1. Social practice theories and research on sustainable consumption

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THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Despite elaborate public awareness campaigns to motivate people to reduce their environmental impact in light of climate change threats, practices contributing to greenhouse gas emissions remain stubbornly stable. This public policy conundrum is intimately, yet perhaps surprisingly, connected to how we conceptualize and engage with processes of social change. Will households, businesses, and governments make choices that are in the best interest of environmental health and justice if provided with good information? There is great reason to doubt the likelihood of this coming to pass. In fact, as we see in the case of climate change, as well as other systemic problems such as poverty or oceanic pollution, there is very little meaningful progress occurring despite a wealth of information.

Understanding the persistence of human attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, in the face of overwhelming evidence that significant changes are underway, brings us to the arena of social theory. In the policy community, the most popular theories of social action posit that external stimuli such as a tax or rebate can guide individuals to make decisions that are best for themselves and the common good. A particularly well-received variant of this notion is the 'nudge' approach that accepts that as decision makers we are constantly bombarded by often-contradictory information (Thaler and Sunstein 2008). As evidence of the popularity of this strategy, President Barack Obama appointed scholar Cass Sunstein to head the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (part of the Executive Office of the President) and Prime Minister David Cameron selected Richard Thaler to lead the Behavioural Insight Team for the United Kingdom government (Standing 2011). These initiatives made recommendations for governments to alter the social context in slight ways to encourage people to make

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subtle movements toward the 'right' decision. The social theory behind such logic is that we can 'nudge' people into rational decision making, leading to outcomes that would be described and expected by rational choice theory (Hands 2013).

The view of action as rationally determined behavior is not only pre-eminent in policy circles but also in theories focused on enhancing the sustainability of contemporary consumption. The dominant environmental research tradition in the social sciences is rooted in positivistic, rationalistic, and quantitative epistemologies, with psychological approaches acting as the leading expression of this research trajectory. For instance, value–belief–norm theory is one of the most cited conceptual approaches in the study of environmentally significant behavior (Stern 2000). In brief, this theory maintains that individual environmental action can be understood as dependent upon values that cohere with the environmental movement, and the belief that the environment is under threat and that one's actions can bring a measure of restoration. Social practice theories of sustainable consumption are thus forced to challenge or 'compete' with the dominant psychological tradition as well as with a fairly widespread preference for positivistic and rationalistic explanations that rely on quantitative evidence to understand societies.

Positivistic and rationalistic explanations like nudge and value–belief–norm theory overlook a salient argument from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, namely that social action is highly influenced by power (i.e., by the struggle to acquire social, economic, and cultural capital) and structured by the reinforcement of class privilege (Spaargaren 2013). Bourdieu (1977; 1979) persuasively asserted that individual choices more often reflect one's position in society rather than rational calculation. Such cultural explanations of social action are markedly distinct from rational choice theories in recognizing the role of social organization, power, routine, time, and norms. In attending to the resilience of social practices, Bourdieu's theory shares much in common with Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory and the related body of scholarship termed 'social practice theories' (Reckwitz 2002). Social practice theories posit that institutional, infrastructural, and cultural structures play a strong role in shaping social action, understood as a constellation of practices rather than the result of individual attitudes and values (Spaargaren 2003). It is the social practices approach that is taken up and further elaborated in this book.

Though scholars immersed in the study of education, cultural studies, and other fields have long benefitted from a practice-informed view, it has only recently entered the arena of research and policy regarding sustainable consumption (e.g., Halkier 2013; Røpke 2009; Spargaaren 2003).[1] Social practice perspectives provide a unique and powerful lens through

which to examine how we collectively make decisions that undermine the common good. When applied to sustainable consumption, social practice theories make clear how earlier work on sustainability in the social sciences ignored the routine nature of everyday activities, and the relationship of daily actions to broader social contexts (Shove 2003; Warde 2005). In this light, shifting behavior is not simply a matter of deciding to do so, but an ambitious pursuit involving the acquisition of new knowledge, the alteration of other – often complementary – routines, the overturning of cultural norms, and the reconfiguration of subtle relations of power. Social practices theorists understand that well-intentioned goals for behavior change may ultimately be thwarted by each of these elements while also acknowledging that social practices are constantly evolving. As the focus of inquiry shifts from individual attitudes and values and toward social practices, scholars have the ability to widen their gaze to the institutions, routines, and norms most responsible for generating present-day problems of unsustainability.

