Consumer Resistance, Coherent Inconsistencies, and New Consumption Communities

Dr. Caroline Moraes

Lecturer in Marketing

Birmingham Business School

Tel: +44 (0) 121 414 6696 / Fax: +44 (0) 121 414 7791

c.moraes@bham.ac.uk

Prof. Isabelle Szmigin

Professor of Marketing

Birmingham Business School

University of Birmingham

University House

Birmingham B15 2TY

Tel: +44 (0)121 414 7357 / Fax: +44 (0)121 414 7791

i.t.szmigin@bham.ac.uk

Dr. Marylyn Carrigan

Senior Lecturer in Marketing

Open University Business School

The Open University

Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

Tel: +44 (0) 1908 654741 / Fax: +44 (0) 1908 655898

m.carrigan@open.ac.uk

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Abstract

This study examines and problematizes what has been conceptualised as attitude-behaviour gaps (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000), and explores how groups of resistant consumers have re-construed such practices and their meanings through the formation of New Consumption Communities (NCCs). Ethnographic findings stress the importance of normative and habitual reframing through 'ethical spaces' (Barnett et al. 2005) in establishing and maintaining increased consistency in participants' consumption meanings, behaviours and goals. We suggest that such communities' discourses are coherent and can only be viewed as inconsistent in relation to their consumption practices if the communities are theorised as anti-market and/or anti-consumption. Thus we re-frame attitude-behaviour gaps as coherent inconsistencies.

Consumer resistance, herein defined from an *etic* perspective as consumers' ability to withstand and respond to undesired market discourses, practices and players, has received considerable attention from the media, business practitioners and academics in the past few years. Resistance behaviours vary in intensity and degree of adoption, and comprise phenomena such as downshifting (Gandolfi and Cherrier 2008), voluntary simplicity (McDonald et al. 2006), anti-consumption (Zavestoski 2002), radical environmentalism (Dobscha 1998), subversion of advertising messages (Rumbo 2002), illegal music sharing (Giesler and Pohlmann 2003) and community-supported agricultural schemes (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). Firms are increasingly under the scrutiny of such groups, and documentaries such as *Supersize Me* (on the health issues associated with the over-consumption of fast-food burgers) and *The Corporation* (which compares corporate behaviour to that of psychopaths) have contributed to raising public awareness of questionable corporate activities. Now companies that do not 'genuinely' or 'consistently' adopt more responsible and ethical marketing strategies are subject to much cynicism, and Crane (2005) alerts us to the ethical challenges and paradoxes faced by organisations that attempt to respond accordingly.

Although resistant consumers are quick to recognise inconsistencies in corporate behaviour, resistance groups themselves have been accused of hypocrisy and lack of self-reflexivity in light of their use of marketing tools and apparently inconsistent behaviours (Higgins and Tadajewski 2002). Attitude-behaviour gaps (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000) have been identified both amongst mainstream consumers (Chatzidakis et al. 2004; Chatzidakis, Hibbert, and Smith 2007) and within resistant consumers (Kozinets 2002; Dobscha 1998). However, such studies have been criticised for their restricted scope and for providing limited understanding of the phenomena at hand (Chatzidakis et al. 2004). They have also been critiqued for their over focus upon individual decision-making and agency, and for addressing consumers as rational beings who are somewhat disconnected from wider socio-cultural processes (Dolan 2002). Instead, and following Connolly and Prothero (2008; Ward 2005), we view consumers first and foremost as people; people engaged in meaningful and socially-embedded everyday discourses and practices, green or otherwise, which involve the (symbolic) consumption (purchase, usage, and/or disposal) of material goods. This stance, therefore, suggests a view of consumption as deeply intertwined with social relations and norms, thus making individual behavioural change toward sustainability a matter of changing social norms and relations (Barnett et al. 2005; Jackson 2005). Such a position also questions the concept of 'attitude-behaviour gap' itself in that consumers' inconsistencies may be seen

as signs of their meaningful, albeit at times contradictory, interactions with and co-constructions of markets (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2006).

Given the criticisms and research gaps outlined above, this paper seeks to problematize the attitude-behaviour gap concept through the literature review and answer the following question: how have particular groups of resistant consumers addressed (some of) their attitude-behaviour inconsistencies? Specifically, we explore attitude-behaviour inconsistencies, and improvements in such inconsistencies, through the meaningful and socially-embedded everyday practices of New Consumption Communities (NCCs). NCCs have been conceptualised as the development, over time, of consumption communities, which provide alternative forms of thinking and consumption to an increasingly varied range of individuals (Szmigin, Carrigan, and Bekin 2007). NCCs are sustained around a sense of community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) developed through consumer engagement in boycotts, voicing of concerns and buycotts (Friedman 1996). NCCs are encompassing, ranging from Fairtrade Towns (formed through steering groups of committed mainstream consumers and limited to a single issue, namely fair trade), through to those highly committed to various interrelated issues, such as intentional and sustainable communities (comprising broad lifestyle changes and production-engaged approaches to consumption). In their own ways, NCCs represent positive, localised, and context-specific consumer responses to unwanted societal and environmental consequences of consumer culture. They embody individual as well as communal discourses and practices, which range from patronage of positive alternatives (e.g. organic produce, recycled paper) through to reduction, modification, and consumption avoidance.

