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THE COHERENCE OF INCONSISTENCIES:

ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOUR GAPS AND NEW CONSUMPTION COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Despite the growing success of well-marketed environmentally-friendly products, there remains a gap between consumers' positive attitudes toward green issues and products, and their inconsistent and often conflicting consumption behaviour. Indeed, this is a challenge for social marketers seeking to advance the sustainability agenda. Therefore, this study problematises what has been conceptualised as attitude-behaviour gaps (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000), and explores how groups of consumers have re-construed such practices and their meanings through the formation of New Consumption Communities (Szmigin, Carrigan and Bekin 2007). Multi-sited ethnographic findings illustrate the social processes through which ethical and green forms of consumption are established and normalised. Findings also 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. Thus, we re-frame attitude-behaviour gaps as coherent inconsistencies, which allows for a move away from solely trying to explain and change individual consumer behaviour, to identifying how suitable upstream and downstream (Verplanken and Wood 2006) approaches and policies can be used to facilitate more sustainable forms of consumption.

Key words: Behavioural Inconsistency – Consumption – Social Marketing

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Dr. Caroline Moraes is a Lecturer in Marketing at the Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham. Her research interests include the social dimensions of ethical and green consumption, consumer activism, power issues in consumer culture, and ethical issues in consumer research. Before embarking on her academic career, Caroline worked in market research and held international account management posts in the advertising industry.

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THE COHERENCE OF INCONSISTENCIES: ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOUR GAPS AND NEW CONSUMPTION COMMUNITIES

Introduction

Environmental issues have gained increased prominence amongst policy makers, and marketers have not been slow to capitalise on the green agenda. Some critical perspectives see the mainstreaming of green issues as yet another example of systemic cooptation and depoliticising conflation of paramount consumer concerns (Hilton 2003). Nevertheless, consumers have bought into the greening of politics-as-usual (Mori 2007) and mainstream green product offers. In the UK, boycotting (Friedman 1996) has increased substantially over the past years, and this has been driven by environmental as well as other moral and more self-oriented concerns. For example, Mintel (2006) estimated that the combined 'ethical foods' market would reach £2.2 billion in 2006, and the latest Ethical Consumerist Report (The Co-operative Bank 2008) suggests that, despite the economic downturn, the total UK ethical market in 2007 was worth £35.5 billion, which represents a 15% increase from £31 billion in the previous year. Additionally, due to environmental, health, safety concerns, along with the issue of animal welfare and the wider availability of vegetarian options, the number of vegetarians in the UK has exceeded 3 million (the equivalent to 5.4% of the UK population in 2000), and almost half of Britons are said to have reduced meat consumption (Mintel 2000). Notably, the increased availability and convenience of green and ethical alternatives more broadly has had a major impact on the sales of such products in recent years (The Co-operative Bank 2008; Mintel 2007; Mintel 2006; Mintel 2005). Indeed, earlier studies (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; Carrigan and Attalla 2001) suggest that price, value, quality, brand familiarity and convenience play key roles in green purchasing considerations, and Mintel (2007; Mintel

2006) continues to maintain that retailers must make green options more accessible and affordable in order to further develop demand for green choices amongst British consumers.

It has been suggested that the success of green alternatives is not only a reflection of our increased moral or environmental concerns, but also a manifestation of our widening consumption desires and choices (Newholm 2005), which encompass, but are not limited to, 'consuming green.' This may include additional consumption in the name of the environment and, thus, what consumer researchers have portrayed as inconsistent behaviour. For the purpose of this paper we define 'green consumption' or 'environmentally-friendly consumption' as consumer behaviour that is predominantly driven by consumers' environmental concerns and their attempts to reduce or limit their environmental footprints, including efforts to make their own, reduce, reuse and recycle consumer goods and produce. 'Ethical consumption', on the other hand, is a more encompassing term, which addresses consumption as a medium for political and moral action. Harrison, Newholm and Shaw (2005) define ethical consumption as purchasing and consumption that takes into consideration societal, animal welfare as well as environmental concerns, including corporate responsibility, development and fair trade issues, animal welfare, labour practices, WTO policies and globalization, as well as issues more directly linked to global and systemic risks such as food scares, environmental degradation, and a questioning of the ethics of consumption and market practices more broadly (Barnett, Cafaro and Newholm 2005). Clearly, any attempt to consume ethically presents inherent tensions in that what may be a good environmental solution (e.g., producing own honey), for example, may work against societal concerns (e.g., reduced consumption of Fairtrade sugar and honey and, thus, reduced patronage of poor producers in developing countries). Therefore, attempts to consume ethically will usually posit consistency challenges to consumers.

