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LIVING PRODUCTION-ENGAGED ALTERNATIVES: AN EXAMINATION OF NEW CONSUMPTION COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

In this study we draw on varied theoretical perspectives to explore and gain an alternative understanding of consumption at New Consumption Communities (NCCs). Intrinsic to the notion of NCCs is a sense of community between production-engaged consumers who question market practices deemed inadequate or unfair. Reported findings are part of a three-year ethnographic research project and suggest that such communities have been overly perceived as presenting radical resistance to prevailing ideologies of consumer society. Collectively, they are more interested in entrepreneurial positive discourses, practices and choices, than in acting against consumer culture or markets. This view is buttressed by their varied production-engaged practices, which in turn are problematized in relation to (perhaps outdated) notions of consumers, producers and their interrelationships. Finally, this paper attempts a fluid classification of the NCCs (Committed, Engaged Alternatives, Apprentices and Visionaries), and offers a view of alternative consumer behaviour that goes beyond the current 'anti' discourses in the extant literature.

LIVING PRODUCTION-ENGAGED ALTERNATIVES: AN EXAMINATION OF NEW CONSUMPTION COMMUNITIES

In this paper we present varied theoretical perspectives and findings from an ethnographic study to explore and gain an alternative understanding of consumption at New Consumption Communities (NCCs). NCCs have been conceptualized as the development of consumption communities which provide alternative forms of thinking and being to an increasingly varied range of individuals (Szmigin and Carrigan 2003). NCCs are sustained around a sense of community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) developed over time, through an initial engagement in boycotts, voicing of concerns and buycotts (Friedman 1996), which in turn may be theorized as forms of consumer resistance. NCCs are encompassing, ranging from Fairtrade Towns (formed through steering groups of committed consumers and limited to fair trade issues), through to those highly committed to various interrelated issues such as intentional and sustainable communities (comprising lifestyle changes and production-engaged approaches to consumption). In their own ways, NCCs reveal perceived inadequacies of existing market systems, and represent responses to unwanted consumption and corporate behaviour deemed inappropriate or unfair (Szmigin, Carrigan and Bekin 2007).

At face value the communities in this study may seem like anti-consumption researchers' paradise. Such communities, however, present a much more complex picture. Individual consumer resistance and communities of alternative consumption have been examined not only as anti-consumption (Craig-Lees 2006; Hogg, Banister and Stephenson 2006; Zavestoski 2002) and attempts at consumer emancipation (Kozinets 2002; Giesler and Pohlmann 2003), but also as consumer activism and movements (Hermann 1970; Hilton 2003; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Lang and Gabriel 2005), political consumption (Micheletti and Follesdal 2007; Tormey 2007; Micheletti 2003; Dickinson and Carsky 2005; Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson 2006; Shaw

2007) and countervailing responses to corporate co-optation (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007).

It is important to raise the question as to whether NCCs' practices and discourses really should be theorized as anti-markets or anti-consumption. This is examined through a review of the extant literature and findings of a three-year ethnographic research project. A thematic exploration of seven UK NCCs is addressed, and the discussion goes beyond the current 'anti' literature and problematizes taken-for-granted dualisms and notions of consumers, producers, and their interrelationships. Finally, we develop theoretical implications for NCCs, consumer culture research and marketing theory more broadly.

Consumer Resistance and Related Theories

Consumer resistance, herein defined as consumers' ability to withstand and respond to undesired market discourses and practices, is not a new phenomenon (see Brobeck 1997; Hilton 2003; Holt 2002; Lang and Gabriel 2005; Mitchell 1978). Several theoretical perspectives on consumer resistance have been developed and a few are reviewed below.

