

*theories of*

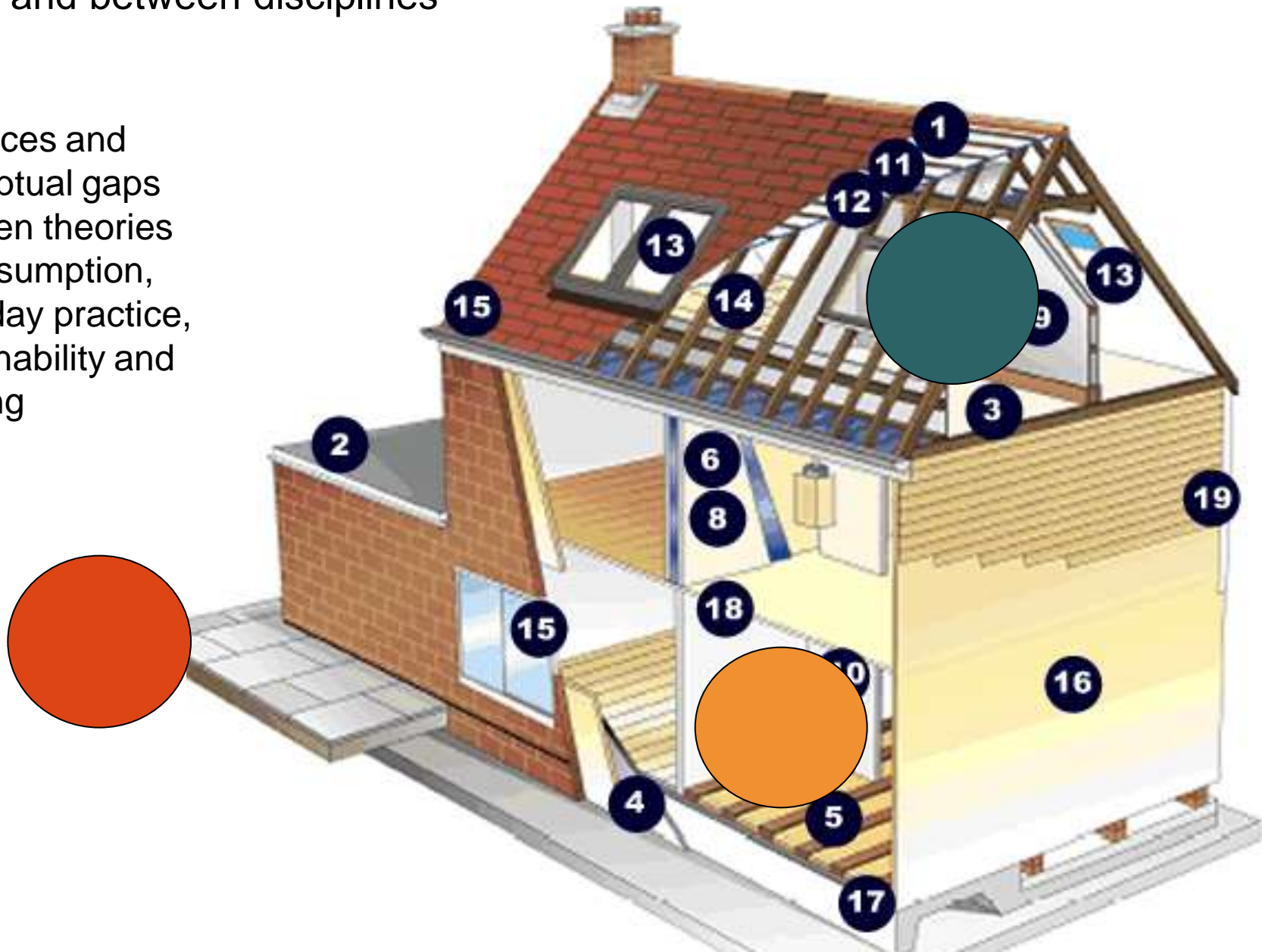
**CONSUMPTION**

**SUSTAINABILITY**

**and HOUSING**

Frequently and not so frequently asked questions  
within and between disciplines

Interfaces and  
conceptual gaps  
between theories  
of consumption,  
everyday practice,  
sustainability and  
housing