When we face the very important question, 'why do people do what they do?' a social practice perspective asks how widely accepted societal rules affect the performances of daily life and how, in turn, these activities shape the conventions by which we live (Lemert 2012). To put this question into a more concrete example, think about how everyday car driving fits in with broader structures in society about, say, workplace conduct (positing that cycling or walking might entail arriving at work sweaty and flustered), widely accepted understandings of convenience, or assumptions about the safety of public transit. A social practices approach allows the interested researcher, practitioner, or citizen to examine a daily routine with an eye to the rules and resources in a society that make a particular mode of daily performance the default option, rather than blaming individuals for not doing what is 'right'.

Using social practice theories to analyze how routinized activity can contribute to unsustainability problems has resulted in a great deal of stimulating scholarship. In this introduction, we begin by venturing back to some of the early work on social practices and offer an account of key theoretical contributions to the contemporary study of sustainable consumption. With this literature in mind, we then summarize and synthesize the remaining chapters in the volume.

HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF SOCIAL PRACTICE THEORIES

An exceptionally heterogeneous body of literature, the area of scholarship captured in the phrase 'social practice theories' can be difficult to identify

and describe in precise terms. To grapple with this challenge, we first articulate some of the key features of a practice approach. We then place these central concepts in a historical context.

The history of social practice theories is deeply intertwined with the history of sociology and philosophy. We simplify this incredibly rich and complex terrain in this section to chart a way forward for the study and pursuit of sustainability. Shove (2010) combines rational choice and value–belief–norm theories outlined above by using the term 'ABC (attitude–behavior–choice) theories'. Recall that these approaches assume that social action is a product of mental structures arising out of individually held values, beliefs, and attitudes. Social practice theories formulate a decidedly different understanding of social action, and rather than maintain that mental structures cause action, social practice theorists share an assumption that the impetus for action is found in practice (Schatzki 1997). Put simply, ABC theories offer an iteration of the dictum 'people do things because of their mental representations of what action means' whereas a social practice perspective contends that 'people do things' and proceeds to demonstrate how action is connected to historical and current social context (Martin 2011). Social practice theories attempt to remove the necessity for the dualism between mind and action, agency and structure, and subject and object. Our consciousness does not cause our actions, much to the chagrin of many policy makers, as this observation undermines the belief that with better information we can achieve certain desired outcomes. Rather, our actions reflect an ongoing dialogue between agents and structures and a historically situated relationship of people to place.

Let us examine a hypothetical example. If a group of people is going to protest a proposed trade agreement, some of the structures that might immediately come to mind include legislation (What are the rules around protesting? What will the police presence be?), the economic system (What is the ideology that promotes free trade in the first place?), and state–capital relations (How are governments and corporations linked?). But before a protest can take place, there are other structures that are built into taken-for-granted expectations. The word 'protest' likely conjures up specific images: placards with demands written on them, people shouting, and a setting, perhaps a city street or a public lawn. Thus, when a group organizes a protest, it is drawing on other practices, and in this way practices structure the activity of protesting. This illustration highlights the various types of structures at play in a practice – everything from the material (a placard), to the ideal (a laissez-faire approach to economics), to the cultural (ways of communicating), to skillsets (knowing where to go, how to speak). No single individual sets out to define these structures and yet they are reproduced when people re-enact similar schemas of protests in

different places and spaces, drawing on and reinforcing bodily and mental knowledge as they do so.

As previously noted, Bourdieu and Giddens are two of the most prominent theorists cited in the body of work now termed 'social practice theories' – theories that seek to explicate the relationship between agency and structure by taking everyday practices as the unit of analysis (Bourdieu 1977, 1979; Giddens 1984). The predominance of these authors can be seen in the prevalence of recent work on social practice theories that builds from concepts that they initially developed three decades ago. Of course, both theorists use earlier scholarship to inform their primary arguments; we connect the classical and contemporary contributions to social practice theories later in this introductory chapter. We selected Bourdieu's account of habitus and Giddens' notion of structuration knowing that we are excluding Bourdieu's other work (particularly on field, doxa, symbolic violence, and distinction), Michel Foucault's (1969) study of the archaeology of knowledge, Charles Taylor's (1985) theory of human agency, and Norbert Elias' (1978) concept of figurations.[2] However, as we intend to demonstrate, Giddens' ideas have had the greatest impact on social practice theories of sustainable consumption and Bourdieu's writings have had a significant effect on the study of consumption (absent an explicit sustainability orientation).[3]