In this paper we examine the observed and experienced consumption practices and lifestyles of varied NCCs, and the social processes through which greener modes of consumption are established and normalised. We explore the potential role played by habits, environmental cues and social norms in propagating, changing, as well as reducing the inconsistencies between attitudes and behaviours in relation to reduced consumption, green products and green lifestyles. The theories discussed below facilitate the problematization of the attitude-behaviour gap concept.

ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOUR GAPS AND 'RATIONAL CONSUMER' PERSPECTIVES

As put by Caruana (2007), the emphasis on positivist perspectives across the green and ethical consumption literature has led to a significant bias toward research examining the

cognitive aspects of individual consumer behaviour. Indeed, in such studies consumers tend to be seen as rational decision-makers (e.g. Chatzidakis et al. 2007; Shaw and Shiu 2002; Shaw et al. 2007) disconnected from wider socio-cultural processes (Dolan 2002). This is particularly the case with research based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and its extended version, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991). Despite the model's popularity within the consumer research literature, the gaps between intentions and behaviours remain unexplained. This has prompted the development of alternative reasoned action theories based on the volitional factors impinging upon behaviour (cf. Bagozzi 1993; Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990) and, in the case of ethical consumption, new constructs (namely, ethical obligation and self-identity) have been added to the model (cf. Shaw and Shiu 2002) in order to augment its predictive ability. However, such theories maintain the focus on reasoned action, and scant attention is given to habits or the social processes, contexts and incentive structures that embed behaviour.

Furthermore, researchers adopting qualitative methodologies (e.g. Chatzidakiset al. 2007; Chatzidakis et al. 2004; McDonald et al. 2006; McEachern et al. 2007; Newholm 2005) have also theorised such attitude-behaviour discrepancies at the level of individual agency within the context of ethical and green consumption. Chatzidakiset al. (2007) and Chatzidakis et al. (2004), for example, have added to the extant literature by using Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralisation to conceptualise the gaps between attitude and behaviour. According to Chatzidakis and colleagues, these neutralisation techniques present five rationalisations which can help consumers alleviate the impact of their behaviour upon their social relationships and self-concept. These techniques entail denial of responsibility (one does not feel responsible towards the outcomes of the behaviour), denial of injury (denial that someone actually suffered as a result of the behaviour), denial of victim (the view that the suffering parties deserved what they got), condemning the condemners (the belief that those who condemn engage in similar behaviour) and appeal to higher loyalties (the behaviour is justified based on the higher goal one aimed to achieve). Chatzidakis et al. (2004, 531) contend that neutralisation is applicable whenever "there is an ethical concern that may trouble the consumer with respect to performing a certain action, which is (…) contrary to the direction that this concern dictates." Through their exploratory findings, the authors suggest that neutralisation is not always effective in ameliorating guilt and dissonance regarding ethical consumer behaviour, with potentially damaging effects for the self-concept. Despite these authors' significant contribution to theory development within the area of ethical consumption, they remain focused specifically on the cognitive processes of consumer

behaviour and also neglect the social processes embedding behavioural inconsistencies. Finally, Shepherd (2002) explores the experiences and ethical consumption of a community of radical environmentalists through the theoretical lens of rational self-work and asceticism drawing on Weber's sociology of religion. Although consistency was sought and buttressed by strict normative consumption codes within the community, inconsistencies still existed and such findings were sidelined by the author. Underlying the studies reviewed above is the assumption that people want and are able to seek consistency in their consumer choices, which we believe reflects a limited understanding of attitude-behaviour gaps.

THE COHERENCE OF BEHAVIOURAL INCONSISTENCIES

Attitude-behaviour gaps have also been problematised by interpretive studies (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; Carrigan and Attalla 2001). For example, McEachern et al. (2007) conceptualise the role of flexibility and cognitive dissonance in what they have termed conscious consumption contexts. Their study reveals behavioural inconsistencies which might be seen as imperfections in consumers' self-integrity. However, unlike Chatzidakis's studies reviewed above (Chatzidakiset al. 2007; Chatzidakis et al. 2004) McEachern and colleagues suggest their respondents freely discussed their behaviours without justification. Inconsistency was not considered important enough to produce dissonance; hence the lack of rationalisation about inconsistent choices. Indeed, the adoption of flexible approaches to ethical consumption allowed conscious consumers to manage the difficulties of accommodating their desires, budgets and ethical concerns.

Newholm (2005), on the other hand, argues that these so-called inconsistencies can actually be seen as coherent if we look at consumers' ethical consumption as part of their overall life projects. In his research, Newholm (2005) found that self-nominated, individual ethical consumers adopted three main sense-making strategies mediated by culture and context, namely distancing (avoiding certain products, but replacing them with positive substitutes), integrating (sense-making of one's life aspects, including the non-ethical, according to ideas that also made ethical consumption meaningful), and rationalising (celebrating consumption, but also acting ethically when considerable consumption-related injustices are perceived). Although some participants sought integrity and consistency, others were happy with, and embracing of, the fragmented nature of their behaviours. Consumers' life projects, argues Newholm, are embedded in complex, contradictory and sometimes morally-irresolvable environments; they are constrained by what is possible to attain.

