

The working party working paper

Round 1: Alexia Coke and Andrew Darnton

Targeting practices? The relationship between target setting and practice theory

Premise: target setting is blind to practices.

So what is target setting? It's not an example of intervention, but a basis of negotiation, a language for debate. An attempt by policy to take control of behaviour, (though which implicitly recognises that it can't – unfortunately policy doesn't care to remember this bit).

Target setting is about imposing boundary conditions. It's putting a box around a system rather than addressing any of the factors in the system. It sets limits around behaviour (of individuals, institutions...). These limits (and the idea that the system is bounded) are of course are illusory, the precise points arbitrary (ie. grounded in scientific fact). If target setting were an intervention, it would only be as a governance device for getting institutions around the table. (The irony of course is that the very targets repel some governments from the table, as in Copenhagen – plus we don't have the data to monitor progress, the agencies to monitor countries, and the legal institutions to enforce the targets).

Targets become the space for debate. In a simple-minded sense this fulfils Rip's caveats about governance: the governments aren't intervening (managing change) they're debating, being reflexive. Their real agency is in target setting (not in changing behaviour).

However, the governments don't know this: their illusion of agency is alive and well, not least in the implicit assumption that they (or their successor governments) could meet the targets. The problems come when their agency overflows from target setting to targeting practices. One conceptual problem is that practices being emergent their development is unpredicable – hence we are back with Rip: you cannot manage change, just modulate. A target for practice change is an oxymoron: practices are always in transition. For Rip we cannot know outcomes just make adjustments (modulations) to our practice that mean the current (definitely unsustainable) course is altered: “do something, whatever”.

Whether at some future point our modulated practices and government targets converge is unknowable; we can but try to improve the odds of our aggregated conduct falling within the boundary limits. Targets do bite on our practice, by injecting a sense of urgency and scale. And fundamentally they give us new imperatives, and a new narrative to operate within.

“Such narratives, especially when they reflect ongoing stories and storylines which constrain and enable, can be powerful in shaping action.”

(Rip 2006, p.22)

[Possible Further Questions to pursue:

Are practices blind to targets? Could practice theory help us plot trajectories/scenarios to eg 2050?]

Round 2: Sam Brown and Stanley Webster

Setting goals - The new year's resolution

Sustainable change – agents can change what they do in the short term but such changes mask the difficulties of sustaining a new practice or trajectory, which is also affected by external forces like the institutional and economic landscape. Short term target oriented change is incoherent with such ‘landscape’ forces and is resisted by them.

Round 1. Glen Watts, Greg Wallenborn, Stanley Webster

How does a practice recruit practitioners? – the case of daily showering.

We want to start from the case of daily showering in order to show that a practice recruits individuals rather than individuals choosing a practice.

Why do people shower?

The practice of daily showering is easily defined – an overhead source of water, a tray to collect the left-over water, and a person to stand between the two every day.

You are recruited or captured by:

- The history of stuff – the existence of showers, the existence of sources of water, space in the bathroom
- The image of showering – cleanliness, freshness, waking-up: what conveys these images? Advertising: bathrooms, shower gel, soap-on-a-rope (whatever happened to soap-on-a-rope?)
- Time...saving time compared to bathing
- Skills – able to stand on the wet floor; able to reach and operate the controls.

Does a practice capture an individual or is the individual constrained or obliged to follow the practice? Are these actually the same? Are people showered or do people take a shower? Does the use of the passive or active voice make a difference to the way that we conceptualise the practice? The same practice recruits in many different ways – different ways at the same time, different ways at different times.

Words are important in the way you think about ideas. How should we describe the process of recruitment to a practice?

Recruit – capture – ensnare – entangle -

Where does agency fit into this?

Showering is an assembly of human and non-human components. Is the agency shared between the components rather than residing with the human?

How do these ideas help us to understand and develop policy to achieve different paths?

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Round 2. Svenja Jaffari, Rachel Howell and Tom Hargreaves

Does an individual engage with a practice or does the practice engage the individual?

Can a dog engage in a practice in the absence of humans? How can we know? What about babies/someone who is demented and whom we can't tell has meaning anymore? Also eg. of autistic person.

Practice theory suggests that consciousness is social – is developed through engaging in social practices.

What is the different between just 'doing stuff' and a 'practice'?

T: A practice is a culturally recognised entity. If I stood on a street corner just waving my arms around with my tongue hanging out I'd just be 'doing stuff' and carted off as a nutter.

R: But if you stood in a park and waved your arms around you might be engaged in the practice of T'ai Chi or you might be just 'doing stuff' – how would we know? It might be that every action that is judged by us as just 'doing stuff' is regarded by the person doing it as having meaning and therefore a practice.

T: So the QA is: Where does the practice exist – does it exist in eg. the UK yet?

Round 1. Martin Green and Andrew Glover.

The challenges and opportunities of researching social change

Learning what social change is, was, or will be, represents some of the core challenges for researchers. Change appears to be something that:

- a) Has happened i.e in the past
- b) Is happening now
- c) Will be likely to continue into the future

Learning about the past to learn about present and hopefully future

Part of challenge of doing social research is negotiating not only interviewee's conceptualisations of past, present, and future, but also one's own.

