing in the UK, encouraging men and women to grow their own food and reuse old clothing through the Dig for Victory and Make Do and Mend propaganda issued by the British government, a philosophy that has resurfaced in the last few years of contemporary economic recession (see John Lewis Partnership, 2009). The late 1960s saw the beginnings of a heightened environmental sensitivity in the Western world (Connolly

and Prothero 2008), arguably penetrating public awareness in developed countries after Rachel Carson's ([1962] 2000) *Silent Spring* and the spectacular images of 'Spaceship Earth' (Boulding 1966; Ward 1968) produced by the moon landings. The 1972 UN conference of the human environment is often credited with the concept of 'sustainable development', whilst E.F. Schumacher brought to light the damaging consequences of mass production and promoted 'production from local resources for local needs [as] the most rational way' (Schumacher 1973, 59). The Brundtland Report in 1987, followed by the 1992 Rio Summit awarded political legitimacy to sustainability (Mebratu 1998), installed the term 'sustainable consumption' in international policy lexicon (Seyfang 2005), and opened the way for ideas of voluntary simplicity, 'slow' food, food miles, carbon footprints and peak oil to take hold (see Alexander and Ussher 2012). Consumption came to be seen as a main cause of global environmental change along with production and population (Hobson 2002), and concomitant waste disposal practices (see Tadajewski and Hamilton 2014). More recently, consumer practices of reusing, recycling, crafting one's own goods and buying locally have become fashionable in the mainstream whilst various complaints about consumer culture and commercialism constitute a prominent contemporary discourse of moral condemnation (Cross 2000; Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010). These cultural narratives offer the ideological basis for many of the practices we observed in the community, as well as allowing such an institution to emerge and continue.

Normative practices of sustainability as collective ethical work
The shaping of normative sustainable practice within the community is best described as an ongoing endeavour, produced collectively on an ad hoc and continual basis to deal with the challenges that emerged in carrying out community projects. This amounted to collective ethical work. Unlike other sustainable communities, there was no 'ecological charter' (Casey et al. 2014, 832) that set out the sustainable practices, nor restrictions on resource usage with which members should comply. There were, however, constituents of legal and disciplinarian dispositives codified in the 'Common Code' used by members and by Trustees who 'are empowered to remove or suspend any appointment if they behave in ways that go against the community' (field notes), for example if members owned pets, did not contribute in the running of the community or failed to exhibit a range of wanted behaviours such as growing and

making rather than buying, avoiding wastage of resources and sharing of skills and resources (Common Code and community website). Other interrelated elements in the legal dispositive pertained to local authority planning permission, which needed to be gained to carry out maintenance to the buildings, or conditions placed by charities and other funding bodies they relied on to fund the installation of solar panels (field notes).

The normalization of desirable practices like the sharing of skills and resources, avoiding wastage, and the use of rudimentary tools rather than electrical appliances, were all instilled via a range of interconnected elements that constituted disciplinarian and security dispositives. Besides the threat of expulsion or suspension as an exercise of repressive power, we found plentiful modulations of power that were more normalizing in intent and thereby more productive, formative and facilitating. Disciplinarian dispositives were mainly pedagogical in nature, and were observable in how community members came to acquire the necessary knowledge and skill to make their own cheese, mend fences, build objects from scratch, repair turbines or deal with damp problems. In these instances we observed how a Steiner pedagogy, emphasizing the development of social skills and learning by doing, was in evidence in how community members dealt with emerging projects and learnt from each other. The ultimate aim of these was not to extract utility from docile bodies as in the factories and prisons described by Foucault (1977), but rather to enforce a set of practices that reduce waste. This made practices more complex and time consuming, in that they required a complex integration of objects, skills and meanings in ingenious and energy efficient ways.