Indeed, such inconsistencies have caused much scepticism amongst researchers, and some have problematised the appropriateness of assigning consumers co-responsibility for environmental reform (Connolly and Prothero 2008). However, policy makers and social marketers are still calling for reduced levels of consumption as a step toward sustainability, and as a means to address environmental issues (Peattie and Peattie 2009). Consumers, in turn, are expected to regulate their consumption in an instrumental manner (Connolly and Prothero 2008), and the existing gap between consumers' positive attitudes toward green issues and their inconsistent and often conflicting consumption behaviour – what Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) have called the attitude-behaviour gap – remains a concern. Indeed, environmentally-concerned consumers are quick to recognise inconsistencies in corporate behaviour or 'green wash.' However, green and ethical consumers themselves have been accused of hypocrisy and lack of self-reflexivity in light of their use of marketing discourse and seemingly inconsistent behaviours (Higgins and Tadajewski 2002).

Attitude-behaviour discrepancies have been identified both amongst mainstream consumers (e.g. Chatzidakis *et al.* 2004; Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith 2007) as well as within consumer groups with accentuated environmental concerns such as resistant consumers (Dobscha 1998; Ritson and Dobscha 1999), voluntary simplifiers (Huneke 2005; McDonald *et al.* 2006), ethical simplifiers (Shaw and Newholm 2002), downshifter (Schor 1998), green consumers (Strong 1996), and, more broadly, ethical consumers (Harrison, Newholm and Shaw 2005; McEachern, Carrigan and Szmigin 2007; Strong 1996). Nevertheless, many studies have been criticised for being restricted in scope and for providing limited understanding of the phenomena at hand (Chatzidakis *et al.* 2004). They have also been criticised for their focus on individual consumers and agency, and for addressing consumers as rational decision-makers somewhat disconnected from wider socio-cultural processes (Dolan 2002). Instead, and following Connolly and Prothero (2008) as well as Ward (2005), we view

consumers first and foremost as people engaged in meaningful and socially-embedded everyday practices, green or otherwise, which involve the (symbolic) consumption (purchase, usage, and/or disposal) of material goods in one way or another. This stance, therefore, suggests a view of consumption as deeply intertwined with social relations and norms, thus emphasising individual behavioural change toward sustainability as a matter of changing social norms and relations (Jackson 2005; Barnett et al. 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 problematise the attitude-behaviour gap concept and answer the following question: how have specific groups of consumers addressed (some of) their attitude-behaviour inconsistencies? Specifically, we explore attitude-behaviour inconsistencies, and improvements in such inconsistencies, through the examination of socially-embedded everyday practices of New Consumption Communities (NCCs). NCCs have been conceptualised as the development, over time, of consumption communities that 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 mainstream 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. Despite what NCCs may represent to our affluent societies more generally, they embody individual as well as communal discourses and practices, which range from patronage of positive alternatives (e.g., organic produce, recycled paper, green energy) through to reduction, modification, responsible disposal and consumption avoidance. It is NCCs' varied characteristics (e.g., from mainstream to radical, from single-issue to multiple concerns) and their community behaviour that make them valuable research contexts, which in turn will add to our wider understanding of the research gaps related to the attitude-behaviour inconsistencies outlined above.