Past

Learning about the (un)sustainable past can inform our understanding of present circumstances. They fluctuate throughout time and space and are rarely remain unaltered by historical circumstance.

However, learning about these 'past presents' is subject to the same challenges that any reflective thinking entails e.g biases toward fond memories, a tendency to romanticize the past, imbuing past circumstances with meanings that may or may not have been there at the time. In short, the process of 'constructing' a past rather than drawing from it.

Present

Unpicking these constructions of the past could be understood further through incorporating the images of the present. This is particularly the case with the present socio-political context of the 'mainstreaming' of climate change and environmentalism. The broad ranging nature of these issues tends to infiltrate many parts of day-to-day existence, and hence many otherwise 'neutral' practices, have been subject to scrutiny by 'green' ideals. Actors must legitimate what is done, and in some cases, perpetually re-legitimate what is done, as new global circumstances arise (e.g new carbon reduction imperatives each year).

Future

The future emerges through the ongoing reproduction of practices, and although these are informed by past-presents, as well as the present, determining its actualization is unlikely to be successful. Uncertainty persists, particularly as new technologies, innovative practices, and adaptation redefine what the future will be.

Each of these temporal and spatial projections inform one another, whether in rhythm or tension. They fixed, but they're constantly in negotiation with one another.

Round 2. Andrew Darnton and Rose Timblett

Past, present and future of climate change?

How to measure social change and where?

Can you know change in past and understand transitions? Measure fixed points and imagine the gap between them, retrofitting a narrative between them. E.g. how did cycling decline in UK from 25% trips to today's? Based on historical narratives – story e.g. change in car ownership, fabric of towns, etc. What body of data? Attitudinal, cultural, ethnographic (bottom up) as well as social-geographic (top down). Reconstruct the context from 1940. Can we see interventions / motivations behind big changes? Looking back we assume it is the big stuff that makes the changes. Currently when we try to reconstruct social change the accounts are often techno-cractic (e.g. from sailing ship to steam ship). From here on we can accumulate more stories of everyday life and practices then perhaps in future we could plot social change more roundly. Body of evidence about elements (e.g. changing perception of freshness).

Behaviour change narrative is a new enterprise for many institutions and are interested in practices / behaviours that interact with their core business (individuals to comply to achieve core business) but many of the elements of the practice are outside the institutional remit. Beginning to recognise the need to change outside remit.

Round 1: Rachel Howell and Svenja Jaffari

Practice theory v. behaviour change interventions: thoughts and questions

Starting questions:

* What is the boundary of a 'practice'? Can you pinpoint one practice?

* What is the advantage of concentrating on practices rather than individuals/groups, given that it is individuals/groups who 'do' practices? Can see the point in not concentrating *only* on individuals, needing to take into account the social context, but why is that (including social context when considering individuals) not enough? Without individuals there is no practice.

Svenja: But haven't behaviour change interventions been tried and found not to work? Incentives etc don't work.

Rachel: I'm not sure enough has yet been tried to conclude that they don't work. An awful lot of behaviour change campaigns have focussed just on providing info and that doesn't work, but not so much has been done on trying to change norms, give feedback etc etc, and there

are various egs. where things have worked eg. where recycling is made easy, there is higher take-up; congestion charge in London; research showing that feedback about home electricity consumption telling people how their consumption compares with others' and giving normative signals does encourage low users to stay low and others to cut.

S: But if you follow behaviour change models maybe it's too slow. We don't have a lot of time (to tackle climate change). And people are so different – eg. in my research looking at different people's home energy use, some don't care whereas others were really ambitious about reductions. Maybe focussing on practices helps things to happen faster?

R: I would be sold on practice theory if I thought this was likely to be true but I find it really hard to conceive how trying to change practices by opening up spaces for things to be different could generally be faster. It seems to me that a lot of the time it would be really quite slow and since one wouldn't necessarily be directive about exactly how the practice should change you wouldn't even know when the intervention wasn't working – you wouldn't know when it's time to stop and try something else. In terms of dealing with different people having different levels of concern/diff barriers to action etc what about behaviour change interventions based on segmenting the audience??

S: During my research into people's indoor climate practice, I came across the problem with recent development in passive/ low energy housing having e.g. your windows controlled by a computer etc. being not taken up/ bought by people or when being bought, being 'messed' with. If you asked people if they would like to have automatic window controls, they would answer 'yes', so they would say that they want to have it, but if you then look at what they actually do, then you will realize that they do not use it or want it in particular situations e.g. when they want to sit together and hear not noise/ distraction (in the kindergarten) to be concentrated on what they are doing...

R: But you could ask people not only 'do you want automatic window controls', but also e.g. 'how do you want to be able to use the controls, do you want e.g. a manual override?' Could you then look at practices, and define the elements of that practice, and design the intervention which diverts from the practice theory because it is aimed at individuals but still taking into account all elements of a practice??

I'm still struggling with the idea with how you would actually design an intervention that really fitted with practice theory and didn't turn into a behaviour-change intervention?

S: Could you have an intervention that involved both elements? Could you look at a 'practice' and then design a behaviour-change intervention? What counts as a behaviour-change intervention as opposed to a practice theory one?

