

**SUSTAINABLE
PRACTICES**
RESEARCH GROUP

Partners and researchers:

Ben Anderson, benander@essex.ac.uk
Sam Brown, S.Brown@lancaster.ac.uk
Simon Guy, Simon.Guy@manchester.ac.uk
Mark Harvey, mharvey@essex.ac.uk
Andy Karvonen, Andrew.Karvonen@manchester.ac.uk
Will Medd, W.Medd@lancaster.ac.uk
Joseph Murphy, J.Murphy@leeds.ac.uk
Sarah Parry, Sarah.Parry@ed.ac.uk
Fellowships led by:
George Hutchinson, g.hutchinson@qub.ac.uk with
Simon Marvin, s.marvin@salford.ac.uk and
Lucie Middlemiss, l.k.middlemiss@leeds.ac.uk
Julie Newton, newtonj2@cardiff.ac.uk

Sustainable Practices Research Group

Director

Dale Southerton, Dale.Southerton@manchester.ac.uk

Management team

Andrew McMeekin, Andrew.Mcmeekin@mbs.ac.uk
Mark Harvey, mharvey@essex.ac.uk
Elizabeth Shove, E.Shove@lancaster.ac.uk
Gordon Walker, G.P.Walker@lancaster.ac.uk

For further information contact:

Teresa Chilton, teresa.chilton@manchester.ac.uk
Sustainable Practices Research Group,
School of Social Sciences, Arthur Lewis Building,
The University of Manchester, M13 9PL.
Tel: 0161 275 4485

Website:
www.sustainablepractices.ac.uk

A collaboration between:

The University of Manchester
Edinburgh University
Essex University
Lancaster University
Leeds University

With associated fellowships at:

Cardiff University
Salford University
Queens University Belfast



Introduction and approach

If there is to be any effective response to climate change, substantially and significantly new ways of living are urgently required.

There is growing recognition of the need for fresh ways of framing problems of climate change, consumption and demand, and for forms of intervention capable of catalysing entrenched habits and practices and of doing so quickly and on a big scale. Understanding and intervening in the dynamics of social practice are central to the challenge of sustainable consumption.

The group's research consequently focuses on the emergence, persistence and disappearance of social practices and on the cultural norms, regulations, technologies and infrastructures that shape them.

Such an approach recognises that habits—for instance of eating—are defined by prevailing food cultures and institutional arrangements which differ from country to country. These are, in turn, affected by a global political economy of food which links business, governments, and other actors like the World Trade Organisation. In this context, policies that only focus on individual choices are unlikely to have much impact.

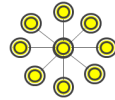
Rather than treating consumption—for instance of energy or water—as a matter of personal preference, we investigate persistent and emerging cultural conventions and identify social, infrastructural and institutional processes that shape everyday practices in more or less sustainable ways.

The Sustainable Practices Research Group seeks to answer three key questions:

- How and why do practices persist or disappear?
- How and why do new practices emerge and spread?
- How can more sustainable practices be encouraged?

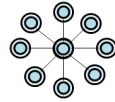
Our programme of work turns the focus of research and intervention away from the micro-level of the individual through the meso-level of social practices and processes of change, to the macro-level of major political choices and structural change. Guided by this approach, seven projects and four fellowships provide new ways of conceptualising and intervening and of changing and challenging unsustainable ways of life.

The programme of work includes five empirical projects:



Changing eating habits – an international comparison.

Alan Warde (Manchester). A study of changing diets in France and the UK. How do cultural and institutional differences shape experiences of transition?



Consumers, markets and institutions – the case of bottled water.

Mark Harvey (Essex), Adrian Evans (Essex). A study of bottled water in France, Germany, Italy, the UK, Mexico and India. How do systems of provision, regulation, marketing and consumption intersect?



Keeping cool - expectations and infrastructures.

Elizabeth Shove, Gordon Walker, Sam Brown (Lancaster). A study of how air-conditioning is taking hold in different sites and spaces in the UK. How are technologies and conventions co-evolving and with what consequence for energy demand?



Patterns of water - difference and change in domestic consumption.

Ben Anderson (Essex), Will Medd (Lancaster). A study of households and their water consuming practices. Can methods of micro-simulation and interviewing be used to reveal patterns of difference and change in domestic water consumption?



Zero carbon habitation – the design of ways of living.

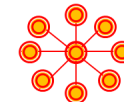
Ralf Brand (Manchester), Simon Guy (Manchester), Gordon Walker (Lancaster), Andy Karvonen (Manchester). A study of practices and ways of living inscribed in the design of zero carbon homes. How are zero carbon homes being conceived and with what assumptions and expectations about the everyday lives of their inhabitants?

Four fellowships add to this agenda:



Intermediaries and the meso-level restructuring of new practices.

Simon Marvin and Mike Hodson (Salford)



On the Margins of Consumerism.

Lucie Middlemiss (Leeds)



Sustainable communities, social enterprise and local food.

Julie Newton and Alex Franklin (Cardiff)



Practices in discounting future benefits and food choice.

George Hutchinson (QUB), Susan Chilton and Morten Lau (Durham)

Two projects integrate results, advance understanding and contribute to policy:



Theoretical and conceptual integration

Andrew McMeekin (Manchester), Dale Southerton (Manchester) Integrating results and insights from the full range of the group's work to develop a coherent theoretical and practical position informed by a review of past efforts to change routines and habits.



Engagement, interaction and influence

Sarah Parry, (Edinburgh), Elizabeth Shove (Lancaster) Analysing and contributing strategies to promote social change and sustainability within national, regional and local government through a programme of action research, non-academic engagement and dissemination.