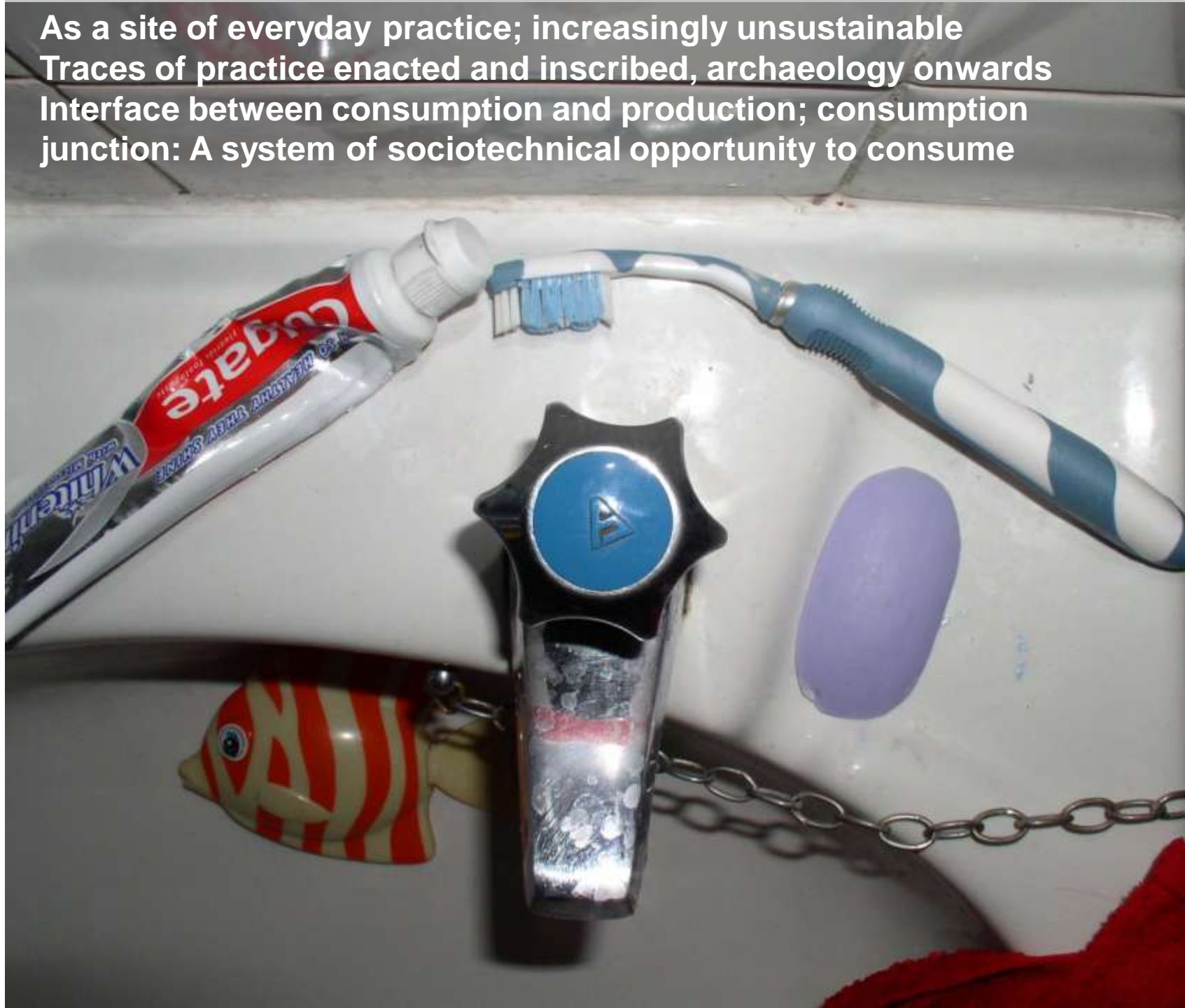


# CONSUMPTION



As a site of symbolic meaning; material culture; taste and expression, mantelpiece studies: ordering, collecting, keeping, remembering, associating, gifts, exchange

As a site of everyday practice; increasingly unsustainable  
Traces of practice enacted and inscribed, archaeology onwards  
Interface between consumption and production; consumption  
junction: A system of sociotechnical opportunity to consume





## Housing

As a commodity  
- property,  
wealth, storage,  
inheritance  
(economics);  
housing  
markets, adding  
and depleting  
value

As an outcome  
of planning and  
policy;  
embodied  
visions of the  
good life



# SUSTAINABILITY



House design, information, label, behaviour

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What if consumption is a consequence of ordinary practice?

What is required in order to be a 'normal' member of society?

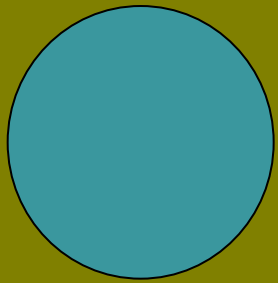
How does this change, and with what consequence for sustainability?

How are patterns of consumption and practice inscribed in housing?

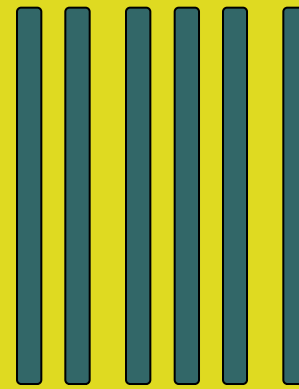
# Consumption, sustainability and the home

<b>Table 4.1</b>		
<b>Two Cypriot homes</b>		
<b>Features</b>	<b>Grandparents' house</b>	<b>Parents' house</b>
Area per person	18m <sup>2</sup>	66.5m <sup>2</sup>
Roof	Timber, mud, straw	Reinforced concrete
External walls	Stone and mud	Reinforced concrete frame, brick and cement mortar
External openings	3 timber doors	14 doors and windows with aluminium frames and imported glass, 1 door of imported timber
Internal finishes	Natural gypsum	Processed gypsum, vinyl paint, ceramic
Floors	White soil	Ceramic, terrazzo and carpet
Internal services	None	Copper, galvanised steel and PVC pipe, PVC covered copper wire
External services	None	Copper, galvanised steel, salt glazed earthenware and PVC pipe, aluminium wire
Lighting	Animal oil	Electricity
Space heating	Wood burning fire	Diesel oil
Space cooling	None	Electricity
Cooking and washing	Wood burning fire	Gas, diesel, oil, electricity, solar
Control of comfort	Inhabitants experience a wide range of conditions	Inhabitants experience a narrow range of conditions
Control of lighting	Limited control	Extensive control
Servicing the dwelling	Takes considerable time	Takes barely any time
Social network	Local friends and relatives	International networks, electronic communication

Adapted from Golton  
1994

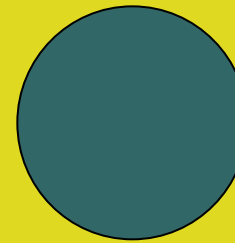
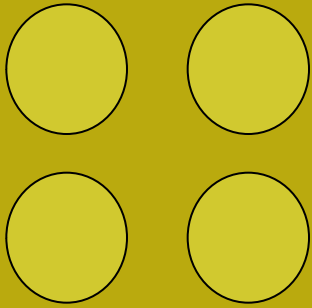


Embedded and dynamic



Dale  
Southerton  
Sociology,  
Manchester

practices in the  
kitchen and  
bathroom

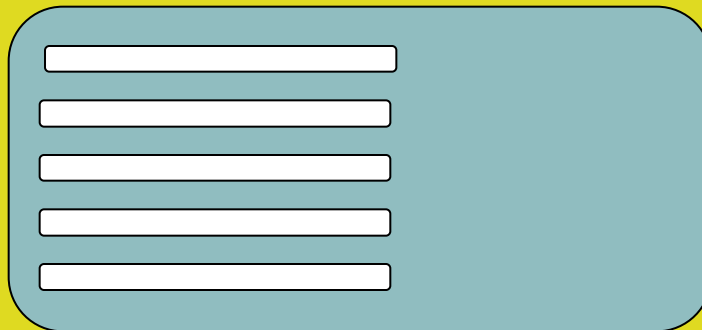
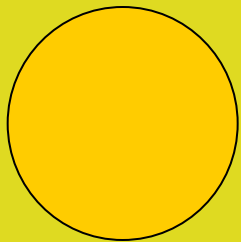


Martin  
Hand  
Sociology, Queens  
University, Ontario



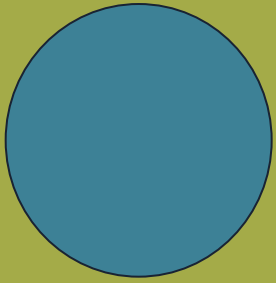
Elizabeth  
Shove  
Sociology, Lancaster

Sustainable technologies programme



Alan  
Warde  
CRIC and Sociology  
Manchester





## Kitchens and bathrooms

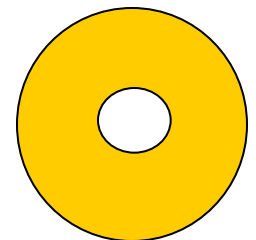
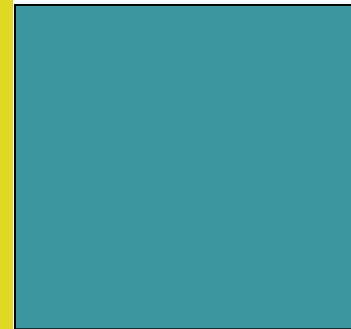
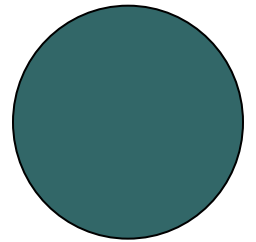
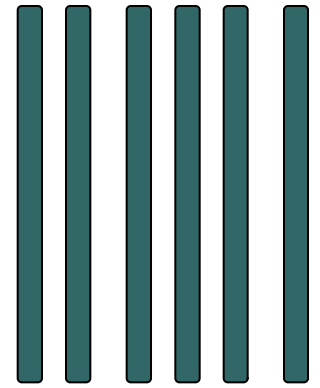
Sites in which technologies, conventions and injunctions co-evolve.