Changing practices might have to be studied over a long time and without a specific goal set it might be difficult to see what's changed. How would you evaluate? You could try and leave it very open and just say 'I'm going to be an observant and non-judgemental observer' but what one person interprets as a change, another person might not. You might observe things that you hadn't observed before and wonder whether that's because a change had happened or just whether you hadn't observed the same thing happening before, because it's not possible to observe and comprehend everything going on at once, but over time you will notice different things, even though things may not actually be different.

S: Maybe it would be helpful to have some kind of comparative example, to be given details about some kind of intervention(s) which have been designed in a practice-theory way, and how they have worked or not. What we've read about practice theory analyses the elements of practice, or how practice develops (eg. the Nordic walking paper) rather than applying it to the question eg. of cutting emissions, which our PhDs are supposed to be about (and several other people here we think).

Round 2: Geoff Gardner and Elizabeth Shove

We decided to continue the conversation but with the example of congestion charging, and maybe cycling if we get there!

R says that congestion charging is a behavioural intervention that has worked. Although congestion charging wasn't designed in ways informed by practice theory, we don't think it was a behavioural intervention – in fact it is a good example of a transformation in practice. Let us explain. The congestion charge was not about changing individual attitudes or behaviours. It was a major top down intervention in the 'stuff' of ordinary mobility. It was an infrastructural transformation.

In so far as it worked it did so because all kinds of different, but related (related to mobility) practices were re-arranged: breakfasts were eaten at different times, delivery scheduling was reconfigured, the patterns of friendship in London changed a bit – e.g. those in the zone were not visited as frequently by friends from outside. This was a transformation in time and timing and the rhythm of London.

Where people live in London – where they buy houses, is potentially influenced by the charge or more accurately by how other people (and practices) are responding to the charge. This is an intervention in the living system that is London life. One interesting point is that planners expected the congestion charge to only make a difference for a short while – until people switched back to 'old' behaviour. In fact this didn't happen. It looks as if practices were reconfigured and because they are so interdependent, so connected to other practices, these new arrangements stayed in place for a remarkably long time. Ok, so levels of traffic are now rising, but this is because quite *new* practices are growing up in the congestion charge setting.

Lock in ability is used to describe interventions that physically re-arrange space. The point is that by grassing over one of four lanes immediately after congestion charge reduces car use by 25% then the benefit is locked in rather than being available to new practices. We think that up to a point, congestion charging is an intervention in practice.

BUT Congestion charging doesn't really address the key issue which is about the extent of moving around that goes on and that the accomplishment of everyday practices now often entails. So it doesn't really grasp these big issues. We might also be suspicious of congestion charging in that it is solidly framed in terms of an economics of individual choice, and therefore provides an excuse in a way for government to not bother thinking about or engaging in possibly more effective interventions like those to do with land use planning. Questions have been asked about how practice theory can guide an intervention. For example if you were to introduce a new congestion charge should you start one year in advance by targeting interventions based on influencing images and by creating skills (such as how to use

a bus or even how to reschedule breakfast) in order to make the transition to the new stuff more palatable.

Round 1: Sam Brown and Dan Calverly

Intervening in Practice? Displacing/Disrupting

Ecology – Bounded system, niches, finite resources (time, space, money, people)

We're wondering whether, in seeking to engender a change or transition in practice, the focus of attention should be redirected towards disrupting practices that dominate. In doing so we take an ecological approach to thinking about the relationship between practices. In particular we're interested in the idea that practices occupy niches characterised by particular configurations of finite amounts of time, space, materials and people. Practices could therefore be seen as being in competition with each other for these resources. An intervention strategy therefore must consider not only the possibility of 'growing' desirable practices, but also disrupting the undesirable practices currently occupying the relevant niche. Attention must be paid to the nature of the competing relationships between practices. Such relationships must be reconfigured to the disadvantage of the undesirable practice. These relationships might have their basis in the institutional arrangements holding such practices in place. Our focus is therefore directed towards the 'landscape' as Pred conceptualised it.

To elaborate we can use the example of private car commuting vs other forms of commuting. These forms of commuting are in competition for space on the road, the time used in their performance, the practitioners that take them up and material resources that they consume. In order to tip the scales against private car commuting (an undesirable practice) then the institutional rules and conventions that give car commuting priority access to those resources must be changed. Thus instead of having 'cyclist dismount' signs you might have 'driver stop' signs.

Round 2. Alexia Coke and Greg Wallenborn

Alexia & Greg prolonging "Intervening in Practice? Displacing/Disrupting"

Practice theory is interesting because it brings materiality (stuff) to the forefront. Contrary to the other dimension (images and skills), materials are limited. Here we start then from finite resources: time, space, money, people. And therefore we consider competing practices rather than complementary practices.

Scenarios about 'future' practices speak often about sharing resources: collective projects, etc. It is a way indeed to escape from the privatisation of finite resources. Today, for a practice to recruit individuals, stuff has to be replicated. Practice theory shows us that stuff is not linked to individuals but to practices, and could therefore be shared in much more original ways.

We will try to elaborate an example of sharing resources in other way and analysing how practices reconfigure.

What are the practices to be disrupted, from a materiality point of view? Which are the practices associated to over-materiality?