Habitus

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is useful for understanding how structures are unconsciously reproduced by actors, through practices rather than by means of mental representations like beliefs or attitudes. He argues that the rules that govern a society are not necessarily strengthened by people actively enforcing those rules, but by individuals who use them to get through everyday life. In other words, people act 'strategically in a world that presumes those rules' (Swidler 2001, p. 91). The habitus is inscribed in practice, where 'practice' refers to 'socially recognized forms of activity, done on the basis of what members learn from others, and capable of being done well or badly, correctly or incorrectly' (Barnes 2001, p. 27). A practice theory is thus one that either provides an account of practices (e.g., protesting, driving) or offers an account of some social thing (e.g., international climate governance) by drawing attention to socially recognized forms of activity or practices (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 2001).

Habitus refers to principles that are both 'generative' of social order and 'durably installed' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 78). That is, the concept captures both the productive (practices always create a precedent for future practices) and the reproductive (practices follow a logic that is pre-determined)

elements of daily life. Bourdieu argued that sociologists should challenge the notion of social reality as being either structured by macro-scale forces like the economy or micro-scale variables such as personality. Instead, social reality should be understood as a site that is constantly made and remade by everyday practices of living. Bourdieu was acutely aware of power relations, and through his theory of practice he maintained that power is reproduced by control over symbols and discourse. It is on the basis of discourse (written and verbal expressions of thought) that capital is revealed: the way we communicate reflects and reproduces differences in economic, social, and cultural capital. The habitus represents Bourdieu's efforts to overcome the agency/structure dichotomy that dogged sociology for much of the 20th century.

Structuration Theory

Like Bourdieu, Giddens was also interested in going beyond the dichotomies that long dominated sociological thinking. While his articulation of practice – 'structuration theory' – differs in several respects from Bourdieu's notion of habitus, both approaches call for a focus on practices before structure (e.g., attention to population, environment, ideology, technology) or agency (e.g., individual attitudes and behavior) and to be attentive to power relations and special interests. Structuration theory rests on an ontological concept described as the 'duality of structure' (Giddens 1984, p. 5), which denotes the idea that social systems, social rules, and economic and political resources both constrain and support everyday practices, enabling people to achieve the daunting feat of navigating daily routines but limiting their capacity to change the underlying systems, rules, and resources. For instance, while the ubiquitous layout of a university classroom may constrain peer-to-peer learning by placing students in rows rather than face-to-face, it also facilitates the process of knowledge transfer and acquisition by providing clear expectations of where students ought to sit and to where they should direct their attention during lectures.

A key difference between Bourdieu's and Giddens' theories of practice is their understanding of the basis for human action. Bourdieu understood human action as habituation of the acting body, that is, a body does a certain thing a particular way because it has always done that thing in that way. In contrast, Giddens argues that practice culminates from consciousness – that what people do and say reflects their knowledge of how and when to act and speak. This feature of Giddens' scholarship is visible in his distinction between 'practical consciousness' and 'discursive consciousness'. Practical consciousness refers to the mental states and knowledge that allow individuals to engage in routine, everyday activity.

These dimensions of consciousness are where Giddens develops his understanding of structures as being enabling: that we can perform daily routines without too much effort is a testament to the predictability of social structures. Discursive consciousness involves verbally expressing awareness of the rules, resources, and systems that shape daily life. Accordingly, everyday routines or habits can be questioned or challenged, and as they are reconsidered dismantling (and changing) a practice becomes possible. That is, in discursive consciousness lies the potential for change in practice, and therefore structure.

GENEALOGY OF SOCIAL PRACTICE THEORIES

Conceiving of social practice theories as a family tree, it is important to understand which ideas have been left out of current analyses of sustainable consumption and which have continued to shape how scholars conceive of practices. Having briefly reviewed two versions of social practice theory, we now look both backwards and forwards from these theories. In this way we briefly describe the philosophical influences on Bourdieu and Giddens (which others have done) and (more originally) comment on how certain concepts and perspectives have been included or overlooked in contemporary accounts of sustainable consumption.