Since contingencies were varied, each activity could not necessarily be judged easily by existing guidelines, rules or general understandings, making the structuring of normative practices of sustainability a constant, collective achievement, not guided by a well-defined shared understanding or single cultural authority. Instead, we found a panoply of understandings of sustainable living and how it could be best practiced, as well as constant processes of elicitation and review undertaken in the normalization of such practices. The community did have an overriding goal 'to set an example' of sustainability (Common Code and website). This discourse appeared to be ingrained in how members conducted all aspects of daily life; dispositives of security operated to facilitate constant reflection and governing of oneself and others. Setting an example of sustainability meant members self-regulated to be as self-sufficient in

terms of consumption as possible. Community member Sam explained, 'What we're trying to do here is kind of be an example of how you can live sustainably...trying to create more renewable energy resources and get off grid. That's our main aim'.

To achieve this key principle of being an exemplar of sustainable living, we observed that community members needed to adhere to three fundamental norms. Firstly, community members should be as self-sufficient as possible, using resources they have grown, reared or generated themselves through the harnessing of renewable energy. Ellie explained that it is important to 'be able to do as much as you can for yourself and relying as little as possible on shops'. Second, it was essential that all community members purchase only certain products; any commodities have 'got to be organic' and 'fair trade' (Paul) but 'using natural, local materials as much as possible' (Ellie). Finally, it is normative for community members to share goods and skills, minimize resource-use (such as water, gas and electricity) and eliminate landfill waste. For example, Nick describes how all broken items come to his workshop where he aims to re-use them, and has transformed a milk churn into a wood burner, a visible reminder of this obligation. Leftovers from dinner would be saved for another meal or scraped into painted buckets labelled 'Pigs' or 'Chickens' to ensure that waste was re-used.

Despite these norms, practices of sustainability at the community were not accepted as a natural state of normality but conditional in an ongoing process of deciding upon normativity, which purposefully incorporated the participation of community members in its determination. We saw a range of differing ideas as to what constitutes sustainable practices and a variety of cultural narratives that provided implicit justification, such as the evil of corporations, the damaging inauthenticity of modern power tools, and the detrimental effects of over-protective health and safety regulation (blamed for stripping traditional craft skills from school curricula). For example, the Wal-Mart owned British supermarket chain ASDA was singled out as a 'nasty big company' (Oliver, interview), whilst locally sourced wood was considered far more sustainable than buying from B&Q (a multinational DIY retailer) 'or other such rubbish' (Nick, field notes), and it was considered 'disappointing' that as academics, we were also involved in the study and teaching of marketing. However, competing discourses resulted in an uncertain philosophy in the community which was exacerbated by the range of competencies and contingencies needed to enact the

myriad of practices involved in 'getting off grid', and the fatigue of repetitive daily chores such as chopping wood that 'bog us down' (Oliver).

Interpersonal harmony guides sustainable practices

Dispositives of law, discipline and security operated in interconnected ways to achieve harmony within the community, and we saw how, in turn, interpersonal harmony also shaped the formation and maintenance of what was to count as sustainable practice. For example, a normative order was codified in the Common Code in clearly stating that everybody 'must take a full rota or make alternative arrangements if unable' to help in running the community, from working in the kitchen and the office, maintaining the grounds, to cleaning and helping in the school onsite. Likewise, dispositives of discipline such as timetables and scheduled meetings were a fundamental aspect of life in the community, with meetings as a mechanism through which the veridiction effects of regimes of practice were confronted.

The 'daily attunement' meetings, 'weekly meetings', 'fortnightly members' meeting', 'monthly community meetings' and 'visionary meetings' were used to prescribe and produce desired activities and prevent unwanted acts more attentively. We saw how the daily timetable of work (8:30am-6pm) and a range of scheduled meetings operated to control behaviour and minimise dispute through examination, discussion and consensus regarding members' activities. Each meeting reflected different structural purposes. For example all residents were to attend 'daily attunement' at 8:30am (9:30am on Sundays) in order to determine work and play plans for the day, the sharing of the rota, and the payment of pocket money and fees to use the shared vehicle, whilst 'weekly meetings' provided a platform for regulatory decisions and establishing 'how we can be more sustainable and what we're doing wrong' (Harriet). The community worked to achieve its status as an exemplar of sustainable living on a consensual basis, achieved in these meetings. For example, each member had a specific day to lead the half-hour daily attunement and though attendance is voluntary and held outdoors when weather permitted, we observed how meetings followed a ritualised format of passing a 'talking stick' round to precipitate full disclosure of the day's activities from all attendees. Indeed, the meetings appeared to us as group confessionals where projects could be sanctioned and personal grievances aired. Such mechanisms thus facilitated the normalisation of 'sustainable' conduct and members' self-regulation. Social activities such as dinner