Ex.: using an individual car one hour a day to move one person (e.g. commuting): takes much place while unused, and when used! We should consider both cases: when practice is performed, and when it is not (because materiality is still there). From the point of view of practice, the still stuff is a stupidity: it is just not practiced.

Other domains to be explored: household energy consumption, food (decreasing meat), ...

Due to a limited resource of time, we have to finish here.

Round 1: Geoff Gardner and Allison Hui

So if in some way our objective is to influence carbon emissions by encouraging change (in practices), then we need to figure out how to encourage practices that have fewer carbon emissions as a consequence. In a way, changing practices isn't something to be feared by policy makers because humans change practices all the time – we are extremely adaptable.

In many cases though, this might be as a result of being 'forced' in some way to adapt. If you move from one country to another and discover you can no longer access giant 'American' refrigerators, then your provisioning, storing, and cooking practices change out of necessity. If you break your leg and cannot drive a car anymore, then you find other ways to get around.

How can we best make use of this adaptability and the way that introducing new elements (or making others inaccessible) can spark changes towards practices with a smaller carbon footprint? Can we manipulate elements to spark changes in practice?

If a change in our collective emissions is going to be reduced to the levels proposed for 2050, then we need a significant change – a regime change in practices, perhaps.

The role of policymakers and visionaries then would be to hunt down the elements that have the most negative impact upon carbon emissions across a whole group of practices, and search out and design new elements that would support practices with fewer emissions. Then the elements that were linked to greater carbon would be hunted and killed by policies that were directed not at bad behaviours, but at 'bad' elements. This could be done with a concern to time and space as well – so perhaps not banning an element like surfaces on which to drive cars, but banning cars from these surfaces for particular times – mandating car-free days on roads.

One question is whether you try to intervene with the stuff, image, and skill of a less desirable practice at the same time, or in sequence. When trying to decrease levels of smoking, the government has done work to try and change skills and image by characterising smoking as anti-social and running quitting classes. In some ways, these made it then easier politically to implement the smoking ban by having said that other less-drastic measures had been tried. Could policymakers have the conviction to just ban carbon-intensive stuff? Or do we need (or would it be valuable) to have campaigns aimed at changing images and skills around carbon-intensive practices first, before then changing the availability of stuff that these practices rely upon?

It's massively integrated and complicated, the webs of practices that people and societies are a part of and carry. So rather than trying to intervene and predict new practices for people, it's easier to get at the basics.

Round 2: Dan Calverly and Glen Watts

Hunting down the elements that have the most negative impact across a group of practices – perhaps the car scrappage and boiler scrappage schemes demonstrate characteristics of this approach. But it also locks in practices – using cars to commute, using gas to heat houses. It's tempting to think about the elements of practices that are contributing to carbon use – but isn't a practice a coherent whole that uses or doesn't use carbon? Are there alternative interventions that alter the landscape and allow the practice to shift or alternative practices to emerge?

Round 1. Jess Paddock and Julien McHardy

POSTCARD: Can you focus on solutions and outcomes in practice theory?

In the group there seem to be a frustration based around the difficulty to operationalise practice theory – but what can you ask from a theory?

We think this question is problematic as it assumes that solutions are a feature of theories. We argued that a theory does not translate into solutions or goals directly. It does however provide a model that can help to understand the world in a particular way that does matter for how we think about what kind of interventions are possible.

This is a problem for all theories not just practice theory. Economical or behavioural theories do not translate into action either. But unlike practice theory they offer simple models and boxes that can be filled and measured – can they? The relative lack of success of behavioural and economical models brings up questions if it makes sense at all to start from the idea that theories should be operationalised.

Practice theory offers us the opportunity to understand complexity. This posed the question in the group if practice theory is only an analytical tool that is no good for action. This does not mean that practice theory does not provide a space for action but rather makes obvious that interventions do not fit neatly into the boxes of models anyway.

What can practice theory do?

- It is a theory of complexity that allows us to move away from a static understanding and representation of people's doings.
- It helps us understand how peoples practices interlock and build up to ecologies of practices.
- The very departure from an ABC model helps to get rid of the obsession with end points and fixed solutions.
- It is not measured easily but it might be possible to measure growth of practices and migration from one practice to another. This matters more than what beliefs people apparently hold and allows to focus on their doings instead.

But do we not need solution urgently?

Practice theory never finishes. The question we started from invokes a static model that allows for solutions. This does not mean that there are no moments of social change but that fixed solutions are neither part and parcel of everyday life nor of practice theory. However – imagined end points are sometimes useful and these imagined end points might be informed by theory but they are not inherent in a theory and remain political and contested.

To our successors

So what the hell do interventions look like

Round 2. Nicky Ison and Andrew Glover

Entry Question: ‘So what the hell do interventions look like?’

Practice theory as our entry text goes into, is very good as a way of understanding ‘what’ in terms of what goes on, how to understand the world – complexity, holistically etc, what could be changed, where one could make strategic interventions. However, practice theory doesn’t tell us much or anything about ‘how to create change’. We need to look to other ideas, or create new ones about ‘how’ to create change, given what practice theory (or systems theory) tells us about the ‘what’. For example that the world/practices is/are uncertain, not fixed and emergent. Thus in our HOW we need to leave room for emergence, we need to learn and be flexible.