Early Influences on Social Practice Theories

Scholars attribute Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Dewey, and Charles Pierce as key influences on Bourdieu and Giddens. The impact of this work is thoroughly described elsewhere (Dreyfus 1991; Joas and Knöbl 2009; Reckwitz 2002), so we will limit our discussion here to the most relevant themes. Briefly, Heidegger was a profound influence for both sociologists, and Bourdieu described him as his 'first love' in philosophy (Dreyfus 1991).[4] This is because of Heidegger's emphasis on being: his philosophy held that people trust historically produced practices as guiding mechanisms while realizing that people do not have conscious access to all aspects of their own actions. Thus practice becomes the most valuable unit of analysis, particularly understanding how we exist and participate in daily life. To this observation, Wittgenstein added the importance of rule following as a key component of belonging in the social world. These themes are so prominent in practice theories that Reckwitz (2002, p. 250) states, 'we find everything that is original in practice theory already in the work of these authors'.[5]

In the following discussion, we attempt to demarcate two subsequent

'generations' of concepts that create a bridge between the early philosophers and contemporary researchers studying topics related to sustainability and social practice theories. We label the first generation 'early adopters of social practice theories', referring to those authors who first applied the perspective to study sustainable consumption. The second generation is labeled 'recent practice-based accounts'. We simplify the conceptual terrain in an attempt to draw out the most salient features of scholarship on sustainable consumption and social practice theories and to highlight concepts that have lost purchase in recent work. This genealogy is intended for pedagogical purposes and is not a comprehensive overview of sustainable consumption and theories of practice. Bearing this caveat in mind, we offer a small sample of these concepts in the text that follows.

Applying Social Practice Theories to Sustainable Consumption

To sustainable consumption scholars, social practice theories have a patina of novelty and innovation, as this fairly recent integration provides theoretical grounds to dismiss the formerly voluntaristic and deterministic models that dominated this field of study. The first scholars to make use of social practice theories did so to provide a theoretical framework that decentered individuals' mental intentions as a central explanatory mechanism for social action (Warde 2005). That is, scholarship on sustainable consumption at that point largely accepted the ABC models discussed earlier, presuming that if an individual or group was not consuming sustainably, this must be a function of a lack of awareness or knowledge. Instead, drawing from Bourdieusian theory, sociologists pointed out that social location is an important determinant of consumption behavior and time use (Warde 1997; Wilk 1997), and looking to structuration theory, scholars argued that consumption practices are rarely fully conscious (Hobson 2003; Spaargaren 1997, 2003).

In addition to the reintegration of culture and class into the study of sustainable consumption, the second key theoretical advance has been to draw routine, everyday actions into the foreground. In contrast, Thorstein Veblen's famed account of conspicuous consumption (consumption intended to convey status) long dominated consumer studies and resulted in a scholarly emphasis on profligate displays of wealth. From a social practice perspective, Shove and Warde (2002) introduced the idea of *inconspicuous* consumption, highlighting the possibility that quotidian consumption practices may have a more significant environmental impact and are in large part an outcome of being a competent member of society. Using Giddens' structuration theory, the authors demonstrated that everyday consumption practices such as bathing and air-conditioning

cannot be explained by theories of conspicuous consumption. Perhaps the strongest theme emerging from Giddens' work is, as previously discussed, the distinction between practical and discursive consciousness. For instance, Spaargaren (1997) describes the difference between the two forms of consciousness to articulate how elements of a practice become background noise as long as they perform as expected. Using the example of water consumption, Spaargaren explains that for most individuals, the system that exists to deliver water to our homes only enters our discursive consciousness when something goes wrong, such as the water coming out brown, or leaking, or costing too much. Otherwise, much of our tangible consumption occurs in the plane of practical consciousness. Once we have established a habit, it is not easy to recall why we do what we do and even more difficult to challenge the assumptions upon which our actions are based. A large body of work builds on the same or similar premises, sharing an empirical emphasis on everyday routine practices as the key unit of analysis (Hobson 2003; Shove 2003; Shove and Pantzar 2005; Warde 1997; Warde and Martens 2000).