Sites of innovation in practice.

Hot spots of water, energy and resource consumption.

Frequently renewed – every seven years, and more bathrooms added.

**What do people do in the home, how is this changing and with what consequence for sustainability?**



# Practices steer the process of consumption

*‘Consumption occurs as items are appropriated in the course of engaging in particular practices, consumption occurs within and for the sake of practices’*

*The practice, ‘requires that competent practitioners will avail themselves of the requisite services, possess the appropriate tools, and devote a suitable level of attention to the conduct of the practice’ (Alan Warde, 2003.)*

## Kitchen renewal

How do new appliances and designs relate to practices?

How do new kitchen-practices arise and with what consequence for consumption?

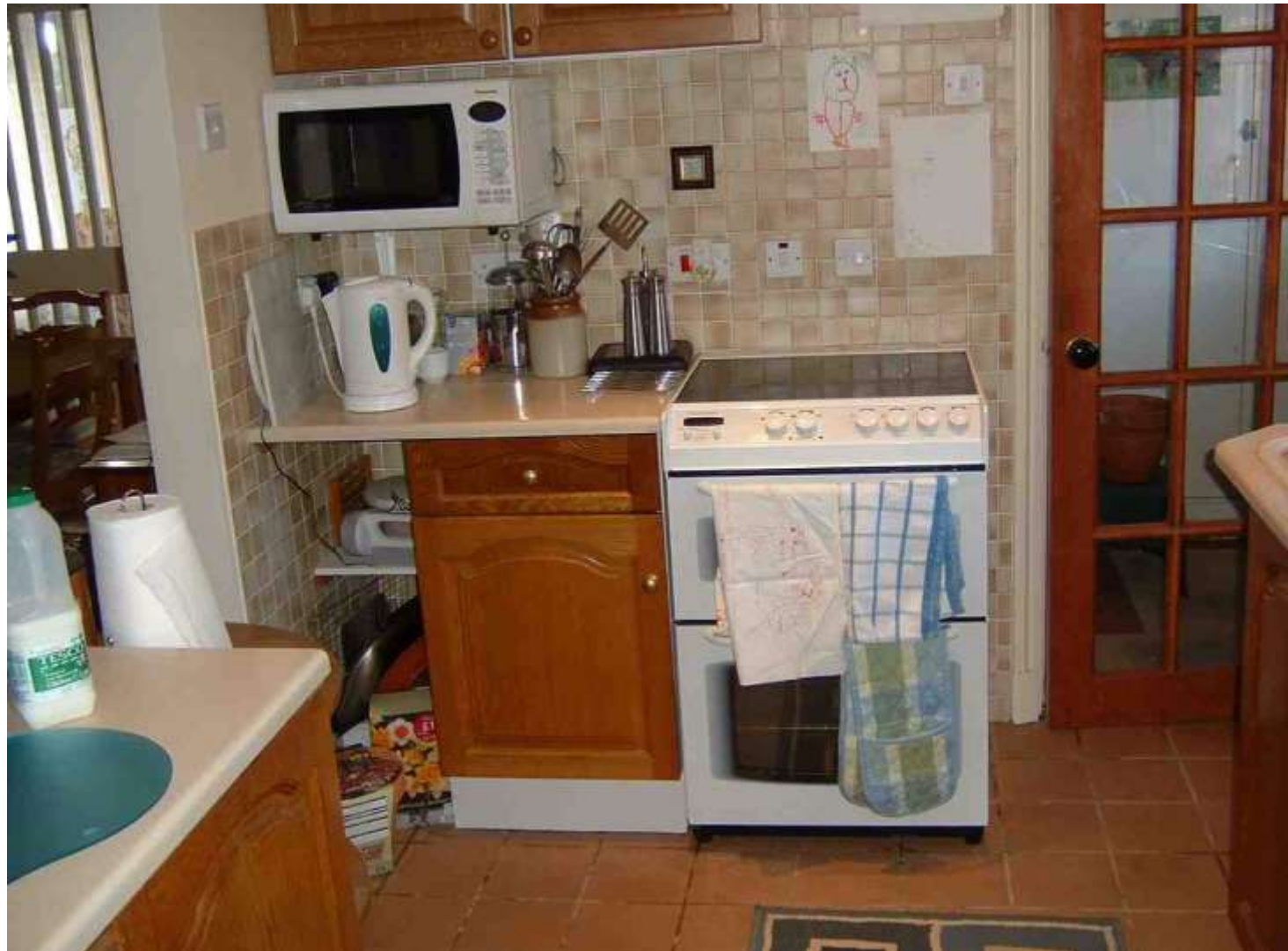
# 1 Performance without possession

## visions, realities and modes of restlessness

Disruption,  
downsizing,  
thrift

making do,  
adapting,  
compromising

Temporary or  
permanent



## 2 Performance and possession visions, realities and modes of restlessness

Resources  
make  
possession  
possible;  
deliberate  
'future proofing'

content;  
equilibrium for  
a while

having and  
doing are in  
balance





### 3 Possession without performance

visions, realities and modes of restlessness

Problem of living up to the stuff, have it all but the vision is not yet a reality

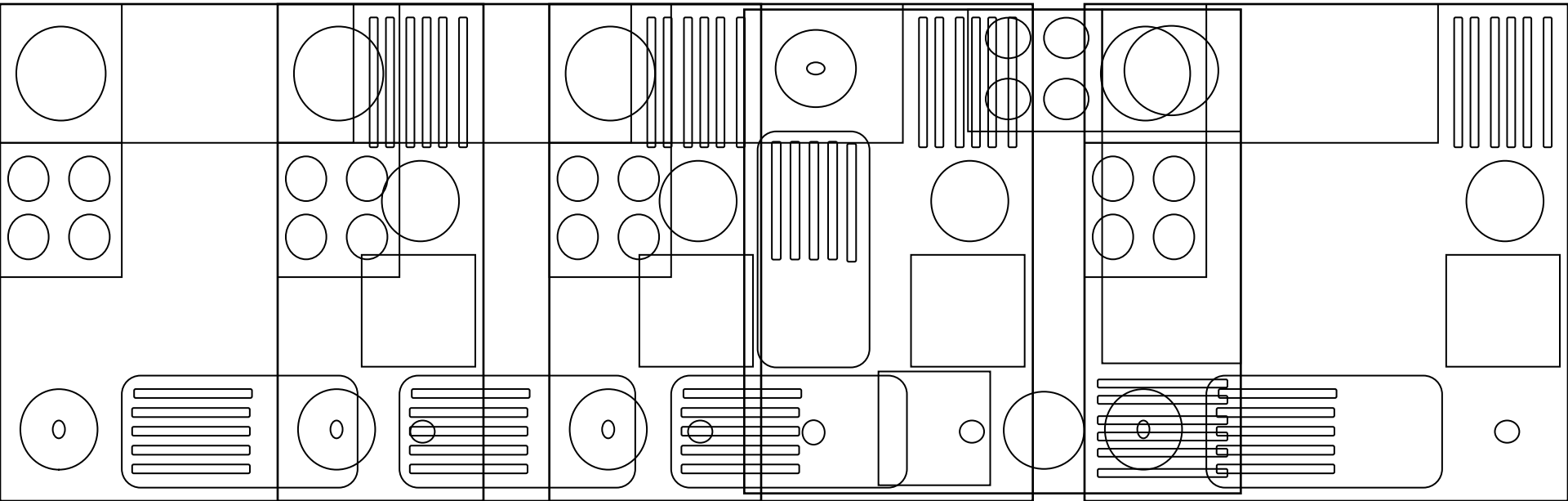
wish for a way of life that has yet to be realised: - eating together, fresh food, well organised, a full freezer...