Another question we came to was – what does practice theory have to say about the practices of institutions. For example Spanish institutions that undertake the practice of investing in solar power stations rather than coal fired power stations? As many of the successful changes that have reduced emissions, have come through changes in institutional practices, rather than in day-to-day practices. However, we note that day-to-day practices such as Spanish siestas and living spaces, are also more sustainable practices. These day-to-day and institutional practices interact, we’re not sure how, but hypothesise that both are needed to make the transition to a low carbon economy.

Round 1: Nicky Ison and Elizabeth Shove

KEY:

- This font is Elizabeth and Nicky
- This font is Elizabeth
- **This font is Nicky**

What is the strategic and political impact of bounding the world in terms of practices? Or elements of practice, or systems of practice. Similarly when and why does it make sense to think about landscape and/or about individual life paths and does this distinction obscure more than it reveals? Paths and landscape are made up of elements, so it’s your choice as an observer/analyst whether to focus on path or landscape and why though notice that you are yourself part of the system.

We like these grand theoretical statements but there are some questions about how this translates to practical efforts to adapt to climate change or mitigate it. And especially about what the implications are for governance.

How to get around the 'individual' ? is this a sensible question and what models of action does the very question suppose? Well I'd say its easy: practices are only ever reproduced by individuals, BUT that does not mean the individual needs to be the focus of understanding, analysis or intervention because individuals are AT THE SAME TIME the carriers of practices. To me this makes perfect sense. It displaces the illusion of individual agency that many disciplines and people harbour, and it makes proper sense of the extent to which what people do is, as it were, beyond them – both in terms of infrastructure and materials, and also in terms of competence, and image meaning, in other words in terms of the elements of practice.

I agree, but for me, that means that in order to make an intervention, as previously discussed it is important to fix one of the elements – either image, competency, infrastructure or a practice. In which case to make a meaningful intervention or change it requires picking one or multiple of these, which in turn requires putting a boundary around the scope of what you're interested in. For example with the cycling exercise to create an intervention in practical terms, as a policy maker I would either need to fix the practice that you want to increase the number of carriers for, for example commuting cycling, which then potentially limits the possible practices that people are supported to undertake – potentially limiting emergence. Alternatively, a policy maker might focus on one of the images (or other elements) of cycling, which implicitly leads to a target audience and then understanding the potential motivations of individuals or groups. I'm not sure if this is a issue that can be resolved. Perhaps my fear that by concentrating on increasing the number of carriers for a good practice or decreasing the number of carriers for a bad practice would limit emergence of new practices, will prove to be unfounded in practice. I don't know.

Another idea that was raised by your statement, is this idea of individual agency. As a climate activist, I have been involved in trying to increase the agency of individuals, by trying to increase collective agency or power as a climate movement or groups. I think we as people, particularly in groups do have the power to create change, although we are constrained obviously by the system that we are part of. There's more there, but that's enough for now.

I'll start with the elements issue. I agree if a policy maker intervenes at the level of elements they can't be sure what the result will be: policy makers can't 'make' practices, but actually fiddling with elements is something that they can and actually do do all the time. That the effects of these fiddling are unknown and uncontrollable is just how it is. That doesn't mean do nothing. But you raise another issue about bounding a practice and encouraging recruits or defectors, depending on whether its a 'good' or 'bad' practice. That is harder to address in that one selling point of practice theory is a focus on the practice not the individuals – on this, I think there is still an advantage to the idea of promoting conditions and elements.

I agree.

You then introduce the further issue of activism. I was recently asked to join a support group for someone cycling across America trying to promote the use of clothes lines. I turned him down. We then got into an exchange about why. I said, I really don't think this is the way to transform laundry habits.

I agree.

He objected that you have to start with individuals – to some extent, and from one point of view, you could say ok, but if his target is laundry, I'd not go for persuasion in that such is to treat laundry as something people are persuaded to do. I just don't believe that is a relevant social analysis of laundering which has such a deeply culturally, materially embedded history. Not to say that it is static, but that it changes in other ways than the ones he is locked into thinking about.

I find the focus on the individual in social change problematic. I think the idea of looking at practices is useful, however, for me it is the practices of business and government that require change, in order to change the practices of the individual. For example, the purchase by Ford in the first half of the 20th Century of the tram and train infrastructure, gave them the power to shift the practice of transport or mobility. My analysis of both systems and now practice theory (I think) is the absence of the construct of power.

Power. Yes. I think theories of practice as we've been playing with them here are hopeless on these basic questions of power. Perhaps ok on the role of governments and business – e.g. in developing and promoting the circulation of elements, but still there is no analysis of inequity, injustice and raw inability for various nasty reasons. So how to build that in? One irony is that a lot of theories of power are also rather individualistic. Obviously not all, e.g. Foucault. But for me – and I've not thought about this enough – in a way the availability of resources relevant to a discussion of power are themselves the outcomes of past practices. This sounds like cheating, and to some extent it is, but Bourdieu has some stuff to say on the sorts of capacities (capitals) that are accumulated through peoples' differential participation in different practices, that is transformative in that it then allows them to build up capacities to take part, in the future, in some and not others. Ok, but still not very satisfactory.