Indeed, this resonates with Connolly and Prothero's (2008) perspective on green consumption. Questioning the instrumental ways in which consumers are expected to regulate their consumer choices, the authors consider green consumption through the conceptual lens of reflexive modernisation and identity drawing on Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992). Central to their arguments is the notion of a dialectic relationship between globalisation and self-projects. Globalising influences and their individuated social relations, it is argued, impact on projects of self-identity as much as the process of shaping the self (through commodities) influences global strategies. This is seen to be circumscribed by a context of systemic risks, and the uncertainties caused by competing expert and lay knowledge in relation to such risks. Although green consumption is important in shaping and maintaining empowered green identities, there is much uncertainty about the choices to be made (Connolly and Prothero 2008). 'Green' is but one aspect of participants' sense of identity; it involves constant negotiation and uneasy compromise, and while social relationships and roles can put pressure on one's green and moral beliefs, moral and green concerns can also put pressure on one's social relations (Connolly and Prothero 2008). In the study, participants insulate some aspects and practices of their lifestyles from their green concerns, consciously or not, with some occasional inconsistencies arising due to what is possible to achieve.

The theoretical lens adopted by Connolly and Prothero (2008) highlights that, although people feel empowered and responsible for environmental issues at an individual level, this is coupled with the insecurities of not knowing what the 'right choices' are (Connolly and Prothero 2008). Overall, Connolly and Prothero's (2008) work helps us to understand the meaningful coherence of arguably contradictory consumption behaviour. Therefore, we suggest a theoretical shift from 'gaps' to 'coherent inconsistencies', which are discursively and practically meaningful to environmentally-concerned consumers. However, such contradictions still pose challenges to policy makers, so furthering our understanding of such phenomena is justified. Thus, the role of norms, habits and environmental cues in perpetuating coherent inconsistencies are further examined below.

THE ROLE FOR NORMS, HABITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CUES

Jackson (2005) considers the implications of consumer behaviour theories to the realm of sustainable consumption and behavioural change. The author reminds us that material goods play vital symbolic roles in our lives, and facilitate culturally embedded, complex social communication. This, in turn, suggests that rather than being rational

decision-makers, we are usually 'locked in' to our inconsistent consumption patterns due to factors such as restricted choice, inequality in access, institutional barriers and (lack of) incentive structures, habits, social norms, as well as expectations based on prevailing cultural values (Jackson 2005).

Particularly relevant for the purpose of the present study is Jackson's (2005) view that consumers are constantly influenced by social norms which reprimand or encourage certain behavioural choices. We view social norms as guidelines, principles for action, or controls for behaviour as provided by a particular social group (Varman and Costa 2008). Indeed, social norms are central to the endurance and cohesion of groups and communities. They encompass social rewards and/or punishments for particular types of behaviour, as well as shared emotions and expected reactions by relevant others (Varman and Costa 2008). In the relationship marketing literature, norms are seen as instrumental, that is, as serving to help members of a particular group or community to achieve desirable and efficient utilitarian and economic goals, and as cultural rules aimed at fostering emotionally fulfilling social and socially-embedded market relationships (Varman and Costa 2008). We view these two perspectives as complementary, and believe that norms have both utilitarian and cultural functions within social relations and in our relationships with material possessions.

Drawing on social identity theory, Jackson (2005) argues that key behaviours are often stirred by a propensity toward inter-group competition and intra-group solidarity, and that these theories suggest behavioural change must take place at the social level. Like Verplanken and Wood (2006) below, Jackson (2005) states that, although reasoned action and expectancy value models place cognitive processes as the drivers of behaviour, in practice much everyday behaviour occurs with little cognitive deliberation, which helps us to cope with information-dense environments. Jackson suggests that the processes of routinisation of everyday behaviours makes them even less visible and perceptible to consumers' cognitive deliberations; that for change to occur we must unfreeze habits, and make common practices visible and discursively available. Recent research (Barnett 2007,19) supports Jackson's argument that ethical consumption initiatives are most likely to succeed when they find ways to enable change "in practical routines of consumption," whether at the level of household or collective infrastructures of urban consumption (Clarke et al. 2007).

Much like Connolly and Prothero (2008), Jackson (2005) views consumption as a collection of social practices that impact, and are impacted by, lifestyle choices, social norms, societal structures and institutions (Jackson 2005). The author highlights that although most routine behaviour is enacted through practical consciousness, goal-oriented actions such as

sustainable (or resistance) consumption practices require that such routine behaviours be raised to discursive consciousness. Jackson (2005) also suggests that individualised approaches to behavioural change are ineffective, and argues that we must release behavioural lock-ins through the creation of appropriate institutional structures and incentives, with appropriate access to pro-environmental choice, grass-root community initiatives, and exemplar practices and policies.