Consumer Movements and Activism

Consumer resistance has been conceptualized by some scholars as a diverse social movement, which attempts to change aspects or, as put by Lang and Gabriel (2005), inadequacies of consumption and market practices. US and UK consumer movement cycles are said to have developed over four main waves beginning in the late 1800s (Forbes 1987; Frank 1997; Herrmann 1970; Herrmann and Mayer 1997; Hilton 2003; Kotler 1972; Lang and Gabriel 2005; Mitchell 1997). Consumers have mainly strived for fairer marketing practices, inclusivity and better information, and some groups (e.g. voluntary simplifiers) were interested in issues of excess materialism before the early manifestations of consumer movements (cf. Rudmin and

Kilbourne 1996). The first wave (late 1800s - early 1900s) was marked by strong cooperatives and a desire for social change, and capitalism was seen as something to be avoided. The working classes exercised both their power as workers and consumers, and as early as 1844 in England (Lang and Gabriel 2005), and 1840s in the United States (Frank 1994) the first consumer cooperatives were organized. The second wave (1930s) sought to provide consumer information so that people could operate more efficiently in the marketplace. This “value-for-money consumers” phase was the “first time that consumer activism saw itself as enabling consumers to take best advantage of the market, rather than trying to undermine the market through cooperative action or political agitation” (Lang and Gabriel 2005, 44); it offered no alternative envisioning for society. The third wave (1960s), on the other hand, viewed capitalism and the marketplace as acceptable, but in need of much work to avoid its excesses and problems (Lang and Gabriel 2005). It was during this wave that many US organizations gained strength; prominent consumer advocates such as Esther Peterson and Ralph Nader played an important role, which in turn prompted Lang and Gabriel (2005, 46) to call this the “Naderism” wave and position it as a particularly US phenomenon.

Although Lang and Gabriel (2005) believe that European green consumerism has been *the* factor to mark a new wave since the late 1980s, there have been several major aspects contributing to the conditions for a new and diverse upsurge of consumer movements since then. One was the rapid proliferation of personal computers and Internet access at the beginning of the 1990s (Berry and McEachern 2005; Shaw *et al.* 2004; Szmigin 2003). Additionally, there has been a rapid growth in consumer organizations and coalitions (Herrmann and Mayer 1997). Western consumers’ concerns have become so encompassing that what has been termed ‘ethical consumption’ – that is, purchasing and consumption which takes into consideration societal, environmental and animal welfare concerns (Harrison, Newholm and Shaw 2005) – may be viewed as emanating from this long history of consumer movements.

Current consumer concerns include 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. Herrmann and Mayer (1997) argue that consumer trust in business has diminished over the years, and Crane (2005) highlights the challenges faced by organizations attempting to respond to consumers' often contradictory moral gaze. Nevertheless, current consumer concerns have facilitated renewed cooperative engagements; examples include ethical banking, community-supported agriculture initiatives, box schemes and farmers' markets (Lang and Gabriel 2005). In Lang and Gabriel's (2005) view, such cooperatives offer critiques of productive structures, which in turn, it is argued, appeal to twenty-first century consumers.

From a historical perspective, Hilton (2003) highlights that although some academic discourses drew on old theories to conceptualize consumers and their movements as manipulated dupes, others (i.e. cultural studies and early postmodern thinking) viewed the consumer as a liberated *bricoleur* (Firat and Dholakia 2006; Hower and Brownlie 2007), for whom commodities and resistance strategies are cultural resources for self-expression and experimentation. The problem with this celebration of the *bricoleur* consumer, argues Hilton (2003, 09), is that first, the *bricoleur* representation probably bears little, if any, relation to the everyday realities of most consumers; secondly, it assumes that all consumers are empowered or able to subvert or devise acts of appropriation; thirdly, it resembles what marketing has been doing for years (that is, championing the freedom and agency of the 'sovereign' consumer); and finally, this "ideological convergence" has enabled many former counter-cultural activists to become foremost leaders in the current economic scene. Notwithstanding, it is worth reiterating the diversity intrinsic to such phenomena to avoid any overarching theoretical generalizations and interpretations about consumer movements.

Anti-Consumption and Consumer Emancipation

Kozinets and Handelman (2004, 692) also conceptualize consumer resistance as movements, but position them against the “ideology and culture of consumerism”. They build upon New Social Movements theory to suggest that their case-studied consumer movements (anti-advertising, anti-Nike and anti-GM food groups) seek to reshape not only the principles, practices and policies of cultures of consumerism, but also the fundamental ideology that sustains them. Although relevant, these authors’ viewpoints are again difficult to generalize. While some groups may indeed be fighting consumer culture, others are still striving to ascertain basic consumer rights. Another issue is a lack of clarification regarding what is meant by anti-consumption, as previously highlighted by Craig-Lees (2006).