I'm jumping all over the place, but one of the things that has been a very powerful framework for me, is the theories of change framework, developed by some Quakers in the 70s. They suggest everybody has their own theory of change, based on their own experience/world view whether they articulate it or not. The framework suggests there are 7 essential elements of a theory of change – ideas about the nature of human beings; ideas about the role of individuals and institutions in creating change; ideas about truth and authority; ideas about what problems are and why; the world you want to work for; and ideas about HOW change is made. The how is for me the particularly interesting one, again they suggest that in social change theories people espouse 6 different ones that can broadly be classified as – social change through personal change; building alternatives; education; confronting power holders; influencing decision makers; caretaking; and other. I'm not quite sure how this fits with what we've been talking about here... but i feel its an important other framework, for me at least to understand why the person cycling across America is doing what he's doing and why you or I for different reasons, may think his actions ineffective.

I like this implicit emphasis on working practices, or practices and theories in and as developed in everyday life – e.g. a practice of practice theory! And I think thats also useful in thinking about how and why individualistic models are so dominant: they are actually parts of practices that have a life of their own across environmental movements, policy and governance. Its no accident that economics dominates in these areas.

Its true, but just because theories are developed by an individual, do not necessarily mean they are individualistic theories, I think.

Round 2. Martin Green, Sarah Hards

We completely agree that paths and landscapes are dependent on perspective and we're part of this system. We don't however agree that attempting to change an individual element of a practice would be a truly practice based intervention.

Practice based intervention as a holistic approach as the combination of elements, specifically the interaction!

Practices can overlap and compete with each other. Eg cycling and car use but should be seen as more of a web than a see saw. Reducing one (if this is possible) would not necessarily create equal and opposite reaction in the other!

Might be able to limit the emergence of a practice but practices are too big and messy for us to suggest that a major impact (like this) could be achieved through a single intervention.
POWER!

We like the idea of bringing power into practice theory, especially that power relations are continually constructed through practice and between practices!

Practice theory could benefit from taking a bigger emphasis on the interaction between different actors and different scales, for example business, government, research.

The concept of recruitment is vital and shouldn't be shied away from because we're scared of individuals. We really like the idea of theory making as a practice which raises interesting questions about how 'theory practices' relate to each and recruit people!

Round 1: Rose Timblett and Nicola Spurling

Can we use practice theory as a model for change?

How do we intervene using practice theory (with interventions that are different to behaviour change interventions)?

Can you have a solutions focus /end point in mind (can / should you be prescriptive) (Can we bring about change without being prescriptive)?

How are the interventions different from using a traditional behavioural / individual approach?

Is it possible to intervene in the facilitating conditions?

How do we intervene in the linkages between elements?

How can undesirable practices be stopped/changed?

Do politicians like behaviour change because they are not brave enough to take bigger decisions?

Are sustainable practices accessible to everyone at the moment or just particular groups of society (i.e. left wing middle class)?

How do they go mainstream?

To us it seems that practice theory is useful as it provides a new way of thinking about the world and describing the context that certain practices are occurring in. It provides a fuller picture than behaviour change theories as it shows that behaviours cannot always be chosen, we may be locked into them and that most of our individual actions are reflective the wider social landscape. Interventions to tackle climate change using practice theory may be about

creating space or the right conditions for sustainable practices to flourish. This is largely a political issue which is not always fully acknowledged. It seems that practice theory to date had described niche practices (like Nordic walking) rather than understanding how practices can be diffused / reinvented / imposed (?) to a whole population. The challenge is to understand how a new practice be taken up by everybody.

For example showering:

We have current practice – e.g. showering every day - which is bound up in infrastructures, cultures (perceptions of cleanliness) but this is classed as unsustainable. But we also have a (more niche) current practice of sustainable showering – stuff (low flow shower), images (green type images has moved in as well as mainstream hygiene ones so they may only shower 3 times a week rather than 7), competences (they know where to get the stuff and info). One way of intervening using practice theory is to grow the niche but sustainable practice and stopping the mainstream, unsustainable. According to practice theory, for this intervention to work and be different from behaviour change, it needs to act on the stuff, image and competency at the same time. What does this look like? Practice theory intervention has to be multi-stakeholder by definition. For example, while a traditional behaviour change intervention might just be done by DEFRA or United Utilities, a practices intervention needs to be wider. Stakeholders that build the stuff (Bathroom manufacturers) – editing choice & making unsustainable practice less possible., Images – NGOs – but wider than just the ‘green image’, but for example interior design magazines and television programmes can make ‘green’ fashionable (explicitly or implicitly) and also question the non-green. Another way, is for unsustainable stuff to not be available. And the unsustainable images to go out of fashion.

So, practice theory interventions necessarily different from current behaviour change or technological interventions, or is it just that practice theory shows that we need everything at the same time, rather than focussing on a specific individual or specific technology or specific behaviour. Practice theory shows that ‘quick fixes’ are not likely to have much affect. It also shows that although everyday activities of the individual are important for sustainability, larger scale change at the infrastructural and societal level is also required, this isn’t always in the realm of individual choice, nor the realm of the individual intervener.