Verplanken and Wood (2006) are also concerned with structural interventions to change everyday behaviour, and their work provides significant insights into the role habits and environmental cues can play in closing the gaps in consumption contexts. The authors argue that informational interventions are unlikely to succeed (particularly in the long run) as they aim to change people's beliefs and intentions without tackling the socio-structural factors which sustain habits. They suggest that as consumers repeat everyday behaviours their decision-making withdraws, and such behaviours tend to become mechanically prompted by contextual and environmental factors. Habit formation, they argue, involves "associations in memory between actions and stable features of the circumstances in which they are performed", and habitual responses are triggered directly by contexts and circumstances without contribution from consumers' intentions and cognitive deliberations (Verplanken and Wood 2006, 91). This highlights the shortcomings of the reasoned action approaches discussed above, and supports the view that attitude-behaviour inconsistencies exist, at least in part, because positive attitudes toward a behaviour do not necessarily lead to the performance of the intended behaviour. According to Verplanken and Wood (2006), environmental cues may comprise internal states (e.g. moods) as well as the company of usual interaction colleagues. Habit learning is a motivational as well as a cognitive process, in which action control is outsourced to the setting and thus triggered by the appropriate situations (Verplanken and Wood 2006). Therefore, 'inconsistency-reduction' interventions entail disrupting the environmental factors that prompt habitual behaviour in the first place (Verplanken and Wood 2006). The authors suggest two possible routes to habit change, namely a 'downstream plus' approach, in which information is provided at points in which habits are susceptible to change, combined with an 'upstream' approach, in which critical features of the behaviour performance environment are disrupted and re-created prior to the occurrence of the habitual behaviour. Upstream approaches are aimed at altering structural conditions that embed consumer behaviour, including economic incentives, legislation, environmental design, technological development and norms; the stronger the habits the bigger the need for upstream interventions (Verplanken and Wood 2006).

As discussed above, our aim in this paper is to address the research gaps and issues identified in the literature by contextually exploring attitude-behaviour inconsistencies, and improvements in such discrepancies, through an examination of the observed and experienced consumption practices of NCCs. How do they sustain green(er) habits, routines, norms and environmental cues, and are gaps still present in their daily lives? We focus on the processes through which creative, production-engaged practices, discourses and choices help establish and maintain greener forms of consumption – or 'prosumption' (Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007) – in the communities. The ethnographic methodology is discussed below.

METHODOLOGY

Aided by websites, online and off-line directories (x3), we purposefully located a range of communities which matched the notion of NCCs. Ten communities were selected and emailed, and five agreed to take part in the study (Hockerton, Woodland, Fallowfields, Sunny-Valley and Stone-Hall). Our e-mails emphasised the volunteering visit request for research purposes, and we began the one-day to one-week visits in February 2004. Some communities were visited several times, while others were visited only once. Due to recurrent referrals, an additional community (Spiritual) was included in the fieldwork. We visited Futurefarms at a later stage to add a 'mainstream' approach to NCC (see table 1).

Table 1: NCCs' Profiles

Community	Description
Fallowfields Community (pseudonym)	Founded in 1950 as an educational trust. Eighteen members at the time of research. Some shared and some independent housing. Values based on living 'a peaceful life'. During fieldwork the community was undergoing an ethos-searching period, with environmental causes gaining prominence.
Futurefarms (real name)	A UK-based community cooperative formed in 2004 in Martin, Hampshire. Its eight founding members resided separately, but in the same parish. Their aim was to produce as much of their daily food as possible on local lands. The non-profit cooperative was set up as a response to members' concerns with food mileage, detrimental to the environment and indicative of the poor relationship between producer and consumer.
HHP - Hockerton Housing Project (real name)	The UK's first ecologically sound, energy-efficient, earth-sheltered housing complex, launched in 1998. It was built by five resident families who produced 100% of their own wind energy, grew organic food, and had their own sewage, water collection and filtering systems.

	Members were committed to a community business that comprised guided tours, educational and specialist workshops. HHP (henceforth) considered itself a best practice example and catalyst for sustainable living.
Spiritual Community (pseudonym)	Pioneering, holistic enterprise whose aim was spiritual (non-religious) education. Rural-based eco-village with several communal buildings for workshops, housing, ethical shops and hall used for conferences and performances. Inspirational example to other communities. Around 500 permanent and volunteer members and thousands of visitors per year. Non-profit charity, with body of trustees. Devoted to sustainability with energy windmills, organic sewage system, and eco-housing. Had its own community currency.
Stone-Hall Community (pseudonym)	Holistic education centre ran by a resident cooperative group and administered by a trust. Main building with guest rooms, as well as several communal areas such as, e.g., the laundry room and community kitchen. Reared livestock, grew produce, and were committed to recycling. All members worked full-time for the community. Had environmental goals, with own water spring, reed-bed sewage, composting and wood burners.
Sunny-Valley Community (pseudonym)	Co-housing cooperative in shared house on rural land. Eleven members celebrated the community's 10th anniversary in 2004. Group of adjacent cottages were sold/ mortgaged by the trust, and members shared maintenance responsibilities. Their ethos had a strong ecological focus and respect for diversity. Good links with local village. Organized local composting scheme and took part in local community currency scheme.
Woodland Community (pseudonym)	Co-housing initiative formed 30 years ago. Fifty-eight members at the time of research. Rural. Volunteers supplemented the community. Spaces were communal with shared kitchen, laundry, social rooms etc. Values included self-sufficiency, cooperative living and low environmental impact.