In contrast, Kozinets (2002) explored the potential for consumer emancipation in what he termed an anti-market festival. Such theoretical conceptualization is in itself problematic, particularly when we consider non/anti-consumption as within the symbolic system of consumption (Connolly and Prothero 2003), whereby a consumption code is still used to achieve particular outcomes. Kozinets’s rich findings reveal that the examined community’s distancing drive was directed not at capitalism or markets per se, but at large corporations and over-marketized practices that were seen to weaken self-expression and social bonds. Anti-consumption communities are discussed by Kozinets (2002) as empowering and corrective, and (artistic) gift-giving, bartering and sacrifice are viewed to re-enchant acts of consumption, self and community. Indeed, ‘community’ was maintained through anti-market art and gift-giving, and as put by Kozinets, physical place was fundamental to their community.

However, the amount of consumption that took place in this festival contradicted their anti-market discourse, something Kozinets explained by arguing that “festal excesses” (Kozinets 2002, 34) are expected in such a context. But this highlights the point above that these

communities are still using consumption as code and, as such, we should not ignore the role for theories addressing, for example, symbolic consumption, social distinction, hedonism, as well as self, extended self and undesired self concepts (McEachern, Carrigan and Szmigin 2007; Hogg, Banister and Stephenson 2006; Hogg and Banister 2001). Kozinets's (2002) findings also highlight the difficulty of positioning such communities as 'anti', and raises the question of whether, from a balanced emic-etic perspective, we should really be theorizing 'anti' at all, a point to which we return below. Nevertheless, scholars increasingly see consumption as political (Micheletti and Follesdal 2007; Dickinson and Carsky 2005; Shaw 2007; Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson 2006; Soper 2007; Tormey 2007) as discussed next.

(Anti)Consumption as Political

Consumption may be viewed as political in that it presents an opportunity for direct intervention, which would not be possible through voting (Micheletti 2003). Political consumption has been defined as consumers' conscious use of "their desire to change objectionable institutional or market environmental, political, or ethical practices as reasons for making choices among producers and products" (Micheletti and Follesdal 2007, 168). In this way political consumption can be an umbrella concept encompassing diverse manifestations of individualized, micropolitical and, as put by Tormey (2007), everyday interventions, which collectively may have a positive impact on societal welfare. Thus, citizens take responsibility by using their virtues to evaluate the politics behind the labels (Micheletti 2003).

But these political perspectives are also controversial. As discussed by Micheletti (2003), although some may see this as the new neo-liberal discourse to suggest that free markets can and should solve all problems (consumer sovereignty), others will view it as the new left seeking to legislate free markets (consumers-as-dupes). As put by Hilton (2003), however, 'dupes' versus 'sovereign' dualisms do not help. Instead, we should remember that "the consuming body is

imbricated in wider systems of power”, in which consumer activism plays a part, but not the only part (Hilton 2003, 18).

Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007) also problematize such dualistic views. When discussing the assimilation of countercultural symbols and practices by the marketplace in the context of community-supported agriculture, they elaborate on the political ideology of such communities. The authors suggest that, although anti-globalization activists may seek market reformation through consumption activities such as buying Fairtrade, this may generate a fear of corporate rhetoric among committed consumers, who in turn will respond and direct their consumption choices at localized alternatives such as community-supported agriculture. The idea of ‘countervailing responses’, however, still rests on a dualistic notion of ‘corporate’, and ‘counter’; an entrapment in itself. This discussion begs a return to the point made earlier about whether we should be theorizing ‘anti’ at all.

Going Beyond Anti and Resistance

Indeed, most of the literature reviewed above and previous studies of NCCs (e.g. Bekin, Szmigin and Carrigan 2008; Szmigin, Carrigan and Bekin 2007) have been largely based on dualistic framings. However, as suggested by our anonymous reviewers, ‘anti-consumption’ and ‘resistance’ facilitate the perpetuation of binary divisions and oppositional theories – of inside or outside, power or resistance, monetary exchange or gift-giving, passivity or creativity, pro- or anti-market(ing) –, rather than acknowledge the changing face of our (new consumer) culture.

Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau (forthcoming), for example, conceptualize communal consumer innovation and creativity in light of the collaborative world facilitated by the diffusion of networking technologies. In doing so, they acknowledge the social (and marketing) significance of such transformations, and the changing nature of consumption; a participatory, collaborative and productive process, no longer characterized by the passivity of previous

century consumption. They suggest that distinctions between producers and consumers – now ‘prosumers’ (Toffler 1981) – are dissolving, and that consumption in online environments is indivisible from production. Similarly, Cova, Kozinets and Shankar (2007) problematize notions of consumption and consumer, and argue for a more participatory, creative, fluid, social and dialogical view of ‘prosumers’ and their relationships with brands, commercial culture and firms. These new consumers are at once activators, double agents, plunderers and entrepreneurs (Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007), at a time in which marketing is said to be evolving into a services logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004). In this way, marketing becomes a facilitator for a new type of work-play, and “part of the cultural fabric of an ongoing community” (Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau forthcoming, 33). Tapscott and Williams (2007) also discuss what they term Wikinomics (collaborative economics) and acknowledge the brave new world of technology-enabled, collaborative consumers as an unlimited and free R&D resource, which in turn should be tapped into by companies (Tapscott and Williams 2007).

However, we would suggest that although roles may be shifting and merging, firms are still major/organized market players if compared to individual contributors to communities of ‘collective intelligence’ (Lévy 1997). As highlighted by Jenkins (2006), sometimes firms will have the same interests as people, and at other times they will not; some companies will be more committed to co-creation alongside consumers than others, and perhaps we will begin to see more cases of new consumers becoming firms. And this, too, may change and shift over time. Maybe we are prematurely celebrating a paradigmatic shift for marketing (would marketing even exist as a managerial philosophy and practice under a paradigmatic shift or would it become any and everyone’s practice?), which is yet to take shape and ‘become’. A good example is the way in which media companies have declared war against their own customers, for fear of losing proprietary control over mediated culture (Jenkins 2006). Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau (forthcoming) themselves acknowledge that online communities may facilitate a counterbalance

to abusive corporate practices, which in turn may force commercial organizations to rethink, legally and organizationally, their interactions with new consumers. Therefore, although we may now witness producer-consumers and consumer-producers operating through our technology-enabled convergence culture (Jenkins 2006), both people and firms are acting and interacting in the infinite web of networks and possibilities, at once liberating and oppressive. Corporations still exist, in an increasingly consolidated way and in increasingly fragmented spaces. Market economies are, therefore, both hegemonic and accommodating; not either-or.

A useful work at this point is that of Gibson-Graham (2006). The authors are critical of both 'leftist' and/or 'neo-liberal' politics and suggest that our economy is what we make of it, through thought, discourse and practices. They present their own ideas for a new economy, to which they refer as 'taking back the economy' (Gibson-Graham 2006, xxii). Their feminist-Foucauldian envisioning suggests a new language of economy based on a more reflective and caring ontology; one rooted on sets of diverse places connected through meanings and analogically rather than organizationally; one which conceives the opportunity for politicized and localized transformation led by empowered people, collectively, without necessarily aiming for, or achieving, large-scale transformation. This goes beyond Micheletti's (2003) definition and notion of political consumption discussed above, and resonates with Soper and Thomas's (2006) and Soper's (2007) conceptualization of 'alternative hedonism'. In their view, people can recreate their own notions of the good life, not necessarily to change society at large, but to restructure the meanings of their own lives and experiences as 'seductive alternatives' of joy and high standard (Soper and Thomas 2006). Indeed, Gibson-Graham's (2006) is a politics of possibility, one which is not disengaged from capital and markets, but one which tolerates 'not knowing'; which fosters curious re-readings of the credible and the marginal, and which relies on individual's freedom to be self-vigilant, to be their own subjects, to cultivate their own creative imaginings, and to engage in ethical practices (Gibson-Graham 2006).

Our study, therefore, seeks to explore and gain an alternative understanding of consumption at NCCs. We aim to examine whether and how the theories discussed above are enacted within the communities by asking the following research questions; do the communities under study desire, or perceive, to be anti-market(ing), or have they gone beyond such a dualistic framing? How is this enacted through purchases and consumption? Finally, what does this mean in relation to notions of consumers, producers and their interrelationships? Our theoretical discussion is now followed by the ethnographic research undertaken with NCCs, and the methodology is discussed next.