A third important idea influencing early social practice theories of sustainable consumption is the premise (shared by both Giddens and Bourdieu) that the relationship between habit and social context is recursive. Bourdieu's work is used to demonstrate that habits are connected not only to what we ourselves have done in recent and past history, but also to the practices of our forbearers, as they established – through practice – systems of provision, cultural norms, and ways of talking and acting.[6] In short, social practices create and are created by social context. As an example of how this concept shaped early social practice literature on sustainable consumption, we describe Spaargaren's (2003) study of the adoption of renewable energy in a Dutch neighborhood. Spaargaren relies on structuration theory to show that practices result from the interaction of agency (e.g., norms) and structure (e.g., infrastructure). For Spaargaren (2003), Giddens' description of lifestyle is central – where lifestyle is 'the set of social practices that an individual embraces, together with the storytelling that goes along with it' (p. 689). Thus, if we are to understand the impact of daily life on the biophysical environment, it is necessary to look at what people do and how their actions are implicated in a recursive dialogue between self and place. Practices, agency, and structure are reciprocally intertwined, a viewpoint that is ubiquitous in subsequent literature on sustainable consumption and social practice theories.

Looking at the broad ideas discussed above as a whole, three themes emerge. First, in the process of applying social practice theories to understand sustainable consumption, scholars used perspectives from the work of both Bourdieu and Giddens (and others) to inform accounts

of household consumption practices. Secondly, this era of scholarship established the idea that material objects are implicated in the practice of everyday life and should thus be given scholarly attention (Shove 2003; Spaargaren 2003; Warde 2005). Finally, notable is the emphasis on consumption that takes place in the private sphere, or household. As we discuss next, these themes persist in current social practice scholarship on sustainable consumption.

Recent Practice-based Accounts of Sustainable Consumption

Between 2007 and 2015 social practice theoretical accounts of sustainable consumption proliferated. Numerous theses have been written at this nexus of scholarship, suggesting that emerging scholars will continue to apply and shape this area of research (e.g., Doyle 2013; Glover 2012; Jensen 2014; Kennedy 2011; Sahakian 2011). Groups have formed to support further study in the area (e.g., Sustainable Practices Research Group at the University of Lancaster and an early career researcher network called Practices, the Built Environment and Sustainability based at Aalborg University) and courses and edited volumes such as this one are now emerging (e.g., Cohen, Brown, and Vergragt 2013; Shove and Spurling 2013). In the discussion below, we briefly demonstrate how the themes from the early adopters of social practice theories continue to influence current scholarship and draw attention to ideas that have lost purchase in the field of sustainable consumption.

Recent scholarship is more closely tied to the issue of climate change (Shove and Spurling 2013) and has broadened the emphasis on household practices to include the workplace (Hargreaves 2011) and commercial settings (Seyfang 2009). These accounts emphasize primarily their rejection of individualist accounts; the theoretical move of decentering the individual plays a strong role shaping contemporary research. For example, in his study of sustainable consumption practices in the workplace, Hargreaves (2011) draws from the work of Elizabeth Shove and Alan Warde to illustrate the inadequacy of ABC models of behavior. The resultant theoretical framework is much more akin to Shove's (2003) work than to that of Bourdieu, Giddens or other early social practice theorists. For instance, Hargreaves raises the same contrast highlighted by the initial adopters of social practice theories in sustainable consumption (regarding the inadequacy of voluntaristic models of behavior) in the following excerpt:

> The focus is no longer on individuals' attitudes, behaviours and choices, but instead on how practices form, how they are reproduced, maintained, stabilized, challenged and ultimately killed-off; on how practices recruit practitioners to

maintain and strengthen them through continued performance, and on how such practitioners may be encouraged to defect to more sustainable practices. (Hargreaves 2011, p. 84)

The above quotation also describes what has become a clear research agenda among social-practice-oriented sustainable consumption scholars. This agenda certainly builds from the ontological perspectives of Bourdieu and Giddens by emphasizing practices as the building blocks of social life, but it is also highly unique and much more characteristic of theory construction from the early adopters in its aim to understand the making and breaking of social practices. This interest in shaping social practices suggests that there is agency involved in practice (a view that reflects Giddens' concept of discursive consciousness). The increased role of agency is a departure from a Bourdieusian perspective.