This fieldwork design, in which the practices are what links the communities, is consistent with a multi-sited or multi-locale ethnographic approach (Amit 2000; Marcus 1995), in which notions of field, non-field and site are interrogated (Knowles 2000; Marcus 2000; Pink 2000). In multi-sited or multi-locale ethnographies, a world of overlapping contexts and interconnectedness is perceived to exist; the researcher plays a major role in constructing the field, defying notions of immersion which imply the existence of 'the field' independently of the fieldwork that is done (Amit 2000). This opens up a multiplicity of possibilities to study 'the field' (Amit 2000).

The timing, variation and duration of the visits were a result of acknowledging the sensitivities of the different communities and their willingness to provide access. One researcher acted as a full-time volunteer in most of the communities (Fallowfields, Stone-Hall, Sunny-Valley, Woodland and part-time at Spiritual), and this meant fully experiencing community life and performing a range of activities. It also meant listening to conversations

about positive and negative personal views of community life, and socialising in natural settings. A number of informal and depth-interviews were carried out, although participation proved difficult. We collected newsletters, flyers and course brochures, and the communities' websites were continuously analysed and checked for updates. We also requested written life story narratives from members and visitors of some of the communities in situations where interviews were deemed impractical (HHP and Spiritual). All materials were transcribed and coded, and analytical themes emerged from a hermeneutic process of reading the whole and the parts (Thompson 2004). We discuss themes that have been reviewed by a key participant ('Cynthia'). We also interweave the thematic narrative with a more contextualised discussion of the theories introduced in the previous sections as well as complementary literature where deemed appropriate. This resembles what Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007, 140) have called "grounded reading in data." Personal as well as collective discourses and practices have been thematically analysed around notions of inconsistencies reduced through creative reconnections with production; the meanings associated with such reconnections; and the importance of 'ethical spaces' in raising issues to discursive consciousness, in breaking and re-creating habits, and in maintaining pro-environmental norms.

COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY: CREATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL RECONNECTION WITH PRODUCTION

Consumer creativity and entrepreneurship were employed by the communities as tools for coping with attitude-behaviour inconsistencies emanating from the uncertainties of reflexive modernisation (Connolly and Prothero 2008). Collective discourses and practices were built around concerns with the impacts of systemic risks (Thompson 2005), namely the perceived disconnect between producer and consumer, environmental degradation and the risks of climate change, lack of respect for diversity and spiritual values, lack of cooperation and some degree of self-sufficiency, as well as a lack of educational and personal development opportunities. Futurefarms, for example, overtly linked environmental risks to the disconnect between food producer and consumer, which they redressed through local and cooperative food production and consumption. In the process of dealing with such global risks, members' green identities shaped, and were shaped by, such threats (Connolly and Prothero 2008):

I have a real need to learn how to be self-sufficient. I don't know if I can put my finger on it, but I feel I need to learn everything. I feel this impending doom, actually, and maybe

survival counts on me learning how to grown vegetables… Yeah, I need to pass these skills to my kids, and I think these are skills that have been lost. [Stone-Hall/Cynthia]

Cynthia's views echo the values of voluntary simplifiers (Etzioni 1998; McDonald et al. 2006; Shaw and Newholm 2002; Zavestoski 2002), found to a lesser extent at Futurefarms and HHP. Such concerns and values could be analysed as radical and oppositional to consumer culture (see Shepherd 2002). However, in all interviewed participants' views, their lifestyles represented nuanced alternative ways of living, and their efforts were attempts to positively redress perceived shortcomings. (See Moraes, Szmigin, and Carrigan (2009) for further elaboration on resistance at NCCs.) The communities' varied alternative practices indicated a creative reconnection with production, which, in turn, allowed for localised control over some of the risks emanating from large-scale production processes. Amongst these practices were cooperative organisation, engagement in alternative economics and local bartering, community businesses, varied levels of self-sufficiency and food growing. People acted as producers of their own consumables; at once producers and consumers in fluid and localised (but networked) settings. They were active and entrepreneurial producer-consumers; double agents (Cova et al. 2007) in their community spaces. Such reconnection with production allowed the communities' members to reduce the gap between their attitudes toward environmental risks and their behaviour as consumers, limited, of course, by what is possible to achieve within market economies (Connolly and Prothero 2008; Newholm 2005).

Re-enchanting Production-Engaged Consumption Meanings

The communities' entrepreneurial production-consumption engagements also enabled the creation of re-enchanted personal meanings and unique symbolic experiences in relation to food growing and community work. This included 'prosumer' (Cova et al. 2007) experiences of sense of community, personal development, spirituality, empowerment, control and trust over quality and provenance, and ethical production-consumption-disposal.