Methodology

Our ethnographic involvement with UK-based NCCs began in January 2004. Back then, aided by websites as well as online and off-line directories (x3), we found a range of communities which fit the notion of NCCs. We instantly ruled out online communities given that one of the aims was to investigate everyday green, production-engaged discourses as well as behaviour. We then randomly selected and emailed ten communities, and five agreed to take part in the research (Hockerton, Woodland, Fallowfields, Sunny-Valley and Stone-Hall). Our e-mails emphasized 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 over an extended period, while others were visited only once. Due to recurrent referrals, an additional community (Spiritual) was included in the fieldwork. We also visited Futurefarms at a later stage to add a more ‘mainstream’ approach to NCC formation (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 ethnographic approach (Amit 2000; Marcus 1995), in which notions of field, non-field and site are interrogated (Caputo 2000; Knowles 2000;

Marcus 2000; Pink 2000; Rapport 2000; Strauss 2000). In multi-sited or multi-locale ethnographies, a world of overlapping contexts and interconnectedness is perceived to exist; the researcher plays a major role in constructing the field, defying notions of immersion which imply the existence of 'the field' independently of the fieldwork that is done (Amit 2000). This approach 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). It reflects the mobility of the people we study as well as our own mobility (Amit 2000), and the relational character of concepts such as consumers and community.

[Insert Table 2 About Here]

The variation, timing and duration of the visits were a result of acknowledging the sensitivities of the different communities and their willingness to provide access. The researcher acted as a full-time volunteer in most of the communities (Fallowfields, Stone-Hall, Sunny-Valley, Woodland and part-time at Spiritual). This meant fully experiencing community life and performing a range of activities including vegetable gardening, composting, cleaning, and cooking for large groups of people. It also meant listening to conversations about positive and negative personal views of community life, and socializing in natural settings. A number of informal and depth-interviews were carried out, although getting members to participate through depth-interviews proved difficult.

We collected newsletters, flyers and course brochures, and the communities' websites were continuously analyzed 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 due to distance or unavailability of participants (HHP and Spiritual). All fieldnotes, interviews, life stories and additional material were typed, transcribed and coded, and analytical themes emerged from a hermeneutic process of reading the whole and the parts

(Thompson 2004). We discuss themes that have been reviewed by a key participant ('Cynthia'), and interweave the thematic narrative with a more contextualized discussion of the theories introduced in the previous sections. This resembles what Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007, 140) have called "grounded reading in data".

Thematic Analysis

Collective as well as personal discourses and practices have been thematically organized and analyzed around emic notions of alternative, reconnection with production, the meanings and re-enchantments associated with such reconnection, and the importance of place as discussed below.

Anti...What?

The communities' collective discourses and practices were built around concerns with the impacts of systemic risks (Thompson 2005), namely the perceived disconnect between producer and consumer, environmental degradation, 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. This echoes the values of voluntary simplifiers (Etzioni 1998; McDonald *et al.* 2006; Shaw and Newholm 2002; Zavestoski 2002), found to a lesser extent at Futurefarms and HHP. Although such concerns and fostered values could, at a first glance, be analyzed as oppositional and radical, 'anti' and 'resistance' were not entwined in community discourses as suggested by previous literature (Zavestoski 2002). Individual discourses also focused upon 'positive ways of living', but meanings varied considerably. For example, the concept of resistance was alien to Futurefarms's members, despite all members' critique of mainstream food production practices:

(Laughter) A form of resistance against mainstream... I don't know about that. I think the kind of concerns that it's responding to really are mainstream now. I think there's an awful lot of concern amongst the general population about how their food is produced, so I would say it pretty much is mainstream... [Futurefarms/Janette]

While Janette and Mark viewed Futurefarms as providing a service to the local community, and Mark and Susanne saw it as a 'collaborative alternative', Nick believed that projects like Futurefarms have the potential to change larger chains of food supply. This is in line with Gibson-Graham's (2006) politics of possibility, and their empowered, localized and small-scale approaches to alternative economic imaginings. In other communities, individual positions nuanced at once from alternative living and positive choices (Friedman 1991; 1996) through to anti-capitalism, and participants referred mainly to 'positive alternatives':