or positively enjoying experimentation

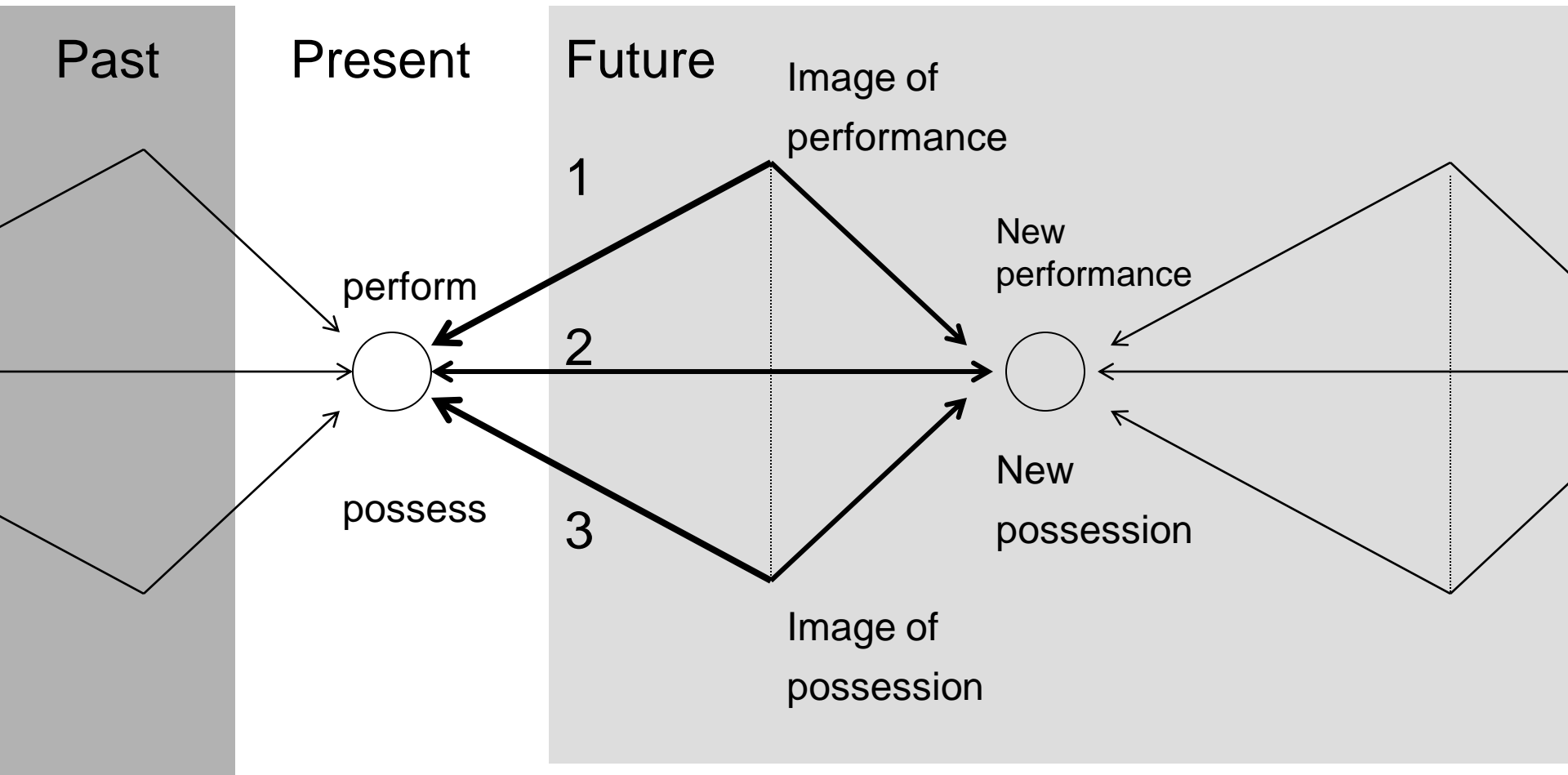


# Technologies and practices: fits and misfits

- Having is important for doing - practices involve the integration of materials, competences and images
- Future images of having and doing (i.e. of future materials and competences) frequently feed back into the present.
- These ideas allow us to conceptualise the future orientation of present practice and the restlessness of the home



# Possession and performance - now and in the future



- 1 new or not yet realised performance
- 2 possession and performance in balance, now and for the future
- 3 new or not yet acquired possessions required for imagined performance

## Contemporary trends

dishwashers displace washing machines, freezers take the place of larders, and the tumble dryer underlines the 'need' for a dedicated utility room.

Where possible, functions previously based in the kitchen are being moved out.