In particular, this study seeks a multi-sited ethnographic understanding of attitude-behaviour gaps, and 'gap reductions', through community practices embedded in community norms. We view social norms as guidelines, principles for action, or controls for behaviour as provided by a particular social group (Varman and Costa 2008). We pursue this not by investigating how individual consumers rationalise their own individual inconsistencies, but by examining 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 also explore the potential role played by the formation of habits and situational cues in propagating, changing and reducing the inconsistencies between attitudes and behaviours in relation to reduced consumption, green products and green lifestyles. Findings suggest that, by reconceptualising such gaps as coherent inconsistencies, we can move the focus away from solely trying to explain and change individual consumer behaviour, to identifying how suitable upstream and downstream plus (Verplanken and Wood 2006) approaches and policies can be used to facilitate more sustainable forms of consumption through community action. Finally, we highlight relevant implications and potential strategies for social marketers interested in advancing sustainability and environmentally-friendlier levels

of consumption, without neglecting the fundamental ethical issues such strategies may entail. Relevant literature is reviewed below.

Literature Review

This section discusses theories emanating from studies that address both mainstream and more radical forms of green and ethical consumption, which in turn facilitate an understanding as well as the problematisation of the attitude-behaviour gap concept. The attitude-behaviour gap concept distantly resonates with Hornik's (1991) idea of knowledge-behaviour gap in that Hornik explores why it is that people learn about health risks and the ways to avoid them, yet do not initiate and/or maintain behaviours that will reduce such personal risks. Hornik (1991) acknowledges the existence of various models that explain such harmful behaviours and behavioural change, but suggests that a single answer to the issue does not exist; rather, he argues, the answer or answers depend on the context and the behaviour. However, we contend that the attitude-behaviour gap concept is the most appropriate notion to adopt as a starting point for the present study for several reasons. Firstly, Hornik (1991) is specifically concerned with the consumption of drugs, alcohol and other explicitly harmful behaviour such as unsafe sex, which is not the context of this study. Secondly, the perceived risks associated with environmental degradation are much more distant for consumers than the potential personal harms linked to the consumption of harmful substances, so the idea that knowledge of environmental issues that do not immediately impact people's health would translate into behaviour seems less adequate than acknowledging that people form attitudes toward environmental issues based on a number of factors that include, but are not restricted to information and knowledge. Finally, the attitude-behaviour gap concept has been applied more widely to consumer culture studies, so this is the concept we adopt and problematise below.

Attitude-Behaviour Gaps and 'Rational Consumer' Perspectives

As discussed 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, rational aspects of individual consumer behaviour (i.e., Allen and Ferrand 1999; Chatzidakis et al. 2007; Shaw 2005; Shaw and Clarke 1999; Shaw and Shiu 2003; Shaw et al. 2000; Sparks and Shepherd 1992; Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Ajzen 1991; Bagozzi 1993; Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990; Shaw and Shiu 2002). Despite their popularity within the consumer research literature, the gaps between consumers' intentions and behaviours remain unexplained by such studies.

Moreover, 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, which present five rationalisations that can help consumers alleviate the impact of their inconsistent behaviour upon their social relationships and self-concept. These techniques include denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemning the condemners and appeal to higher loyalties. Chatzidakis et al. (2004, p.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 and green consumer behaviour, with potentially damaging effects for the self-concept.

On the other hand, in their review of the extant literature on voluntary simplifiers, McDonald et al. (2006) define Beginner Voluntary Simplifiers (BVS) as consumers who fall at

the beginning of the non-simplifier/simplifier spectrum, and theorise ethical inconsistencies in simplifiers' behaviours as part of BVS' initial experimentation with simplified lifestyles. However, previous research suggests that attitude-behaviour gaps can also be identified amongst the most committed voluntary simplifiers (Shaw and Newholm 2002), which makes McDonald et al.'s (2006) explanation of BVS inconsistencies weak.

Additionally, 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.

Finally, with the exception of Shepherd (2002), the studies reviewed above focus on reasoned action and pay scant attention to habits and the social processes, contexts, and incentive structures that embed behaviour. Underlying such studies 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.

Problematising Attitude-Behaviour Gaps

Previous interpretive studies (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; Carrigan and Attalla 2001) have problematised attitude-behaviour gaps. For example, McEachern et al. (2007) and Szmigin et al. (2009) conceptualise the role of flexibility and cognitive dissonance in what they have termed conscious consumption contexts. Their studies reveal behavioural inconsistencies that might be seen as imperfections in consumers' self-integrity. However, unlike Chatzidakis et al.'s (2007; 2004) studies reviewed above, the authors suggest their respondents freely discussed their behaviours without justification; inconsistency was not considered important enough to produce dissonance and rationalisation. The adoption of flexible approaches to

ethical consumption allowed conscious consumers to manage the difficulties of accommodating their desires, budgets and ethical concerns.