parties, movie nights and music festival attendance were also sanctioned in these meetings, as Ellie explained, 'Every once in a while somebody gets a new fantasy and then [they] share it with the group… and erm if something comes up, if there's a gig or something that somebody is interested in then we tend to let it be known.' It is common for the day's work to start after daily attunement 'when members are ready' but Nick explained that working times and structures often change when there are groups visiting or courses running, stating that 'we don't have strict rules, it's pretty flexible'.

However, it was in meetings that the currency of sustainable practices was determined in an ad hoc manner. Living with a fluid and ambiguous understanding of what sustainability actually means (veridiction), the code that rules the ways of doing (jurisdiction) regularly became problematic and contested. For example, when the community was forced to retire their AGA cooker, they found themselves wondering how they could ever find a sustainable but effective replacement: 'and none of them [wood burning stoves] are likely to be powerful enough to feed us and feed our boiler… this is before we even get into the fun of where the wood will come from and be processed and stored, who's going to be on the stock-the-fire rota… and all this without even touching on the whole wood chip v pellet v well, wood debate' (Dave, community blogpost 2011). Tensions between advancing a project with speed and ease and reliance on 'questionable' resources (Dave, community blogpost, 2011) meant the community's mission to exemplify sustainable living was continually tested by a myriad of contingencies arriving from specific activities and goals. When 'ugly' cables that 'look like British Gas networks' were used in front of Nick's house to fence in the pigs, he said he would complain in the next meeting as 'normally we have a meeting to discuss things before we do them to make sure everyone is happy with them' (field notes). Reminiscent of a fossil fuel provider, the repurposing of surplus cable in this way appears to conflict with Nick's understanding of the aesthetic of sustainability.

As such, we observed that the meetings were rarely devoted to helping members decide upon the most sustainable course of action but tended to be exploited as a space for re-establishing interpersonal harmony. In Harriet's explanation she refers to troublesome aspects of community life rather than a deviation from a sustainable ideal; 'If somebody doesn't want swearing in the dining room…or smoking out on the terraces, then it comes up. And every week we have a meeting

and at every week's meetings everybody can bring something up and say really "we shouldn't do this"' (Ellie, interview).

Considered as a regime of practice, we came to see how dispositives of power had determining effects on the 'correct' practice of sustainability, not only comprising group meetings and timetables, but also institutional affiliations, propositions and administrative measures. Several of the members had previously volunteered through World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF), and the community worked closely with a local co-operative (Peasant Evolution Producers' Co-Operative), drawing information on sustainable practice from websites such as Diggers and Dreamers and regional conferences. However, it was clear that there was no one source of scientific information that governed sustainable practices. Normative authority emerged through an alignment of heterogeneous elements that was in constant negotiation, including through the embodiment of publicly accessible activity. For instance, in a dinnertime conversation following his attendance at a renewable energy meeting, community member Nick criticized a county council's desire for wind turbines to support a community of 100 residents when 'this costs more and is far less ethical and environmentally friendly than just putting solar panels on each house' (field notes).