Theory constructed on the basis of a belief in recursivity between agency and structure continues to influence the field. For example, focusing on eating practices, Halkier and Jensen (2011) emphasize that eating is collectively structured – that is, what we eat and how we eat is shaped by where we eat, what norms exist, what foods are available to us, and the eating norms of our reference group. A voluntaristic ABC model would not create the opportunity to consider the influence of such a broad range of variables. Like Hargreaves' scholarship, Halkier and Jensen's focus is more akin to the early adopters of social practice theories in sustainable consumption than to Bourdieu or Giddens.

We discuss the current state of social practice scholarship in the study of sustainable consumption in greater detail in the concluding chapter of this volume. For now, we draw our readers' attention to two points. First, the adoption of social practice perspectives into the field of sustainable consumption has led to an array of questions and perspectives that is different from early scholarship. Secondly, in the hands of contemporary social practice theorists, the influence of earlier authors has largely fallen away. This means that the work of the early adopters is actively shaping the research questions, analytic frameworks, and research agendas of contemporary scholars. On one hand, this observation suggests that social practice perspectives on sustainable consumption have drawn some definite disciplinary boundaries and a field has been constituted that is now generating new insights on theory and practice. On the other hand, severing ties with the foundational literature has resulted in a plethora of middle-range theories that seldom engage in ontological and epistemological debates. That is, Bourdieu and Giddens were involved in explaining social order and social action. The debates in which they were engaged necessarily invoked themes such as power and conflict, class, and agency.

For the most part, these issues are absent among those who study sustainable consumption from a social practice perspective.[7] However, as we point out in the discussion of the chapters in this volume, there is some evidence of a re-emergence of these themes and other indications of advances in the study of sustainable consumption.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The remainder of this book is divided into three main Parts (II through IV) and a concluding chapter (Part V). Part II, 'Social Mobilization and Sustainable Consumption', explores how the study of sustainable consumption must move beyond the household and into the public sphere. The third Part, 'Collective Dimensions of Household Practices', illustrates how the routines in a household such as driving and eating are shaped by societal variables and thus not a reflection of individual agency. Part IV, 'Sustainable Consumption and Social Innovation', examines shifts in systems of provision that shape daily routines that have environmental consequences.

We survey first the three chapters within Part II, which as a whole look at social practice theories and sustainable engagement outside the boundaries defined by recent scholarship in the field. In Chapter 2, Debbie Kasper makes a strong case that the social sciences need a grand theory with more explanatory power than current middle-range social practice theories, and she begins the work of defining such an understanding. Using figurational theory and the concept of habitus in tandem, Kasper develops a theoretical model that 'is intended to sensitize us to, and help us envision, relationships among fundamental processes at the social level'. Her model integrates the biophysical environment with the social and offers researchers in socio-ecological fields the refreshing advantage of studying social practices without leaving behind analyses of power relations. This chapter integrates power, biophysical environments, history, and daily practice in a way that few, if any, existing theoretical treatments to date have done.

The next two chapters explain the connection between private practices and civic engagement in ways that extend and normalize sustainable consumption. Kennedy and Bateman (Chapter 3) define and illustrate 'environmental civic practices' in relation to social change agents involved in reimagining the production, preservation, and consumption of food in urban areas. The authors discuss qualitative data collected from individuals working with others to reduce the negative environmental and social costs of the food system. A key element of these practices – termed environmental civic practices – that contributes to their capacity to incite social change

lies in creating contexts for citizen engagement. Environmental civic practices involve speech acts and activities that precede strategic relationships, community organizing, and institutional reform, and in this way make mainstream the logic and possibility of alternative food systems. Notable is that the participants in this study rarely used environmental civic practices as a form of resistance to the current food system or as a challenge to the cultural meanings that oppose urban agriculture. Nonetheless, the authors contend that environmental civic practices have the potential to catalyze collective action that links households to communities and communities to institutions, and that this is integral to social change toward sustainable consumption.