On the other hand, Newholm (2005) 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.

The Coherence of Behavioural Inconsistencies

In fact, the discussion above 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.

Connolly and Prothero's (2008) theoretical lens 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 'best' or '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.

Factors Fostering Coherent Inconsistencies

Jackson (2005) highlights 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).

The Role of Groups and Social Norms. 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 behavioural change must take place at the social level. Jackson's (2005) view that consumers are constantly influenced by social norms which reprimand or encourage certain behavioural choices is particularly relevant for the purpose of the present study. Social norms are guidelines, principles for action, or controls for behaviour as provided by a particular social group (Varman and Costa 2008). They are central to the endurance and cohesion of groups and communities, and 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 in that they help members of a particular group or community to achieve desirable and efficient utilitarian and economic goals (Varman and Costa 2008). They also serve as cultural rules, and foster 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.

The Problem with Habits. 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 socially visible and discursively available. Recent research (Barnett 2007, p.19) supports Jackson's argument that ethical and green 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).

Furthermore, Verplanken and Wood (2006) 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, p.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 behaviour will 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).

Breaking Old Habits and Building Consistency

Jackson (2005) highlights that although most routine behaviour is enacted through practical consciousness, goal-oriented actions such as sustainable 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 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.

Indeed, Verplanken and Wood (2006) are also concerned with structural interventions that have the potential 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 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, and include economic incentives, legislation, environmental design, technological development, and new norms; the stronger the habits the bigger the need for upstream interventions (Verplanken and Wood 2006).

Since ‘inconsistency-reduction’ interventions require a disruption of the environmental factors that prompt habitual behaviour (Verplanken and Wood 2006), the notion of ethical and green spaces becomes relevant. Low and Davenport (2007) suggest that previously politicised product choices such as, e.g., Fairtrade and organic, have lost their key messages due to the recent mainstreaming of these products’ availability, and due to the fact that these products are now purchased for convenience, quality and taste in mainstream retailers, with ethics as an add-on benefit rather than the main selling point. They argue that ethical spaces can re-politicise ethical consumption through the reinvigoration of the products’ original messages, and by making consumers ‘ethical by default’. This would occur through spaces where only

ethical and green products are sold, thus making a habitual, environment-unfriendly choice impossible to occur. Indeed, this resonates with Mayo and Fielder's (2006) notion of choice editing in that ethical choices in such spaces would be made for consumers in a way that would facilitate inconsistency reduction. In this way, ethical spaces can facilitate environmentally-friendlier modes of consumption.

Given the literature reviewed above, we have sought to address our starting question (how have specific groups of consumers addressed (some of) their attitude-behaviour inconsistencies?) by contextually exploring 'coherent inconsistencies,' and improvements in such discrepancies, through an examination of the observed and experienced consumption practices of NCCs. 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 multi-sited ethnographic methodology is discussed below.

Methodology

With the help of on and off-line directories (x3) and websites, we purposefully located a range of communities that matched the notion of NCCs. Ten communities were selected and emailed, and five agreed to take part in the study (Green-Tech, 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 Community Farms at a later stage to add a 'mainstream' approach to NCC (see table 1).

Insert table 1 about here

This fieldwork design, in which the practices are what links the communities, is consistent with a multi-sited or multi-locale ethnographically-based 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 ethnographically-based studies, 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 – e.g., long and short visits, face-to-face and electronic interactions, frequently and infrequently, through participant-observation as well as interviews, documents, websites, media material and life stories (see table 2) – to study ‘the field’ (Amit 2000).

Insert table 2 about here

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 ‘giving something back’ to participating communities, while 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. The researcher adopted a predominantly participant-observer role where volunteering was carried out, and one of the benefits as well as shortcomings of participating and observing through volunteering was that the researcher was personally and emotionally involved with participants. Another issue was that fieldwork notes had to be written at the end of each day, mostly in the privacy of the researcher’s room. In this way participants had no way of knowing which instances were being noted and, thus, had little voice in the researcher’s note-taking process. Another implication of this process in terms of

the data collected was that the researcher had to rely on memory and her descriptive ability to record data (camcorders were not used as this would have hindered the rapport-building process that is so essential to ethnographically-based approaches). A number of informal and depth-interviews were conducted with the aim of balancing etic and emic perspectives and giving voice to participants. However, participation proved difficult even after researcher-participant relationships had been forged.