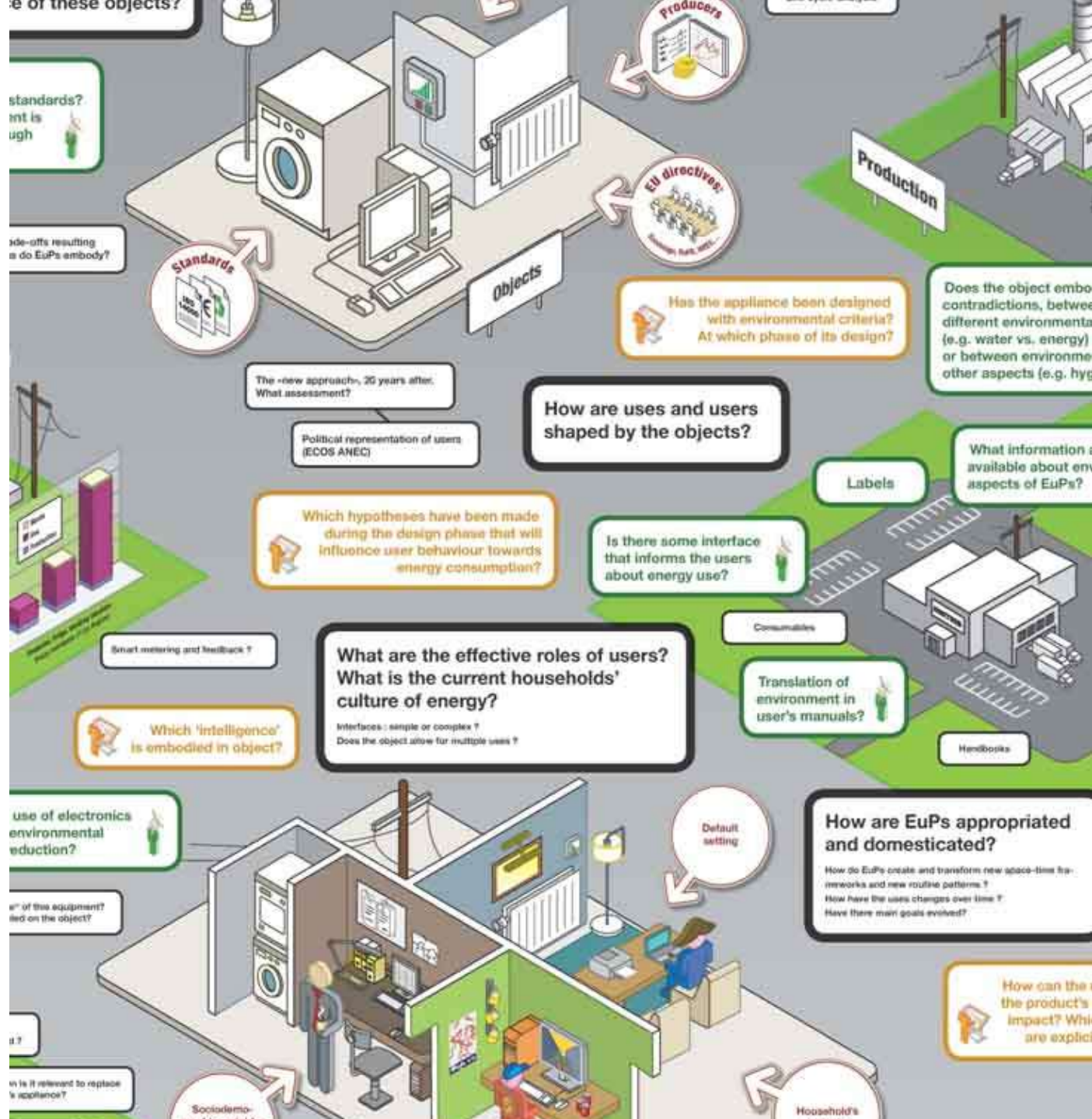
## Extensions





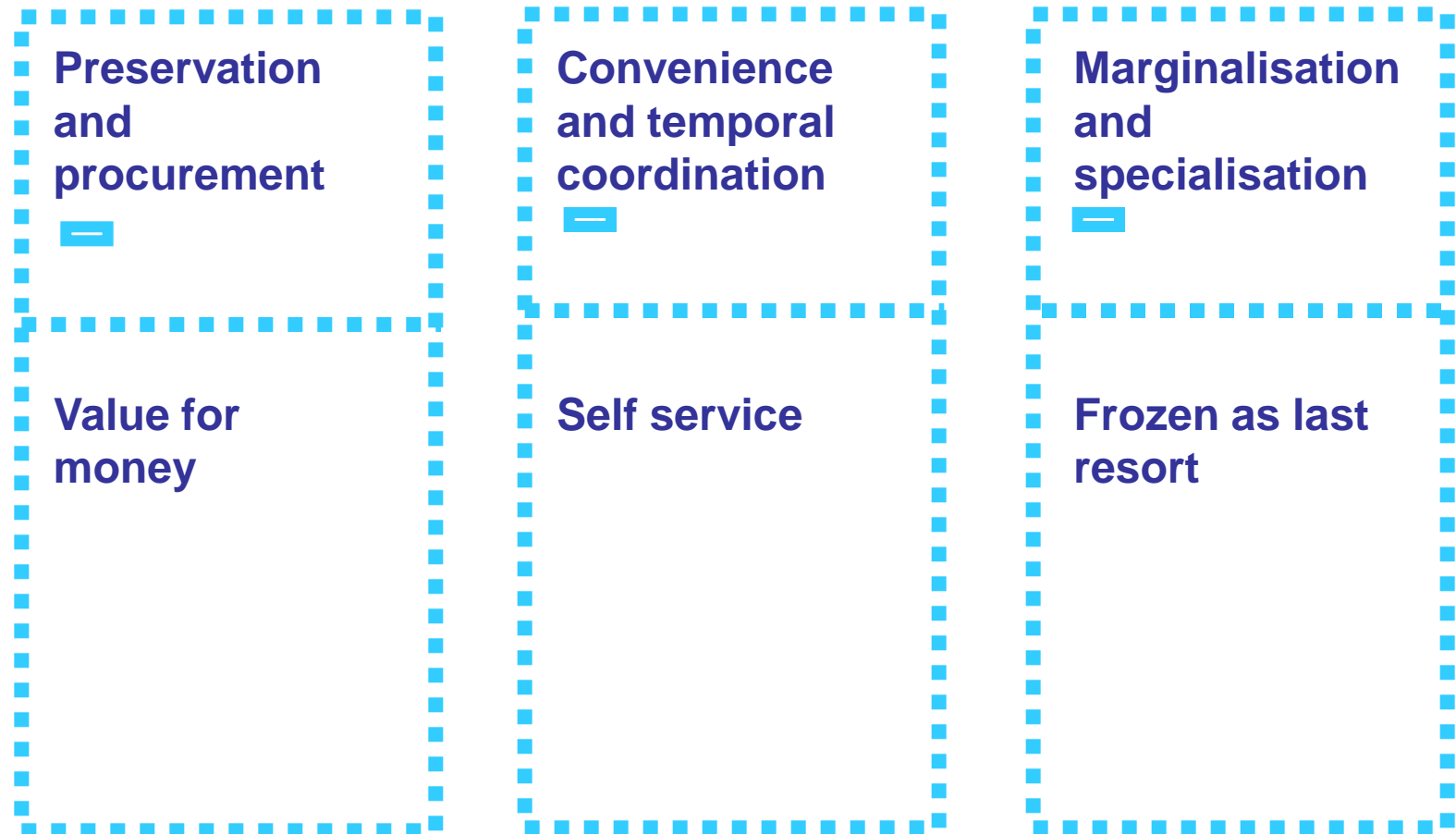
Houses as part  
of wider  
infrastructures  
Technologies  
and systems e.g.