We also saw veridiction effects of the regime of practice in philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions that sustainability cannot be achieved by the individual alone but only through collective action. We glimpsed this in members' shared belief, encapsulated by Harriet, that 'you can't change the world but you can change your part in the world' and that by doing so you can stimulate others to share ways of becoming more sustainable in the wider community. But we also observed the jurisdiction effects of the regime of practice in the specific ways activities were carried out such as the members' rejection of all 'unnecessary' electrical appliances. With these material objects banned, different skills and models of conduct are created and maintained whilst new actions and habits are produced through technologies of the self that subject community members and visitors alike to normative practices of 'sustainability':

'Yesterday when I asked when/how often people have showers, I was told maybe once or twice a week; so I have not showered today as I normally would so as to not waste their water/energy…Going to have first shower since being here but can't wash

hair as no hairdryer, as it is an unnecessary appliance that uses electricity' (field notes)

When needing to remove concrete slabs from the ground, Dave acknowledged that although electrical goods can make the job easier, he 'can't use any form of electrical appliance' in such a task, as the community does not 'believe in that stuff' (field notes). Instead, he would carry out the job using traditional methods using a sledge hammer and pole, 'lifting it up like a mole', in the same way Nick explained that he would be sanding 72 wooden posts for a picket fence by hand and making toy airplanes for the children from scrap wood.

In the absence of a single cultural authority, consensus was of vital importance, heightening the need for interpersonal harmony but also necessitating the use of disciplinary mechanisms such as administrative measures for dealing with conflict and the admission of new residents. Although Oliver described the community as 'one big family' with little confrontation, he explained that a new, lengthier procedure for joining that 'can be cut off at any time' had been developed to reduce the number of irreconcilable differences in the community leading to intervention from the trustees. This procedure involves a week of volunteering first, followed by a two week visit in which the applicant must converse with every member one-to-one, a formal request by letter, the consensual agreement of the group, a vacancy to fill, followed by a three month trial period, after which the new recruit is 'like the rest of us, on paper a six month renewing agreement' (Oliver, interview). In fact, these terms and conditions set by the Trustees' terms of agreement had a normalizing effect inasmuch as they imposed a system of hierarchies to deal with new recruits and their commitment to sustainable living.

While the contingencies of everyday activities made normative sustainable practices an ongoing, collective achievement, dispositives of discipline such as these group meetings, timetables, administrative procedures and specific models for carrying out activities had determining effects on what was to count as 'proper' sustainable practice. In her interview, Ellie mentions that there was, in Foucauldian terms, a competing regime of sustainable practice that no longer has legitimacy: 'There used to be much more of a focus on personal development and er…human interaction and introspective things and erm New Agey type stuff and singing with crystals. But that's not real erm and [laughs] and we've kind of gotten away from

that…although we have full respect for personal development'. Here we see a powerful manifestation of power operating through the exclusion and othering of a form of knowledge about what constitutes sustainability. The mandate of a New Age discourse is not a constituent of the dispositives currently operating and without such validation has so little currency that it is quickly dismissed. New Age discourse is not aligned to the regime of practice operating. Indeed, its associations with the rejection of rationalism and the scientific method in favour of spiritualism, alternative medicine and the healing of the self using crystals, threatens to reshape sustainable practice in the community. It has the potential to disrupt interpersonal harmony by undermining the scientific discourse that helps provide the rationale for rules of conduct, namely that members are enacting consumption practices that minimise damage to the planet with the general goal of reducing consumption and wastefulness.

The continual formation of ethical subjects

With a highly ambiguous notion of what constitutes ideal sustainable living, projects in daily life meant members were constantly monitoring and re-evaluating their practice. Dispositives of security dispensed power through modes of continual reflection where community members governed their own ethical behaviours by way of personal and communal confessionals (Foucault, 1980, 2007). The unclear ideal standard of sustainable living was continually tested – the need to advance 'projects' at the same time as getting on with other people – meant considerable ethical work by individual members. Dispositives of security entailed continual self-management and the ongoing construction of an ethical subjectivity, technologies of the self through which members tested the worthiness or appropriateness of practices which emanate from everyday life, for instance, the problem of 'ugly cables' or 'smoking on terraces', how often one should bathe or whether trips in cars could be justified. This ethical work is subject to various dispositives of security such as ongoing introspection, self-regulation and monitoring of others (Davidson 1994; Foucault 1977, 1988, 1994). Through these, a facilitative rather than repressive exercise of power, residents draw from particular discourses and come to assess their 'practices' from a particular vantage point. We find this when Paul, in explaining his continual effort to reduce his landfill waste, describes how 'my landfill is less than...maybe two, maybe three pieces of plastic, which is two or three pieces of plastic too many'. Encouraged to see themselves as examples to be followed, residents were tasked with