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 (Green-Tech 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, namely Stone-Hall's 'Cynthia'. Cynthia had visited several communities prior to joining Stone-Hall, which in a sense made her an expert participant. On the whole, she was happy with the way in which her community and her views were represented, and although other participants in her and other communities were given access to the draft document, they did not provide feedback. Cynthia had developed a good working relationship with the researcher, which is probably why she felt compelled to reply.

We 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, p.140) have called "grounded reading in data." The findings are discussed next.

Findings

Personal as well as collective discourses and practices have been thematically presented and 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.

Managing Inconsistencies through a Reconnection with Production

Consumer entrepreneurship and creativity were employed by the communities as tools for coping with coherent inconsistencies emanating from the uncertainties of reflexive modernisation (Connolly and Prothero 2008). Collective practices and discourses 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. Community Farms, 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 that avoid supply chain inconsistencies. 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 grow 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 Community Farms and Green-Tech. In all interviewed participants' views, their lifestyles represented nuanced alternative ways of living, and their efforts were attempts to positively redress perceived shortcomings. The communities' varied alternative practices indicated a creative reconnection with production, which, in turn, allowed for localised control over some of the inconsistencies and 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-construing Coherence through Production-Engaged Consumption Meanings

The communities' entrepreneurial production-consumption engagements also enabled the creation of re-enchanting 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 that enabled a sense of wholeness and consistency.

For instance, vegetable and fruit gardening both enabled, and was enabled by a sense of community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). 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]

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 inconsistencies can be reduced, and new habits can be achieved through localised community groups, which is not highlighted by Verplanken and Wood (2006), for example. The positive obligations created in the communities echo the view held by Malpass et al. (2007) that the key to influencing individual consumer choice is to have a greater understanding of the shared learning that occurs through peer groups and social networks, whereby behaviours spread through conversations, social learning, and the personal contacts of everyday life. The evidence from the communities lends further credence to Sayer’s (2005, p.6) notion of ‘lay normativities’ of daily life, and the importance that everyday commitments around what is of value, how to live, and what is worth striving for can adjust peoples’ own conduct in relation to sustainable consumer behaviour (Malpass et al. 2007).

Similar to 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 Community Farms and Green-Tech. But

reconnection with production also meant more control and trust over quality and provenance, thus reducing the perceived risks, uncertainties and inconsistencies 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...” [Community Farms/Sue]

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.” [Community Farms/Jane]

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." [Green-Tech/Nigel]

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 consciously and coherently discussed and practiced in relation to their identities as new consumers.

Consistently Greening Consumption through Production Reengagement

Participants' varied reconnections with production, 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 Community Farms, participants 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; Green-Tech 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!" [Green-Tech/Nigel]

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. For example, Sunny-Valley's Nicky argued that organic and ethical were sometimes too expensive to be bought, and at Spiritual a 'Kitchen Department' member stated:

"We are not a 100% organic; sometimes we are 60%, sometimes 80%... We'd like to be 100% but we are not." [Broadcast/Spiritual Community]

Modes of production-engaged consumption related not only to what, but how the communities consumed, and consistency meant really applying the 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) to their consumption spaces. 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. Green-Tech 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 such altered consumption practices seemed to liberate people from mainstream, consumerist norms and created joy through the achievement of environmental goals. Indeed, it is through their community-production efforts that the people in this study find the strength to address the issues and achieve further behavioural consistency, even if, for example, 'consuming less' or 'differently' means being different from the people they have to interact with through their jobs or other activities in their

daily lives outside their NCCs. In other words, the communities provide the support their members need in order to change ‘production-consumption norms’ so that they can act differently whilst feeling that they belong to a group. 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.” [Green-Tech/Nigel]

Indeed, coherent inconsistencies still exist; sometimes the communities would use the ingredients they wanted to use, whether green or not. As seen above, while Green-Tech 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, i.e., freezers, large-screen TVs and stereo systems. Notwithstanding, creative re-use of materials at Green-Tech 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 and greener 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, coherent 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. Green-Tech, 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. Green-Tech, 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).