Food  
provisioning  
Laundering  
Comfort  
Mobility



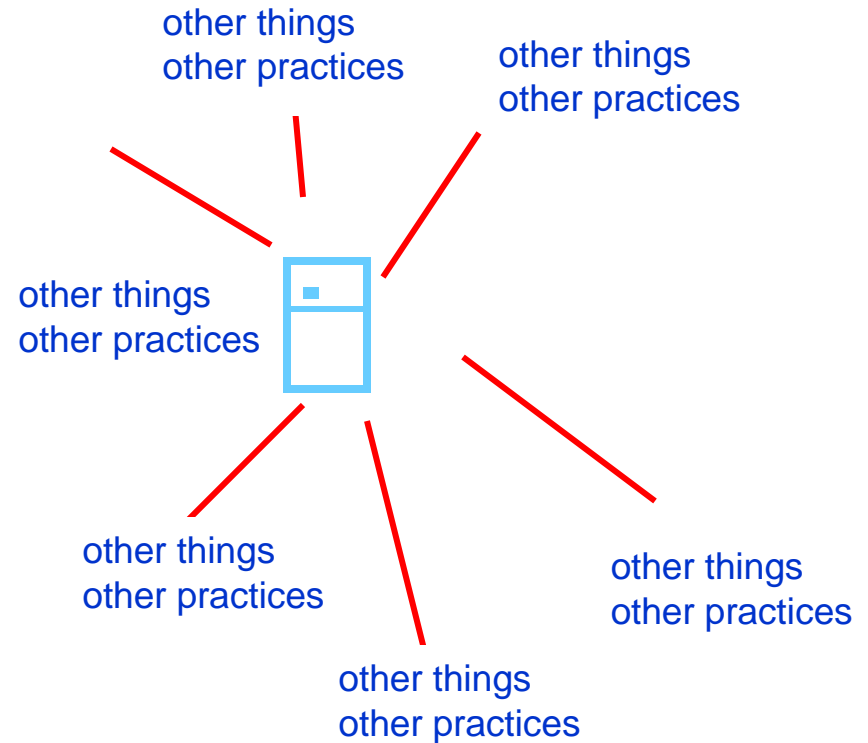
# Freezing

An established appliance: the 'need' is now for more freezers, larger freezers and more types of frozen space: we discover co-existing, sticky links between **freezing, food and family**



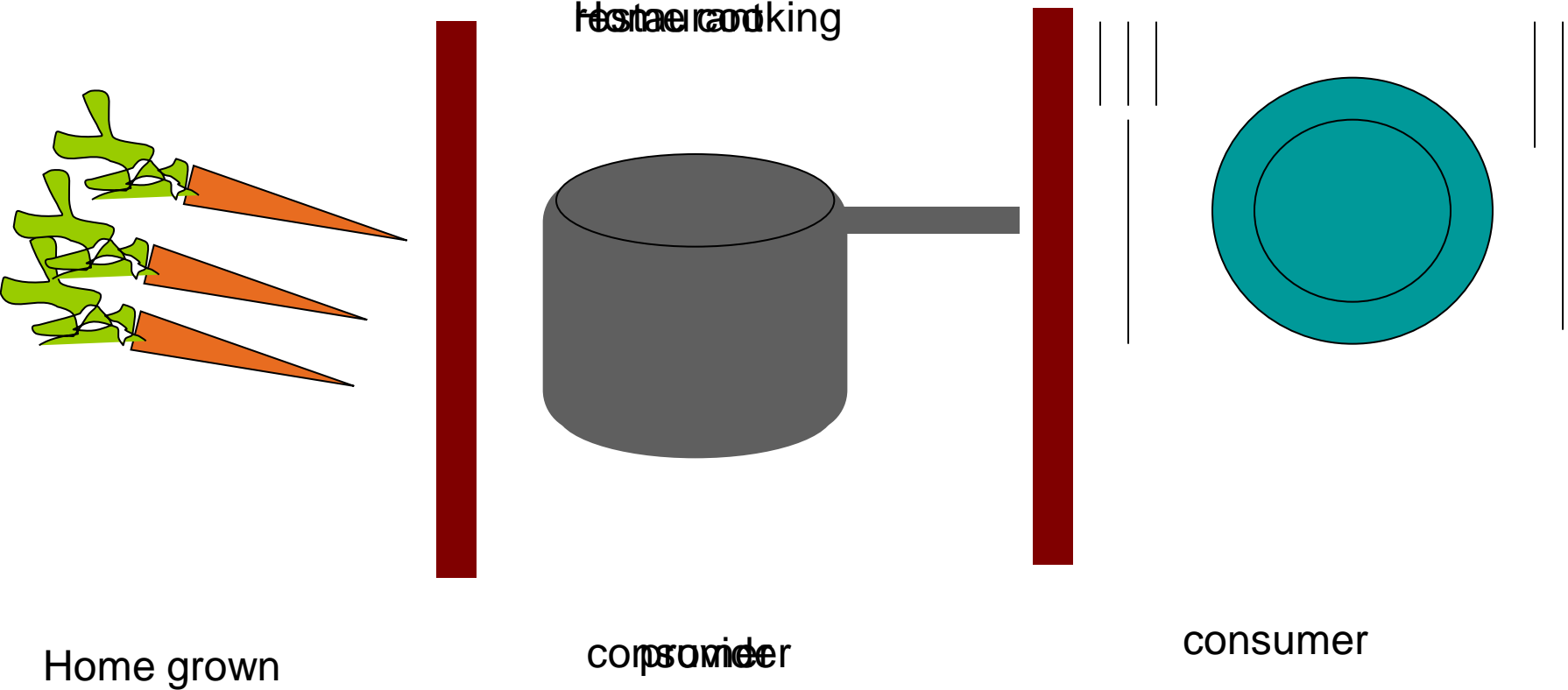
## Freezer Lessons

1. **Material objects as part of a system**
2. **The 'object' changes as the system changes**
3. **Houses and their contents are implicated in the reproduction and transformation of everyday life (e.g. loss of the larder)**