Maybe resistance isn't my word, but it is some example of a new way of living. It's just a choice. I wouldn't say, 'what you are doing is wrong'; we're saying, 'our way is a really good way of living'. [Stone-Hall/Cynthia]

I'm sure it could be seen as resistance, but... The foundation of life is the polarities, what some people call yin and yang... These polarities are at one level in conflict with each other, but can also be seen as working together in harmony, and I think you can apply it to your question as well. It could be seen like a conflict, as resistance and...it is, but it's also extremely necessary, unless you are just gonna blasély go along with it like so many people, and just never make a change... If we were out on the streets campaigning and petrol-bombing Tesco's, that kind of thing; that would be an evident resistance. That would be an actual conflict coming up against...But my preferred method would be for people just to get on with it to the extent they can... It can be a way of inspiring people without going and destroying that which you don't agree with as a statement for the people you are trying to inspire, like 'we have to destroy this before we can get on with how we should be living'. [Stone-Hall/Jonathan]

Words such as ‘good way of living’, ‘positive step forward’, ‘inspiration’, and the view that there is no need to ‘destroy’ what exists (the emic deconstruction of ‘anti’ and ‘resistance’) in order to live ‘ethically’, ‘greenly’ and to simplify, reflects Stone-Hall’s positive way of living. Similarly, HHP’s Nick criticized the word ‘resistance’ and preferred to view the project as an alternative way of living:

The word ‘resistance’ is probably too strong a word, but I guess it is a subtle form of resistance - by showing/demonstrating an alternative. I suppose I prefer to see it as a constructive resistance, i.e. here is an alternative to our consumer-driven society that can actually provide a better quality of life. [HHP/Nick]

Indeed, individual resistance discourses comprised a few rare and mostly situated constructs rather than communally supported, overarching positions. For example, Sunny-Valley’s Raymond has published a book independently (making use of community funds), on the ‘anti-capitalist struggle’. And during an informal conversation, Stone-Hall’s Martin criticized people who were ‘too accustomed with the accumulation process.’ These views, however, were not communally encouraged, and may be seen as related to individuals’ personal histories and motivations for joining their respective communities. Nevertheless, in all interviewed participants’ views, their lifestyles represented nuanced alternative ways of living. They tried and targeted the immediate effects of societal and market power relations in their daily lives (Smart 1985; Tormey 2007), and their efforts were attempts to positively redress the perceived shortcomings. This also suggests that we should move beyond dualistic resistance theorizations (Lang and Gabriel 2005; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Craig-Lees 2006; Micheletti 2003; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007), at least in the context of New Consumption Communities, and re-examine how their entrepreneurial reconnection with production contributes to the participatory, social and fluid nature (Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007) of these new communities.

Entrepreneurial and Creative Reconnections with Production

The communities presented varied alternative and creative practices which indicated a reconnection with production (namely, cooperative organization, 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 localized (but networked) settings. They were active and entrepreneurial producer-consumers; double agents (Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007) 'prosuming' in their community spaces. Futurefarms, for example, overtly linked environmental concerns to the disconnect between food producer and consumer, which they redressed through local and cooperative food production and consumption. Although monetary exchange was part of the communities' lives and not eschewed, alternative exchange schemes (Local Exchange Trading Scheme, bartering, gift-giving) enabled some of the communities (Stone-Hall, Sunny-Valley, Spiritual) to symbolically reconstruct their exchanges as more personalized and local. A Stone-Hall member downplayed the relevance of money:

During the fair there was no monetary exchange, and you could get all of those really nice things [cookies, face paintings, hair braids, palm reading, games, treats etc] for just a pebble... And what's a pebble? Nothing. [Stone-Hall/Jonathan]

The pebble, in his view, symbolized the emptiness of money; it placed value on that which was given, and the caring and social aspect of the transaction rather than on the means of exchange (see Giesler and Pohlmann 2003; Kozinets 2002). The pebble, therefore, dialectically unites community and market, exchange and gift-giving, self-interest and sociality.