One reason behaviour change intervention has focussed on the individual, is that understanding who can change the facilitating conditions is a complex question. For example in any Borough or Town these conditions are a complicated mixture/accumulation of different institutions, and policy that attempts to intervene occurs in silos. Who is responsible for changing the “facilitating conditions”. How does practice theory reconcile to a political world that is already broken up into myriad silos?

Round 2: Jess and Julien

Jess & Julien’s response to: “Can we use practice theory as a model for change?”

We agree that practice theory might offer a way of thinking about change without being prescriptive and precisely measurable. It brings in an element of unpredictability that reflects that we never quite know how change will actually happen, how people will take things on or develop them. It is therefore not prescriptive in the sense that we do not start with a predetermined outcome or

solution because the “solution” is always emerging from the complexity of practices themselves.

The text suggest that sustainable practices are not accessible to everyone but are the remit of particular groups left wing middle class and poses the question how sustainable practices go mainstream. Practice theory offers us a route to the mainstreaming of sustainable practices by the very fact that it does without moralising sustainable behaviour because it is not centred around beliefs but around the doings whether they are based on an environmental ethics or not. Environmental ethics have been employed as a resource of distinction particularly evident in ethical consumption practices. The very lack of moralising through the focus on attitudes and beliefs widens the access to sustainable practices and allows the attribution of different values and goods with sustainable practices. Practice theory allows you to stand at different edges of the landscape.

This leads us to the suggestion of creating spaces for sustainable practices to flourish. While we think it makes sense to think about how practice might be supported this question ignores questions of access to a space of sustainable knowledge and action.

Finally, there is the question raised who facilitates the conditions for practices and how practice theory might reconcile to a world broken up into silos?

There might be two directions to this question.

Into the sky – going big

You might claim that practice theory provides a way to come up with big visions of interlocking practices that could be used to coordinate interventions across silos.

In the mud – going small

Or you might claim that interventions in practice require intervention and knowledge from within practices. Engagement with practitioner – an anarchy of practices?

Round 1: Tom Hargreaves and Sarah Hards Chaos, the blob and the emergence of practice.

...We start with this problem of defining practice, taking from yesterday the idea that there are families of practice that exist on different scales. Practices can be defined and grouped but this is always a construct from a particular perspective. So, to define a practice one must always start from a perspective (although see later, this perspective is part of another practice). For example, cycling – from one perspective it makes ‘sense’ to see cycling as a practice (e.g. the policy maker trying to increase cycling rates), from another (e.g. that of the commuter battling the traffic to get to work on time) it makes sense to think of the practice of commuting of which cycling is a sub-practice in a larger family...

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...So if we recognise that there is no ‘God’s eye view’, that perspective is defined by practice, then we could conclude that all there is, is a borderless, orderless, category-less soup, an amorphous blob. There is no path, there is no landscape for they are both made of the same socio-material components (so far as distinct components exist). We can say that this amorphous blob is made up of images, skills and stuff, but the problems we had in

distinguishing between them yesterday, the inter-relations between them, illustrate that this itself is a (potentially useful) model imposed from a particular perspective...

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...oh, and by the way, we are part of the blob. The particular perspective we see from is the result of a particular practice or combination of practices....

* * *

...Next, and again relating to the problem of defining practice, we see that many definitions suggest practices are always routinised. We wonder, where does this leave the rest of human activity. Ok, much of everyday is routine, but people do occasionally, do things for the first time. Is it possible to suggest these primary performances are somehow 'routine'....

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...One answer might be to zoom away from the individual. To assume not that it is the individual in whom the routine resides, but that the routine is a social phenomenon. Thus, although Andrew Darnton (254) might be doing economics for the first time, and therefore it may feel non-routine to him, he'll probably muck it up, it is unwise to suggest that economics as a practice is not routinised on a social level. So, routines exist as part of practice and must be viewed on a social i.e. larger than individual scale...

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...this led us into intention. According to Triandis, there is a combination of habit (defined by frequency of past behaviour) OR intention in behaviour. Sometimes behaviours are entirely intentional, sometimes entirely habitual, sometimes a bit of both. This assumes that intention is a characteristic of individuals. So, in the example of football, it is Wayne Rooney, and uniquely Wayne Rooney that has the intention to kick the ball into the goal. From a practice based perspective, though, intention (like routine) resides in practice and not in the individual. Thus Wayne Rooney is not the source of the intention to kick the ball into the goal, only its carrier, its agent, its enacter. So, we can then say that ANY human activity results from a practice or combination of practices....

* * *

...In the beginning, was there order or was there chaos? Some would say there was order, and the purpose of science/research etc is to find it, to reveal the hidden laws and order in the clockwork universe. Others, suggest that in the beginning there was chaos. That any order which exists has to have been imposed. There are no boundaries. This is The Blob™. So practice, which contains some kind of order, some kind of hanging together of parts of this Blob is THE source of order in the world (arguably).