forever scrutinising (in public and in private) whether or not their daily existence was 'sustainable' or 'eco-friendly-enough'. This burden, and the extent to which members must alter their behaviour, is clear in Harriet's guilt when it comes to ablution; 'sometimes I turn on the boiler and have a bath twice in a month and feel really risqué about it' (interview). Although there are no set regulations surrounding water and gas usage, her understanding of the implicit imperative to minimize resource usage produces her sense of guilt about what may be classified as excessive consumption.

This ethical work also implied an intensification of the residents' relation to other residents and their practices. We noted how often members judged the sustainability of others' practices and this seemed to us like all members were acting upon each other as well as themselves. Everybody needed to be 'exemplary', all the time. For example, when one of the authors was recording observations in her field diary in her private bedroom, a community member came to check that the room was occupied and that the electric light was required. Judging the sustainability of others' practice was particularly obvious when it came to the attention devoted to the consumption of food, as trained chef Oliver describes:

> 'The kitchen is the most scrutinized of any role, because everybody has an opinion about the kitchen, because they're eating your food, because they care about where your produce is coming from, because they, erm, because they want to know that it's under budget, it's as local as possible and that it tastes good, so it's constantly scrutinized by guests, by community members, by volunteers. Everybody that comes through here has something to say about the kitchen' (interview)

An analytic focus on regimes of practice requires attention to what is said as well as what is done (Foucault 2000; Schatzki 2005) and we also observed how interactions between members worked to maintain or alter what constitutes sustainability in the community. Dinnertime conversations often discursively reproduced ideological tenets of sustainability such as the beauty of the natural world versus the (actual and symbolic) pollution of urban environments and associated work-and-spend lifestyles. For example, a disapproval of excess is reproduced when Nick describes that the wind turbine he has constructed from car windscreen wipers is only small because 'you don't need to make more energy than you need' (field notes).

Though community members sought to forge a sustainable self as an ongoing ethical project - improving their skills by attending courses such as hedge-laying, cheese-making and accounting – dispositives of security within the community meant residents acted upon themselves and others in order to perform an internalised discourse and 'carry' the practice. For example Nickwho had just returned from a renewable energy conference, stated over dinner how other delegates 'were all there in their suits, proud to put an "Executive" in front of their name to climb the ladder, and there's me covered in shit and mud' (field notes). Here 'correct' sustainable practice is not only reproduced through a speech act (see Butler 1993) that identifies certain objects (suits), values (careerism), attitudes (pride, vanity) and competencies (intellectual rather than the physical skills of manual labour) as infracting behaviour; it is also Nick's embodiment of 'correct' sustainable practice (his dirty attire, his attendance at the conference, his practical know-how) that ,is itself a disciplinary mechanism. Nick's formation of an ethical subject also affects the normative significance of other members' conduct.

For Foucault dispositive*s* are always-immanent structures since subordinate others may seek ways of challenging a regime of practice (Rouse 2005) and we also observed this at the community. Defined as a vegetarian community on the basis that this is an important factor in what it means to live sustainably, some tenants and volunteers are meat eaters who believe that meat consumption can be sustainable if it is local, organic and ethically raised. This institutional norm is maintained by forbidding meat from being eaten in the dining room and reasserted through the rule that only vegetarian or vegan meals can be prepared in communal spaces; legal dispositives that include the designated smoking areas by using space to dispense normative authority. However, the meat-eaters work around these normative eating practices, heading to a resident's house 'away from the community' (field notes) in order to eat fish or meat or, as vegan community member Ellie stated, '…tend to barbecue things for themselves out in private'. Transgressing normative practice regarding sustainable living at the community, the meat-eaters self-regulated in order to preserve interpersonal harmony.