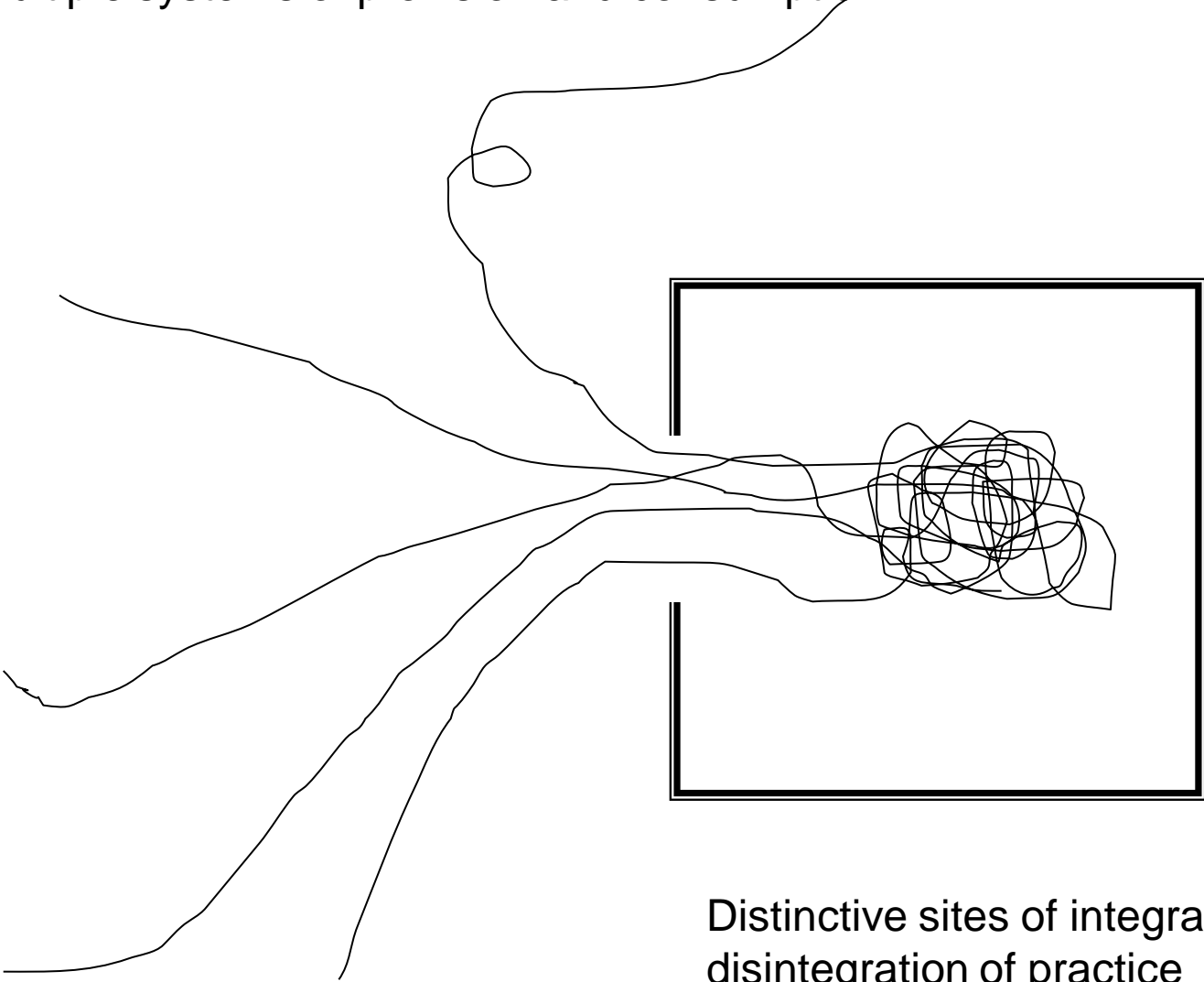
# Consuming within and outside the home

## *Provisioning from ingredients to plate*





Consumption junctions: houses as part of multiple systems of provision and consumption

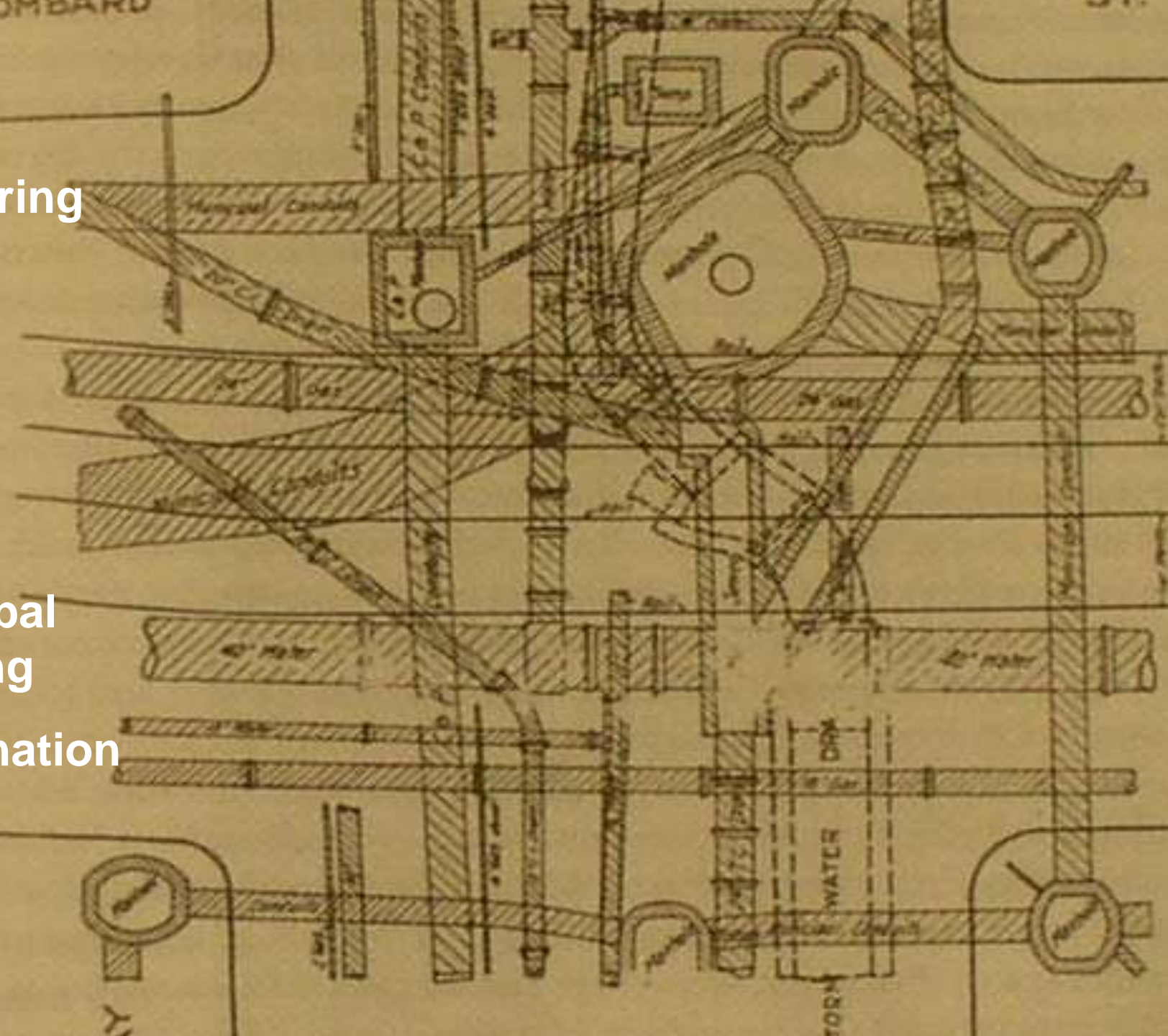


Distinctive sites of integration and disintegration of practice

LOMBARD

Hardwiring

municipal  
planning  
coordination



# Beyond consumer choice: the collective dynamics of practice

Implications.....