The Relevance of Production-Engaged Ethical Spaces

One of the most significant themes emanating from the narrative presented above is the relevance of place. We see place as both location and 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.

Moreover, 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 and reduced inconsistencies. 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), Green-Tech's Nigel and all Community Farms' 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]

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]

Participants 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. As seen above, 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 CO2 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 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 questioned the notion 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. The multi-sited ethnographic findings add to

the growing evidence that individual behavioural change toward sustainability involves changing social norms and relations (Jackson 2005; Barnett et al. 2005). The production-consumption stories narrated in this study illustrate how structural interventions (even small-scale ones) can re-connect individuals through their wider social processes to embed sustainable practices into everyday life.

Although reported in the context of specific forms of intentional community living and/or working, these exemplars have wider resonance with the numerous NCCs that are emerging to empower ordinary people to engage with more sustainable lives. For example, the urban agriculture movement is transforming the lives of many poorer consumers, delivering social, educational, environmental, economic and health-related impacts in cities such as London and Detroit, through community-driven sustainable food production. Transition Towns, designed around the collective concerns of small groups to the threat of Peak Oil, have demonstrated the power of working collaboratively to reconnect communities to their living environment.

The normative and habitual reframing evidenced in the NCCs in this study lends credence to the view that the connections to wider society that ‘ethical spaces’ (Barnett et al. 2005; Low and Davenport 2007) provide, can act as a collective catalyst to embed sustainable practices in everyday life. Participation in NCCs delivers the links that individuals require to the sometimes invisible consequences of their consumption choices, and disrupts the environmental factors that lead to habitual behaviour. Engaging with the community ethos allows individuals to become ‘ethical by default’ through the collective ‘choice editing’ (Mayo and Fielder 2006) practiced within, such as organic vegetable production; in turn, this establishes and maintains increased and meaningful consistency in participants’ discourses, consumption behaviour, and goals.

Cynthia's intention to pass her skills down to her children, the discussions between neighbours about the integrity of their vegetable growing, and the debate about multiple caravan ownership demonstrate that NCCs bring routinised and taken-for-granted consumption practices into discursive consciousness (Barnett 2007; Jackson 2005). The shared learning within these peer groups and social networks is enacted within the personal contacts of their everyday lives. Through their commitment to the NCC and the collective values promoted within, the personal conduct of the individual gravitates toward more sustainable behaviour (Malpass et al. 2007). This also positively impacts the communities' visitors and volunteers; thus, community behaviour creates spaces of collective influence more powerful than fragmented individual acts. 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 a balanced emic-etic perspective allows us to see these communities as consumer groups interested in creative, production-engaged discourses, practices and choices.

Findings from this study are qualitative and, as such, cannot be generalised. However, the examined communities offer potentially instructive models of best practice for social marketers and policy makers interested in advancing more sustainable levels of consumption and development through grassroots community initiatives. The NCCs in this study encompass solutions that offer both downstream and upstream approaches that tackle issues related to routines, habits, norms, barriers, and incentives. The environmental debate has tended to take an "overly rational view" of consumption, and neglected the extent to which consumption and sustainability is "bound up in and complicated by" emotional, symbolic and social meanings (Peattie and Peattie 2008, p.267).

If we are to succeed in promoting sustainability, we need to recognise that sustainable development is a social proposition. The ethical spaces provided by the NCCs offer individuals

a less constrained choice supported by ‘affinity relationships’ (Low and Davenport, 2009) that develop within the community. Following McKenzie-Mohr (1999), all the researched communities apart from Fallowfields can be seen as effective cases of what the author terms community-based social marketing. Community-based social marketing is effective due to its practical and grassroots approach to collective behavioural change, which comprises four key steps: identifying barriers to change through community-based research; outlining a strategy that uses change tools (including the creation of commitment amongst members, implementation of behavioural prompts, development of new norms, communication of effective messages, creation of incentives, and making it convenient to act); piloting the strategy; and evaluating the outcomes. All these steps were, in one way or another, embraced by the communities in this study, and this, in turn, helped them to tackle behavioural inconsistencies.