However, the shared understanding that correct sustainable practice requires adherence to a plant-based diet was also dynamic, in that vegan members were subjected to the consensual prioritization of the commitment to zero waste rather than avoiding the consumption of animal products. Ellie and Harriet had been vegan for

many years but decided to move from soya milk to cow's milk that is produced on the community farm in order to reduce the consumption of non-recyclable tetra paks and soya (or rice) grown, harvested and processed many thousands of miles away. Though they would prefer to be vegan, the non-recyclable packaging produced by their consumption of soya milk comes into conflict with the institutional imperative to minimize landfill waste. Rather than imposing a constraint on residents, existing practice is transformed by changes in the regime of veridiction – the agreement that consuming local cows' milk constitutes a more sustainable practice than buying cartons of organic soya milk – which entails the constant reworking of subjectivity to align with the emergent rules and reasons guiding correct practice.

Conclusions

Using Foucault's related concepts of regimes of practice and dispositives, our study illustrates how what is to count as correct sustainable practice is, in the context of our study, an ongoing, collective, ethical project. We have shown the importance of interpersonal harmony in an egalitarian setting without a single cultural authority, pastor, or any top down, universal definition of sustainable consumption, not only in enacting but also in shaping what constitutes 'proper' sustainable practice. Normative practices entailed continual communal introspection, self-management and the ongoing construction of an ethical subjectivity. Behaviours – such as minimizing waste and energy use but also aesthetic considerations, diet and use of space – were in a dynamic state of normativity through the constant elicitation and ritualized review achieved through the meetings that served to make both the subjects (the residents) and the objects (commodities) visible and known.

This was not a regime of practice that was necessarily guided by well-defined normative symbolic structures of knowledge that enable and constrain subjects to interpret the world according to certain forms and thus behave in corresponding ways, but rather, was continually negotiated involving a recursive process that served to alter shared understandings. In existing scholarship dealing with the individual efforts carried out by people as they best negotiate how to carry out a practice properly, often the practice is seen as an active and simultaneous integration of various elements, including materials, ideas and discourses as well as competences and skills (e.g. Watson and Shove 2007; Shove and Pantzar 2005). In order to explicitly foreground the operation of power in analyses of practices, we drew on Raffnsøe et al.'s (2016)

synthesis of Foucault's interconnected dispositives of law, discipline and security, through which regimes of practices govern sustainable living. In doing so we illustrate that there is not only contestation in terms of how practices are performed, as Warde (2005) and others (e.g. Reckwitz 2002) have suggested, but also in assembling the specific rules of operation enabling them in a first instance i.e. how the rules are agreed. We have shown not only that arrangements between different elements in doing are tenuous but that so too are the shared understandings that govern them, thus allowing us to better appreciate contexts where points of authority within a regime of practice are distributed and more democratic.

We deployed Foucault's practice theoretics as a methodological intervention – an approach to practices that has so far not been well-explored in consumer research – in order to explicitly politicize the study of sustainable practices, whilst at the same time moving analysis of sustainable consumption beyond a predominant conceptualization of such activity as a form of consumer resistance. As of late, Foucault's ideas, concepts and methodological commitments have been used to draw attention to the role of power in privileging and denying ways of thinking about markets, consumers and their practices (e.g. Earley 2015; Giesler and Veresiu 2014; Skålén, Fellesson, and Fougere 2006; Tadajewski 2006, 2011). Generally, these works have produced accounts of how power relations define our field of action (Giesler 2008; Tadajewski et al., 2014), channel our efforts in the pursuit of certain goals at the expense of others, and the spaces of resistance they open (Denegri-Knott and Tadajewski, forthcoming; Mikkonen, Moisander and Firat 2011). Most notably we find a body of research looking at the ways in which marketing governs consumers' innermost desires and connects them to new consumption opportunities (Beckett and Nayak 2008; Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003). Yet, consumer research offers only a dim appreciation of the political constitution of practices, because we have focused on understanding how knowledge, competence, skills and things coalesce in practice (e.g. Arsel and Bean 2012), rather than questioning why they come together in certain arrangements. We remedied this here by applying Foucault's notion of the dispositive to better elucidate the range of social technologies that are constructed and in operation within a self-sustaining community in England that shape relationships between its members and its members' relationship to sustainable living. The productive potential of dispositive has been recognised in

other fields (Raffnsøe et al. 2016; Braun 2014) as an effective means to cut across rigid categories such a culture, ideology and community by connecting them.

