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
As a site of symbolic meaning; material culture; taste and expression, mantlepiece 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
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
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?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Grandparents’ house</th>
<th>Parents’ house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area per person</td>
<td>18m²</td>
<td>66.5m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof</td>
<td>Timber, mud, straw</td>
<td>Reinforced concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External walls</td>
<td>Stone and mud</td>
<td>Reinforced concrete frame, brick and cement mortar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External openings</td>
<td>3 timber doors</td>
<td>14 doors and windows with aluminium frames and imported glass, 1 door of imported timber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal finishes</td>
<td>Natural gypsum</td>
<td>Processed gypsum, vinyl paint, ceramic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floors</td>
<td>White soil</td>
<td>Ceramic, terrazzo and carpet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal services</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Copper, galvanised steel and PVC pipe, PVC covered copper wire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External services</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Copper, galvanised steel, salt glazed earthenware and PVC pipe, aluminium wire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>Animal oil</td>
<td>Electricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space heating</td>
<td>Wood burning fire</td>
<td>Diesel oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space cooling</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Electricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking and washing</td>
<td>Wood burning fire</td>
<td>Gas, diesel, oil, electricity, solar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of comfort</td>
<td>Inhabitants experience a wide range of conditions</td>
<td>Inhabitants experience a narrow range of conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of lighting</td>
<td>Limited control</td>
<td>Extensive control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servicing the dwelling</td>
<td>Takes considerable time</td>
<td>Takes barely any time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network</td>
<td>Local friends and relatives</td>
<td>International networks, electronic communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Golton 1994
Embedded and dynamic practices in the kitchen and bathroom

Sustainable technologies programme

Dale Southerton
Sociology, Manchester

Martin Hand
Sociology, Queens University, Ontario

Elizabeth Shove
Sociology, Lancaster

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.

- Preservation and procurement
- Value for money
- Convenience and temporal coordination
- Self service
- Marginalisation and specialisation
- Frozen as last resort
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*

Home grown

Provider

Consumer

Systems of provision and home, house, housing
Consumption junctions: houses as part of multiple systems of provision and consumption

Distinctive sites of integration and disintegration of practice
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
Configuring practice: Melbourne
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
Highlights and shadows

Government, policy

Fabric, features, materials, technologies - efficiency

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

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

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

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

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

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