In the final chapter of Part II, Francesca Forno, Cristina Grasseni, and Silvana Signori distinguish between the competing roles of citizens and consumers in a study of Italy's Solidarity Purchase Groups (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidal). These organizations provide a particularly interesting case study because they reveal collective processes on the part of consumers. They aim not only to practice ethical or critical consumption but also to co-produce common benefits, to intervene in local food-provisioning chains, and to reintroduce issues of social and environmental sustainability in regional economies. In addition, the purchase groups occasionally express their intention to engage with issues related to the common good such as water privatization and alternative energy. On the basis of detailed quantitative and qualitative research, this chapter contextualizes these dynamics within a theoretical framework of sustainable citizenship as social practice. We learn from this study that political consumerism may be not only the objective, but also frequently the result, of engaged practices, particularly solidarity purchasing.

Part III begins with Stewart Barr's illustration of how to effectively apply a social practice lens to understand the collective nature of daily consumption practices. This chapter takes up a critique of the 'nudge' concept popularized by Thaler and Sunstein (2008) that was mentioned earlier. Using a social practice perspective, he describes how the deployment of nudges to influence private car use would be lost in a sea of guidelines and recommendations for how we should drive, from speed limits to appeals for carpooling. Much more influential, he argues, is our essential relationship to the places in which we reside, and how such connections are reproduced and changed over the course of history. In closing, Barr outlines, 'three pathways for the use of practice theory to dislodge the dominance of short-term, incrementalist and individualistic thinking on sustainable mobility'. He calls on policy makers to focus their attention on what impels people's need or want to move in the first place. Barr furthermore highlights how a social practices approach to studying sustainability

reveals how practices are learned over time. Finally, the chapter discusses how an emphasis on practices rather than behaviors can call attention to the interconnections between people and the places in which they live.

Barr's call to apply the practice perspective to enable a more robust environmental politics is taken up by Julia Backhaus, Harald Wieser, and René Kemp in Chapter 6. In doing so, they also make a number of methodological observations that future scholars should consider: the authors argue that practice theories are valuable because they overcome conceptual individualism but are empirically difficult to operationalize because of the sheer diversity and variability of practices. Backhaus and her colleagues formulate a framework based on the idea of 'webs of entangled elements' that extend across practices, their carriers, and production–consumption systems. They seek in their chapter to unravel these webs by applying both qualitative and quantitative research methods to a large-scale survey involving more than 1200 respondents in Austria, Hungary, and the Netherlands, and include a few in-depth interviews with consumers in each country. This approach enables the authors to identify country-specific food cultures and production–consumption systems, and to explore varying levels of trust in production chains, and subjectively understood time constraints, life circumstances, values, and expectations.

The final chapter in Part III is Marlyne Sahakian's discussion of how emotions and discourse – two collectively structured entities – can shape food-related practices. Sahakian draws on the notion of emotional energy described by Gert Spaargaren (as extrapolated from the work of Randall Collins) and applies this concept to two case studies. The first case study is historical and uses archival marketing and sales materials to demonstrate how appliance manufacturers in Europe during the 20th century went about the process of purposefully instilling their products with emotional energy. Using conventional approaches like trade fairs had the effect of infusing in the equipment ideals of modernity, freedom, and stylized comfort that contributed heavily to its successful diffusion. Sahakian's second case study focuses on the discursive construction of community-supported agriculture (CSA), a contemporary food-provisioning practice whereby local farms deliver a weekly basket of produce to urban consumers. With a specific focus on a contemporary CSA in Geneva, she demonstrates how proponents of this arrangement also seek to infuse emotional energy. In this instance, nostalgia, trustworthiness, community belonging, and spontaneous wonderment come to be infused into the vegetables and other farm products. The two case studies raise interesting questions for social practice theorists about how emotional energy is created and transferred and how it could be imparted to stimulate interest in more sustainable lifestyles.

Part IV extends the corpus of social practice theories and sustainable consumption advanced in Part III. In Chapter 8, Melanie Jaeger-Erben and Jana Rückert-John shift social practice theories toward the study of innovative sustainable consumption practices. They develop a framework of sustainable social innovations that draws from social practice theories and innovation theories. Innovation theories, they assert, are dominated by a technophilic orientation that downplays the importance of social change. Social practice theories can more effectively inform the study of social innovation through a unique emphasis on the interplay among skills, meanings, materials, and social settings. The resulting model allows researchers and practitioners to distinguish sustainable social innovations by highlighting unique modes of alternative consumption patterns. Each type of sustainable social innovation has distinct opportunities to remake the elements of a practice.