This is a methodological extension to Arsel and Bean's (2013) use of Foucault's regime of practice and Schatzki's (1996, 2002) teleoaffective structure, in that we supplement it by using the concept of dispositiveto account for why different elements in practice - objects, doing and meanings – coalesce in the ways they do. Here Arsel and Bean follow others in the field (Schau et al. 2009; Holt, 1995) and in the broader sociology of practice theory (Hand and Shove 2007; Watson and Shove 2008) to consider how normal standards in practice are achieved in the prioritisation of context specific end goals and levels of commitments, which in turn orchestrate and regulate practice. Here it is the taste regime (vis à vis its teleoaffective structure, and not Foucault's regime of practice) which is used to help explain how a shared understanding - whether a design aesthetic, or brand values, norms and mythologies (e.g. Schau et al. 2009) - brings objects, meanings and doings together in predetermined and preferred ways in order to practice 'taste'. Adherence to teleoaffective structure as the enabling concept has meant that while there is a clearer understanding of how heterogeneous elements in practice are held together, there is still little understanding of the conditions of power which both justify how shared understandings come to be and the technologies of power in place to help propagate and dispense them. Emphasis thus far has been on seeing normative practice as emergent from the kind of practical knowledge that is garnered through people's continued and reflexive engagement with a singular cultural authority, be it Martha Stewart, Apartment Therapy or a brand. As such it has been argued that normativity is achieved by following guidance on preferred means of decorating, using objects, looking after them, in contexts where shared understanding is largely uncontested.

In examining what comes to count as 'sustainable' in practice and what does not, we have elucidated the power-infused processes through which shared understandings emerge and are maintained. The rules about how to practice sustainability in the community were not only subject to achieving a localised, pragmatic, if always compromised understanding of what living sustainably may mean, but also in how far that connected them to competing discourses. The negotiation of normative practice, as understood from our analysis of verification and jurisdiction, is not so much guided by the formality of legitimate scientific discourse on sustainability but is emergent and contextual to the exigencies of life as part of a

community living in a large building in constant need of repair. In this negotiation, community members attend conferences, look up information on the Internet and interact with local council officials, to piece together an always fragile and tentative understanding of sustainable practice. We acknowledge, however, that the fairly short timescale of our ethnographic observation has limited our ability to observe shifts in norms and note that future research could trace the original establishment of normative practice through a more historical approach. Politicising the study of consumer practices is a question of extending our conceptual and empirical focus beyond the current emphasis placed on the teleoaffective structure as a way of understanding the range of normativized and hierarchically ordered ends, projects and tasks, emotions and even mood that governs practices, to asking why those specific arrangements emerged and identifying the social technologies - legal, disciplinarian, security - dispensed to produce them. This approach leads us to ask, for example, what are the social technologies that produce the specific alignments guiding mothering (Molander 2017) or self-monitoring (Pantzar and Ruckenstein 2015)? Put differently, if the teleoaffective structure allows us to understand what shared understandings bind acceptable uses, ends and suitable range of emotions in practice, regimes of practices and the dispositive equips us to understand the power infused processes that produce those alignments. Where the teleoaffective structure allows one to describe the configuration of objects, doings and meanings in practice, our interpretation of regimes and dispositives answers why any given configuration attains a grade of sufficient normality and legitimacy, and identifies the specific social technologies through which these are dispensed. In doing so we are able to politicise the study of practices beyond the acknowledgement that there are preferred, normative standards for practice but considering the power-relations that shape and maintain them.

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