For example, vegetable and fruit gardening both enabled, and was enabled by a sense of community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2002). In this way, community relations led to a convenient end to all things and people governed through community, and were simultaneously productive and social:

We can all work together, and obviously I wouldn't have massive patches of land and…I wouldn't be able to cope with all the digging and that kind of thing. So, in a way, community makes it really easy to be able to do it. [Stone-Hall/Cynthia]

Indeed, community ties and relationships were established by, and essential to the establishment and maintenance of, consistent forms of production-engaged green consumption. This emphasises the relevance of normative social frameworks in instituting particular modes of consumption (Jackson 2005; Varman and Costa 2008). It also implies that 'green gaps' and new habits can be achieved through localised community groups, which is not highlighted by Verplanken and Wood (2006), for example.

As in Shepherd's (2002) work, personal development was experienced through learning new skills, new attitudes, and rewarding ways of relating to community work and people, which at times enabled a sense of spirituality and love. This suggests the importance of highlighting, through downstreaming messages, the *positive* personal gains that can be achieved through environment-friendly lifestyles. Of course, sometimes the need to be efficient got in the way of enjoyment, which was the case at Futurefarms and HHP. But reconnection with production also meant more control and trust over quality and provenance, thus reducing the perceived risks and uncertainties associated with current modes of food production, and empowering those involved:

If somebody two doors down is growing your cabbages, you can say to them, 'what have you fed them with?', and you can be really close to the way that it's grown, whereas if you're buying in a shop from somebody you don't know, you've got absolutely no idea whether it's been sprayed every week for the past six months... [Futurefarms/Susanne]

In most participants' view, their reconnection to production on a small, personal scale was also enabling of more consistent, environmentally-sound consumption practices:

The way we're producing it is more ethical and more responsible. I'm particularly concerned about animal welfare so I know that the way we're producing our chickens and our pigs, they have a good life. Obviously they have to die in the end, but that bit I don't think is unethical… I also think it's unethical to use artificial fertilizers which cause great pollution and also take a huge amount of energy to produce. [Futurefarms/Janette]

Most importantly, reengagement in food gardening and partial self-sufficiency also meant responsible creation of a circular link between production, consumption and disposal, which in turn enabled reduced inconsistencies and a sense of the ethical self:

It's about taking responsibility for all my consumer choices. I can see right through the process, and that makes me feel good about myself and who I am and the choices I make! [Stone-Hall/Cynthia]

A typical home in the UK uses about 4 tons of carbon dioxide to heat it, to have hot water, to light it, etc; other 4 tons to run a car at 10.000 miles a year; but the amount of tons

of carbon dioxide associated with the food that a typical UK householder has is about 8tons, so it's actually equivalent to all the energy in the house and all the energy in a typically-used car. So there's a real opportunity there to, if you are really serious about reducing your impact, to try and do something about that. It would be great to do all of them, you know, but if you've got to have an order then food is actually a good starting point. [HHP/Nick]

Production, consumption and waste, therefore, become interlinked and intertwined in a web of empowered green and responsible signifiers, which enable participants' ethical concerns to be discussed and practiced in relation to their identities as new consumers.

Greening Consumption through Production Reengagement

Production reconnection (to varied degrees), therefore, enabled control over preferred modes and practices of consumption with reduced inconsistencies. The communities sought to at once change consumption to try and influence (local) production (Hirschman 1970), and to reconnect to production to change and influence their own consumption. All communities apart from Fallowfields were dedicated to the production of at least some of their own food. At Futurefarms they grew vegetables, kept livestock for meat, and encouraged local residents to bring their excess produce to sell at their stalls. Other communities had large vegetable allotments, orchards, and green houses. All apart from Spiritual kept livestock; HHP had its own farmed fish and apiculture. Most processed some of their own foods, while Woodland made flour, cheese, butter, cream, yogurt, jams and tofu, and were the most self-sufficient in this area. NCCs' reengagement with food production encompassed diverse purposes, and the most externally-oriented concerned food miles and excessive packaging reduction. Other items such as seeds, gardening materials, maintenance tools, cleaning products and essential food stuffs were bulk-bought, but this enabled social links through positive choices:

We purchase quite a lot of stuff from Suma... They supply a lot of organic, fairly traded products. So we bulk-buy those for ourselves and we took a delivery on Sunday and it was split between three houses from here, two houses from the neighbours, one person who's friends with the project, so it's about six people involved. Our community seems to be growing at the moment! [HHP/Nick]

Although usually local and bought from wholesalers, bulk bought foods were not always organic or the most ethical alternatives. This was acknowledged by some of the communities and suggests attitude-behaviour gaps still exist.

Altered modes of production-engaged consumption related not only to what, but how the communities consumed. Reduced usage of products included the dilution of cleaning products in water prior to use (Fallowfields). At Stone-Hall, windows were cleaned with vinegar, and water was considered precious: because it came from their own wells and water shortage was possible during dry seasons, wastage through unnecessary toilet flushing and long showers was discouraged. HHP eliminated the need for heating due to its highly insulated and energy-efficient houses; internal temperatures varied between 18°C and 23°C throughout the year. These consumption restraints did not portray suffering or 'colder and darker places' (Connolly and Prothero 2003); rather their altered consumption practices seemed to liberate them from mainstream norms and created joy through the achievement of environmental goals. In their collective efforts, the communities created their own reduced usage norms, but consuming more ethically did not mean radically going without:

It's about making good use of our resources rather than being deprived… What I try and do is resist buying just for fashion. I still like to look smart, but I think the key thing is not just buy extra clothes just because you're bored with the other 15 shirts and pairs of jeans… It doesn't mean that I don't go and buy a Chilean bottle of wine. [HHP/Nick]

Indeed, sometimes the communities would use the ingredients they wanted to use, whether green or not. As seen above, while HHP reduced food mileage and the consumption of excessively packaged goods, 'green' as a product attribute seemed to come after taste, quality and possibly convenience. Other possible inconsistencies included the equipment of their homes - freezers, large-screen TVs and stereo systems. Notwithstanding, creative re-use of materials at HHP included turning the carcass of an old van into a garage for their tractor, and using cylindrical juice containers as water tanks for each house. Spiritual Community went even further and transformed used whisky barrels into houses. Consumer creativity with 'new products from old' reinforces alternative ways of consuming, which in turn are maintained via the communities' norms. There is a strong commitment to recycling and composting; common to all is a continuous drive to reduce their footprint, and this was reflected in a constant willingness to rethink, re-evaluate and improve their productive-consumer habits. Trade-offs occurred, of course, but these seemed to be overcome by the satisfaction with their differentiated sense of collective identity derived from their everyday production-engaged consumption activities.

Downstreaming and Upstreaming Production-Consumption Reconnection

The communities either ran their own or hosted holistic courses that doubled as outreach strategy and income. HHP, for example, offered consultancy services, workshops, publications and information packages on the technicalities of eco-building and setting up sustainable communities, and Spiritual's 'core' members were in charge of running, teaching and leading a large proportion of the community's educational courses, workshops and conferences. Such educational programmes attracted a huge number of visitors each year. The communities, therefore, acted as social agents for change toward sustainability, to varying degrees, utilising a 'downstream approach' (Verplanken and Wood 2006) that included information and education. HHP, Spiritual and Stone-Hall in particular had an impact on visitors, volunteers and guests, even if unintended, which involved an 'upstream approach': visitors had the opportunity to experience the communities' environmental discourses, norms and practices, as well as their differentiated green habits and values. Visitors' consumption habits were not always fully altered as a result of experiencing community life, but they became more aware of their environmental impact and the differences between the communities' practices and those of their own:

I would say that [Spiritual's] way of life is a neat feedback system - because they cut themselves off from the general energy and sewage systems they know exactly what waste they produce and how it has to be handled. In my life back at home, I feel that…even well-meaning people just don't give much thought to waste because it is literally someone else's problem. [Spiritual/Hilary]

My initial intent for volunteering at [Stone-Hall] was to have a place to stay and see a little bit of England. I was not expecting to have the eye opening experience that I had. I think that much of this came from being around people that truly respected the environment. [Stone-Hall/Sibyl]

I find I am more frugal. With each consumer choice, I really do ask myself, 'Do I really need this new item?' Just this morning, my granddaughter, whom I'm raising and is 13, was comparing her sense of the value of money to a rather spoiled classmate's. My granddaughter opined that even though her classmate's family (….) is free to decide whether or not to give to charity, and it's fine not to, then at least they should be 'aware', when they buy their child a second laptop, that there are children starving in poor areas of the world. My [Spiritual] experience helps me to be mindful as I live my life. [Spiritual/Helga]

Visitors questioned their own consumption practices and environmental impact. Contact with the communities made their routines 'back at home' more visible and thus prone to cognitive deliberations, therefore bringing common practices into discursive consciousness (Giddens 1984, in Jackson 2005).

Production-Engaged Ethical Spaces

A relevant theme emanating from the narrative presented above is the relevance of place. We see place as both groundedness/location and as an 'event in space', imbued with possibilities for new systems of meaning to emerge (Gibson-Graham 2006). Similar to what has been argued by Kozinets (2002), place is fundamental to the NCCs in this research, particularly in respect to the strength of the communities' ties and norms, their 'prosumer' abilities and meanings, and their ability to re-invent and maintain more consistent routines, habits and goals. Clearly the type of communities that took part in the research played a role in this. However, these NCCs were organised not by convenience or geographical location, but by common interests, social interaction and activity, which is consistent with Castells's (2002/2000) notion that it is the social relations that shape space and place.

More importantly, the communities acted as alternative consumption spaces (Williams and Paddock 2003; Williams, Windebank and Paddock 2005) for new production-engaged behaviours and new green meanings; spaces of collective entrepreneurialism and subjectivities, which enabled renewed normative frameworks. Their re-imagined living arrangements, lifestyles, hierarchies, norms as well as struggles, facilitated the communities' situated and green-inclined production-consumption. Cynthia and Jonathan (Stone-Hall), HHP's Nick and all Futurefarms participants referred to their ethical self-concepts through their reconnection with production and experiences of community life; they demonstrated knowledge of their innermost wants and 'undesired selves' (Hogg and Bannister 2001), barred from being due to their communo-spatial environments:

There's less opportunity to buy things, so I'm not walking around the supermarket going, 'oh I'll just have that'! I'm not ever inspired to just, I'm not ever… Yeah, I'm not ever tempted! I'm satisfied with the food here; it's really great for me. And I suppose TV as well; we don't have a TV so…Well, we have a TV, but we watch videos and things so there's none of that constant, 'you go out and buy cheese strings' or whatever they are… There's none of that, so it's really easy to not consume… [Stone-Hall/Cynthia]