The exemplars discussed here may also offer in part some solution to the tensions that exist around the debate that marginal lifestyle changes offer only marginal improvements in environmental impact when urgent and ambitious changes are needed (Thøgersen and Crompton 2009). The environmental successes of the communities in this study are both personal and collaborative achievements, but also ones that are already being replicated in other intentional or happenstance communities. NCCs mobilise “social networks” and articulate “novel combinations of production, distribution and consumption” (Clarke et al. 2007), with the aim of delivering a more sustainable future. Therefore, we would argue that Thøgersen and Crompton’s (2009) plea for governments and environmental organisations to campaign for more ambitious sustainable agendas may be more effective in dealing with public behaviour inconsistencies if framed to include community as well as individual behavioural change.

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Table 1: NCCs' Profiles

Community*	Description
Fallowfields Community	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.
Community Farms	A UK-based community cooperative formed in 2004 in 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.
Green-Tech Community	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. Green-Tech considered itself a best practice example and catalyst for sustainable living.
Spiritual Community	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	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	Co-housing cooperative in shared house on rural land. Eleven members celebrated the community's 10 th 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	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.

*The communities' and participants' real names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

Table 2: Fieldwork Details

Community	Nature of Visits	Details of Fieldnotes	Additional Material*
Fallowfields Community	<p>One-day visit [guided tour, informal interviews and volunteering]</p> <p>One-week volunteering visit [30 hours of community work; informal interviews]</p>	<p>Audio dictation notes taken after the visit [2,026 words]</p> <p>Detailed hand-written notes taken daily. MS word transcriptions made soon after return from fieldwork [12,253 words]</p> <p>One depth interview of 1.5 hours with former community member [6,811 words]</p>	Website, own photographs, printed booklet on the community's history, printed leaflets
Community Farms	One-day visit	Five depth interviews of one hour each with community members [33,500 words]	Website, visits to market stalls and gardening fields
Green-Tech Community	One-day visit [guided tour and informal interviews]	<p>Hand-written notes taken after the visit [2,000 words]</p> <p>One depth interview of one hour with community member [7,709 words]</p>	Website, own photographs, information packs, monthly newsletters, news archives, TV broadcast footage
Spiritual Community	Experience week [seven-day paid visit taking part in planned week-long group activities; some volunteering]	<p>Hand-written notes jotted at the end of each day. Detailed audio dictation notes [13,723 words]</p> <p>Seven visitors' life stories submitted through email [6,017 words]</p>	Website, own photographs, information pack, monthly newsletters, TV broadcast footage, online bulleting board
Stone-Hall Community	<p>One-week volunteering Visit [30 hours of community work; informal and depth interviews]</p> <p>Additional one-week volunteering visit [30 hours of community work; informal and depth interviews]</p>	<p>Detailed hand-written notes taken daily. MS word transcriptions made soon after return from the community [17,246 words]</p> <p>Volunteering fieldnotes [8,010 words]</p> <p>Four depth interviews of one hour each [26,376 words]</p> <p>One life story of community volunteer [540 words]</p>	Website, research photographs, information leaflets

Sunny-Valley Community	Visitor weekend [three-day volunteering visit and guided tour; informal interviews and group discussion]	Detailed hand-written notes taken daily. MS word transcriptions made after return from the field [7,218 words]	Website, own photographs, printed pre-visit information pack
Woodland Community	<p>One-day volunteering visit [guided tour, informal interviews and volunteering]</p> <p>Evening event [Ceilidh ball participation]</p> <p>One-week volunteering visit [30 hours of community work; informal interviews]</p> <p>Community festival]</p>	<p>Audio dictation notes taken after the visit [2,953 words]</p> <p>MS Word notes taken after the visit [705 words]</p> <p>Detailed hand-written notes taken daily. MS word transcriptions made soon after return from the community [15,401 words]</p> <p>MS Word notes taken after the visit [1,057 words]</p>	Website, research photographs, own photographs, leaflets, monthly newsletters, own book, online video

* These communities' websites will not be disclosed as they would reveal the communities' real identities and thus breach confidentiality agreements.