In Chapter 9, Chelsea Schelly demonstrates how the practice of housing can be shaped by policy. Schelly employs a social practices perspective to focus attention on the routines and habits of social groups, moving away from individualistic and value-oriented explanations for behavior. Specifically, a social practices perspective illustrates how action takes place within material, structural, and cultural frameworks that nudge, constrain, and shape human behaviors. This chapter explores how policies shape practice through an empirical examination of three cases of alternative residential dwelling: 1) solar electric technology adoption, 2) radically sustainable off-the-grid homes called Earthships, and 3) an intentional community. These three case studies demonstrate how particular policies work to shape collective routines as well as the understandings symbolically assigned to practices. The policies addressed are at multiple scales, including local, state, federal, and global, and by showing their influence, Schelly argues that policies are actually systems of provision that influence, shape, and give meaning to social practices.

In the final chapter of Part IV, Mike Gismondi, Juanita Marois, and Danica Straith examine a case study of sustainable finance. The 'Unleashing Local Capital' (ULC) project is a social innovation through which people invest in local business opportunities using a cooperative business structure. Deploying a combined theoretical model that integrates the multilevel perspective and social practice theories, the case study focuses on how regime, landscape, and niche practices were confronted and highlights particular social practices that impeded the success of the ULC project. Their analysis reveals how tightly woven social practices are with each level. For instance, though the program undertook key regime changes such as revising regulatory systems to allow local investments in cooperatives, the spread of the innovation was hampered by the resilience

of investing and borrowing practices. Some key elements of these practices that were not present in the social finance approach include privacy (in how one invests one's money and operates one's business) and speed (expecting a quick return on investment). The authors point out that shifting to social finance practices requires new meanings and a new vocabulary, where the patient goals of community development become a normal part of an investment portfolio, and the blind trust in faceless bank managers is questioned. This chapter shows that investment and borrowing practices are an especially challenging area to change: regime and landscape changes may well be conducive to local investing but common practices are more difficult to change.

Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes the key ways in which social practice approaches to sustainable consumption have become increasingly appealing to policy makers, program developers, and applied academics. This chapter also links social practice theories to a sense – illustrated in texts beyond academia – that changing behaviors must necessarily invoke altering social contexts if we wish to foster desirable behavior change. We conclude by arguing that social practice research on the household needs to continue to broaden to communities, schools, workplaces, governments, and large organizations to break down patterns of human thought and action, and identify new patterns that lead to more systematic and lasting change.

NOTES

1. Development of the field of sustainable consumption research began during the aftermath of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. *Agenda 21*, the keystone document of this event, devoted an entire chapter to the issue of sustainable consumption and noted that 'all countries should strive to promote sustainable consumption patterns'. Refer to Cohen and Murphy (2001) for further discussion of this policy history. Over the past two decades, sustainable consumption has become a robust area of research and policy practice that draws together various interdisciplinary areas including ecological economics, environmental sociology, science and technology studies, and social psychology. The recent compendium by Reisch and Thøgersen (2015) provides a comprehensive overview.
2. Refer to Reckwitz (2002) for an excellent overview of social practice theories. We exclude these other authors in the interest of brevity and on the basis of limited integration of their work into the study of sustainable consumption to date. This is not to say such integration is not possible; indeed in Chapter 2 Kasper uses figurational theory to inform her efforts to develop a foundational theory in the social sciences.
3. A notable absence in the genealogy is Schatzki's Wittgensteinian approach to social practice theories. Schatzki (1997) takes issue with both Bourdieu's and Giddens' social practice theories as over-intellectualizing social practices and argues that Wittgenstein's approach more satisfactorily resolves agency–structure dualisms. Readers should note that Schatzki's work is also a considerable influence to scholars adopting a practice perspective on sustainable consumption (i.e., Halkier and Jensen 2011).

4. Tyler Bateman drew our attention to this point.
5. The same focus on everyday life exists in the work of the American pragmatists as well but here we narrow our focus to Heidegger and Wittgenstein, who Reckwitz (2002) argues are central influences on social practice theories.
6. Systems of provision include supportive policies and regulations, cultural norms, and built infrastructure.
7. For two notable exceptions, see Carfagna et al. (2014) and Dubuisson-Quellier (2013).

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