New **images**

New materials

New **competences**

Companies and governments contribute to the reconfiguration of everyday practices and injunctions

Technologies are not innocent – orchestrating demand

Suites of technologies matter

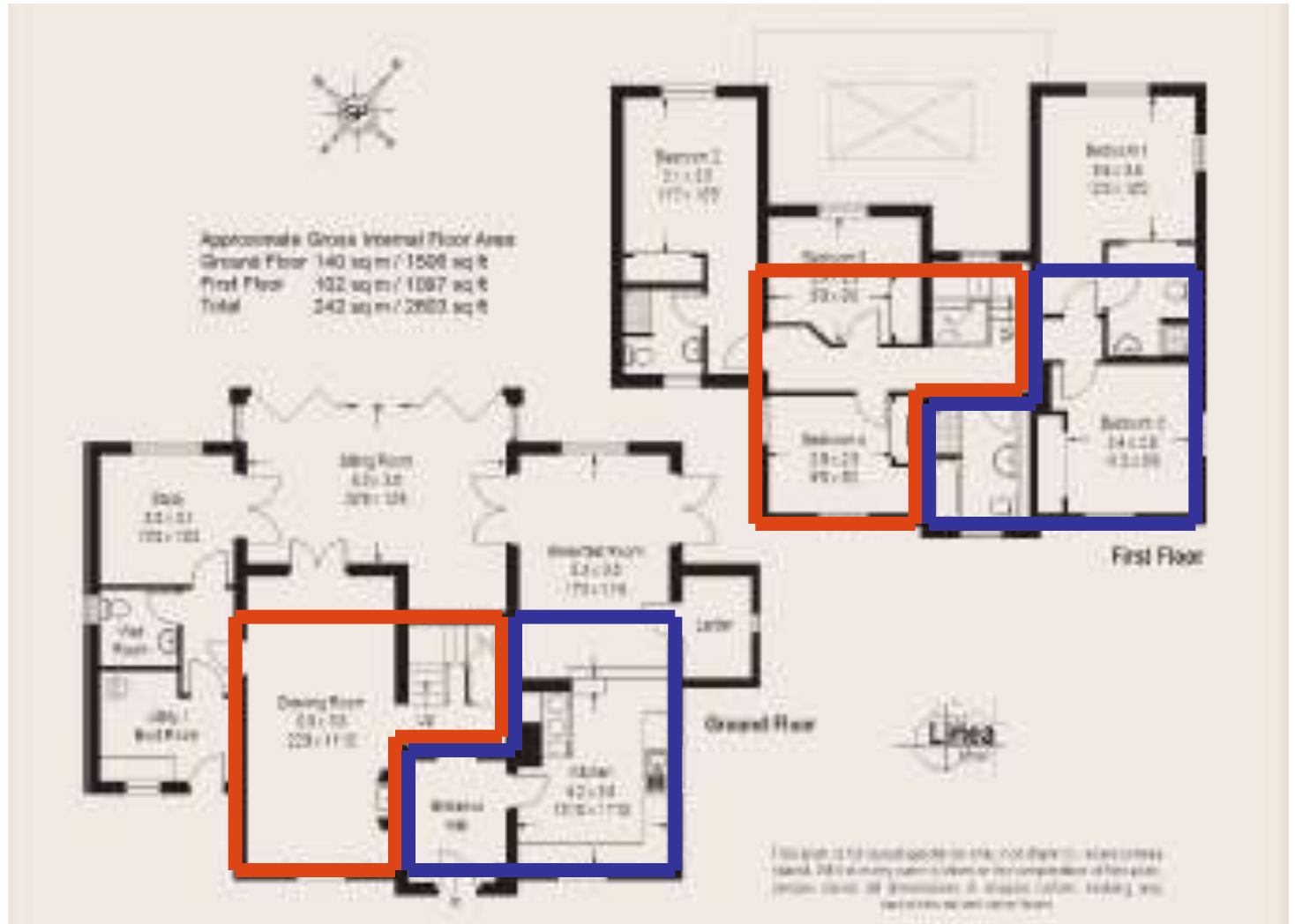
# implications for

“The house is a static object: but the people who live in it are not ... housing is the background – the stage-that allows us to act. It is the set, the locale, where we play out our lives with other actors and their sets overlapping and interlinking with ours”  
(King, ENHR2006)

# Housing theory

# Dynamic Stage: configuring and scripting (not just background)

- Parlour
- Living room
- Dining room
- Study
- Bedroom
- Drawing room
- Larder
- Bathroom
- En suite
- Etc.







The good life  
in full view

Parkside living  
by Meletis Homes

Visit the Discovery Pavilion



Stunning 4 bedroom  
homes on sale now



The new standard of living.

**aurora**

by McUrban >>>



# Configuring practice: Melbourne



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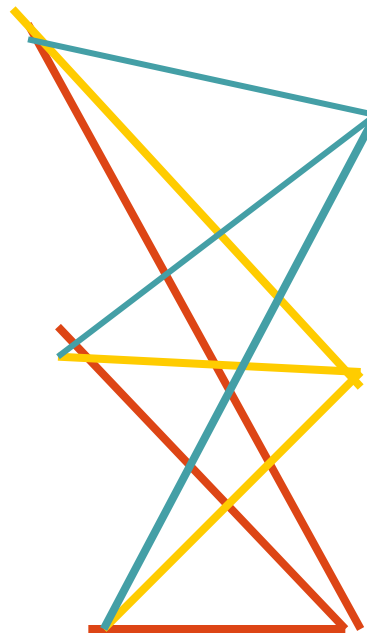
Go

# Explaining changing patterns of consumption, sustainability and housing

Material culture –  
desire, having and  
doing, the flow of stuff,  
extensions

The fabric of the building,  
insulation, passive solar etc.  
utilities and infrastructures

Distribution, density, ideology



*theories of*  
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# Highlights and shadows

Government, policy

Everyday experience



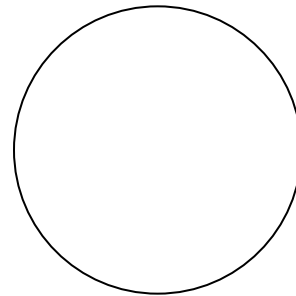
**Fabric, features,  
materials,  
technologies -  
efficiency**

Interaction with the  
infrastructure; practical  
knowledge (heating,  
cooling)



Inscribed ways of life,  
habits, routines and  
practices -  
consumption

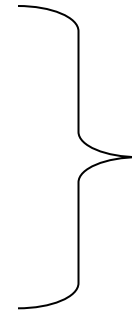
**Acquiring new goods,  
consumption, stocks  
of stuff, space and  
technology**



Linking ideas

1

Home  
House  
Housing



As outcomes of and at the same time implicated in the reproduction of social practices

Housing theory could inform

2

Responses to climate change (beyond efficiency and into demand)

Understanding infrastructures of consumption and production

Transitions in practice and the circulation of materials, images and competence

3

Providing sustainability is seen as more than eco efficient design and providing that homes, houses and housing are seen as active elements in rather than passive backdrops to daily life.



# Housing (theory) as a new focus