* * *

...But, is practice all there is? Is there an outside of this amorphous blob? Just because we can only understand things by looking outward from inside the blob, doesn't necessarily imply there is no outside. So, for example, are the stuff of physics and biology outside of practice? Obviously we can only understand the physics and biology through the lens of practice, but it doesn't necessarily mean it isn't real and it contains its own order and its own laws. So, this suggest that practice is only social. Without human beings, without a sentient perspective, there could be no practice. But, without practice there could be no consciousness, because what we understand as consciousness has formed through practice(s)...

* * *

...So, if the stuff of physics/biology is genuinely outside, does this mean that in the beginning there was stuff? That stuff was the first (proto)element of practice, circulating in the blobby soup all on its own, until the overlaying of stuff with images and skills led to the formation of practices? So, practices captured stuff....

* * *

...So if stuff was the first element, where did images and skills come from? Did the initial emergence of practice on top of this primordial soup of stuff demand some kind of consciousness...some kind of bizarre emergent property, full of ideas, but not necessarily rational and not necessarily contained within the individual, because it's a social mind that we're talking about here. So, this leads us into a situation where we've got some unformed unordered raw stuff (the blob), and we have an unformed and unordered consciousness. Did the two start to interact? Did consciousness start to use stuff in more or less skilled ways? This then leads us towards a co-evolutionary dynamic between mind and practice...practice begets mind begets practice. To reiterate, this is a social mind not an individual mind. The individual is merely a more or less astute carrier of it....

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Stick that in your pipe and smoke it.

Round 2: Allison (Nicola was busy wrapping the pass the parcel!)

Chaos, modeling and the extinction of practice

- Allison's response to Tom and Sarah's invitation to stick 'Chaos, the blob and the emergence of practice' into her pipe and smoke it (I hope it doesn't have toxic emissions)

It seems, of course, like the ideal situation of play. There are no particular rules, just a blob. A huge mass of modelling clay that you can make what you like with. Perhaps from the blob you form a tower, or a car, or a beach. And each only becomes so in relation to the other blobs you form.

A world, a universe of practices as a blob is a fine situation for a playful analyst because one can define the practices, pick things out of the blob, as you like in order to fulfil particular aims or goals. If you need to know about certain members of a family of practices, then you isolate them and form them in order to then play and create scenarios with them. The possibilities are yours to change your models and change your games – changing practices and landscapes and scenarios – as you like.

The question then becomes what you are trying to do. And perhaps what you are not. And whether you can do things in many different ways.

Trying to get at how cycling and car driving are models bits of a blob which articulate off and relate to each other may be done by making blobs of commuting cycling and commuting car driving. But it may also be considered by making blobs of leisure practices – patchwork quilting, walking, and birdwatching – and seeing how they incorporate and interact with bicycles and cars. If we take seriously the offer that elements of practices overlap and are shared by other practices, then we can start looking for them in many places. Cycling can then infect some birdwatching, or even some car driving. Blobs get smashed together and then torn apart again.

The blob also exists at many scales – and so indeed individual routines somehow combine and form social or practice-based routines. Since performances make practices, individuals are always there, but in different ways. The idea of thinking about how starting into a practice might be 'routine' on a larger level is very interesting because it does imply certain ways that practices might infect people as being routine.

And this perhaps is as good a point as any to move into the realm of stuff as the primary element. Whether or not physics/biology is outside (why need it be? The body is in essence ‘stuff’ already because practices like cycling can’t be done without a body and require competences based on and contingent upon physical biology-driven actions. And the apparent uncontrolled or pre-existing nature of biological phenomenon isn’t really a problem in that if individuals don’t create many of the elements themselves, then why does it matter they don’t create or control biology? Can’t we just say some bigger practice created biology and physics and the processes within them at some previous point in time?), the idea of stuff as the first proto-element is interesting. In many ways, stuff can birth images and competences (you have something and you figure out or learn the competences to use it). Then again, you could also argue that images or competences could birth stuff. Nonetheless, if we took stuff to be somehow an important starting point, then if it let practices emerge then perhaps it should also let them die. Perhaps stuff is not only the creator, but the destroyer – heralding the apocalypse of those practices we deem less acceptable.

If this is the case, then maybe Molotch is right to suggest in *Where stuff comes from* that the way to social change is by getting designers to intervene in what stuff is. But stuff depends on many other things – other stuff that allows it to exist, and other structures – images, infrastructure, and government policy and direction. So perhaps what the government needs is a stuff department. A place where designers are employed to envision new stuff that would birth the type of social mind we want or the type of practices we want. There would of course have to be people whose job was to create policies banning stuff that encouraged the wrong kinds of images and competences. And there would have to be people devoted to tracking the stuff the new stuff would need, and ensuring it was safeguarded.

Better yet, we distribute the stuff-making and stuff-destroying. The government could facilitate it so that people in many different locations start actively making new stuff to inspire the practices they want to have – to make their current practices and paths even better. A de-centred intervention in stuff would benefit from being more difficult to shut down (with for example a change in government).

We’re talking then of a craft revolution. A design revolution. Infecting creativity into populations so that they make new stuff and destroy old stuff, and by so doing cause the extinction of practices that are carbon-intensive or otherwise undesirable. If we really are homo ludens, as Huizinga suggests, then this play will be no problem. But if not, then creativity itself is an image – or a skill – or stuff that we need first.

But, given a blob, what else are we to do but play?