Indeed, Cynthia and Norman viewed Stone-Hall as an 'ethical space' (Low and Davenport 2007); a safe-shell from consumer temptations and an aid in self-disciplinary techniques:

The ethical choices are being made for me, because I've joined this organisation where, or am part of this thing where things are sourced ethically in that way, so I'm not having to make the choices. And if I was let loose in a supermarket… [Stone-Hall/Norman]

They were not free from personal desires or 'inconsistencies;' rather, these innermost feelings and technologies of the self co-existed in interaction, reinvented and driven by the pleasure of achieving their collective ethical goals. Thus, to varied degrees, the NCCs in this study provided moral foundations and supportive social contexts for the performance of a collective consciousness; the enactment of collective spaces for ethical, production-engaged, and more cohesive consumption. Therefore, NCCs should be seen as 'ethical spaces', capable of hosting, facilitating and shaping the new imaginings for greener forms of production-consumption. Indeed, ethical spaces can be particularly useful in contexts and situations where products and/or services are consumed in habitual manners. Low and Davenport (2007) suggest that ethical spaces can make consumers 'ethical by default,' which in turn resonates with Mayo and Fielder's (2006) notion of choice editing (that is, ethical choices made for, and not by consumers). However, if these 'consumers' are also producers, as they are at NCCs, people are both making and made ethical prosumers, in a constant and fluid self-vigilant and reflective manner (Gibson-Graham 2006).

This, of course, is not conflict free at NCCs, particularly where the spaces of individual and community 'prosumption' clash. Indeed, conflicts showed the importance of pro-environmental norms in fostering desired behaviours and reducing inconsistencies, and participants constantly negotiated between their enterprises of the self and their communities' priorities. This could be problematic where personal and community goals were misaligned:

Woodland doesn't like the dirt and the sight of so many vehicles, so from now on if you have more than one car and only one in use, there will be a parking fee charged per day, and if the vehicles remain on site they must be kept clean. But look at that, do you see it? That's Jonathan's old boat. It has been there for nearly 20 years and he never does anything with it! [Woodland/Laura]

For Laura, caravans provided nice and cheap holiday alternatives. Rather than flying she drove, which according to her represented less CO_2 emissions. She had no explanation for needing three, but had an emotional attachment to all caravans and the good times she had experienced with them. Because the community interfered with what Laura considered her

private affairs, she purposefully decided to use a community volunteer (the researcher) to wash her caravans, which was viewed by community members as further inappropriate behaviour. Laura's behaviour and rationalisations resonate with Chatzidakis's (Chatzidakis et al. 2007, 2004) techniques of neutralisation. And, although personal trade-offs could at times lead to inconsistencies, members' flexible but nonetheless considerate approaches to production-consumption helped them to overcome the difficulties and issues of accommodating their multidimensional ethical concerns with their budgets and wants (McEachern et al. 2007); they achieved what was meaningful and possible to achieve (Connolly and Prothero 2008; Newholm 2005). Although some participants made more efforts than others in their pursuit of production-engaged ethical consumption, which sometimes meant taking a high moralising path (either toward other community members or toward imaginary or real 'mainstream others'), others acknowledged their personal flaws and seemed happy with their flexible albeit conscious choices. Together, these diverse approaches offered insights into the varied ways in which production-engaged (and risk-minimising) consumption might be enacted through community spaces.

As ethical spaces, the NCCs (except Fallowfields) guided individual members toward more consistent, and greener, producer-consumer behaviour, which in turn highlights the importance of group and community in consumption issues (Jackson 2005). In this way, the communities created their alternative spaces of choice as aims and consequences of their own systems of meaning (Giesler and Pohlmann 2003); alternative and more accommodating meanings of the good life and the new consumer.

CONCLUSION

This study has re-evaluated the issue of attitude-behaviour gaps and explored how specific and diverse groups of consumers have addressed some of their coherent inconsistencies through the formation of New Consumption Communities. Reported ethnographic findings stress the importance of everyday economic practices in the communities' lives, as well as the relevance of normative and habitual reframing through 'ethical spaces' (Barnett et al. 2005; Low and Davenport 2007) in establishing and maintaining increased and meaningful consistency in participants' discourses, consumption behaviour and goals. As ethical spaces, the NCCs also bring routinised and taken-for-granted consumption practices into discursive consciousness (Barnett 2007; Jackson 2005), which, in turn, also positively impacts the communities' visitors and volunteers. Coherent

inconsistencies and inconsistency-reduction are seen essentially as socially-embedded, emicly meaningful and constrained by what is possible to achieve. Finally, we suggest that such communities' discourses can only be viewed as inconsistent in relation to their consumption practices if the communities are theorised as anti-market and/or anti-consumption. A more balanced emic-etic perspective suggests these are communities of consumers interested in creative, production-engaged discourses, practices and choices. Areas for future research include explorations on how such communities may serve as best-practice examples for social marketers and policy makers interested in advancing more sustainable levels of consumption and development.

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