The communities' cooperative businesses are also indicative of their entrepreneurial and creative endeavours, which represent their productive-consumer roles, and makes them akin to non-profit 'firms'. Communities either ran their own or hosted holistic courses that doubled as

outreach strategy and income. HHP, for example, offered consultancy services, workshops, publications and information packages on the technicalities of eco-building and setting up sustainable communities. But the most business-oriented of the communities was Spiritual. ‘Core’ members were in charge of running, teaching and leading a large proportion of the community’s educational courses, workshops and conferences in line with the community’s goals and values, which attracted a huge number of diverse visitors each year. This core group also ran a consultancy service, holiday accommodation, eco-chalets, energy and water services, IT services, and a visitors’ centre. Among the businesses run by this wider community were a publishing house, a Steiner school, an organic vegetables box scheme, a healing essences business, an eco-sewage system business, community shops (selling whole foods, books, crafts etc), a café and a community bank, all of which served themselves, the local community and visitors. The communities thus engaged with the marketplace at once as organized economic actors and enactors of productive alternatives, simultaneously producing and consuming through and with the marketplace, to varying degrees. Embedded in this entrepreneurial spirit are (online-offline) marketing discourses and practices:

Each [of the eight committee members] have this list of twenty people who we should get to know and persuade, and in them you’ve got keen users, you’ve got keen people but not users, and you’ve got people who aren’t keen at all, and so we’re going to go out and hit them... We’re going to ring them up and say ‘Can I have fifteen minutes to tell you how the scheme’s gone, where have we got to, what have we got for sale, what are the future plans, and how can you be... how can we make it more useful to you. [Futurefarms/Nick]

Spiritual also held an open discourse about ‘positioning’ their courses and services, and made use of their website as a targeted communications medium. HHP, on the other hand, used research to develop new services:

It was necessary to undertake a formal feasibility study in order to better understand the needs of the groups we would target, the most effective way of involving local communities and agencies, and the financial viability of such a centre... This included an extensive survey of previous visitors to HHP, workshops with key local partners and visits to other eco-demonstration centres. The study confirmed the need for improved facilities and endorsed the concept of a Sustainable Resource Centre. [HHP/Newsletter]

Marketing is, therefore, both discursively and practically a part of NCCs' reconnection to production. It co-exists with, and shapes, their alternative imaginings of localized and communal economies; it is neither eschewed nor celebrated. Conceptually viewing these UK-based NCCs as production-engaged, entrepreneurial alternatives allows us to understand the communities' use of marketing tools and business services not as inconsistencies or paradoxes (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; McDonald *et al.* 2006), fragmentation (Firat and Dholakia 2006), or even hypocrisy (Higgins and Tadajewski 2002), but as means to create and co-create production-engaged consumption and preferred overall lifestyle projects (Newholm 2005).

Reclaiming and Re-enchanting Production Meanings

The communities' entrepreneurial production engagements enabled the creation of re-encharnted personal meanings and unique symbolic experiences in relation to food growing and community work (see figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1 About Here]

For example, vegetable and fruit gardening both enabled, and was enabled by a sense of community (Chavis and Pretty 1999). In this way, community relations led to a convenient end to all things governed through community (Foucault 1991), 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]

Been here about ten years and probably for the first eight years I knew very few people, but now through being involved with this I know almost everybody in the village. So yeah, it's had great benefits, and of course when we have our market, well, you saw it at the Club, people come and it is a place for people to meet, which there really isn't much of in the village... [Futurefarms/Janette]

Personal development, another value of voluntary simplifiers (e.g. McDonald *et al.* 2006), 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:

It was about the way I (we) did the job. I was part of a team, a team of conscious people and it felt like love in action. That is very different to my job at home. If I had the chance I would like to bring more "love in action" in my job or better say my working life. [Spiritual/Sarah]

Of course, sometimes the need to be efficient got in the way of enjoyment, which was the case at Futurefarms and HHP. But reconnection with production also meant more control and trust over quality and provenance. At Futurefarms, Paul cited the difference in quality, and Susanne wanted to trust the food they consumed by knowing how their food was produced:

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

Reduced dependency on supermarkets was also welcomed and voiced by all participants, as supermarkets were seen to have too much power and to put an unethical level of pressure on farmers and smaller producers. This is in line with a counterbalancing approach to corporate

practices deemed abusive (Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau forthcoming), although the impact of such reduced dependency on supermarket chains' overall relationships with non-local consumers is at best unlikely. Nevertheless, participants felt immensely empowered by their production-engaged consumption processes (McDonald *et al.* 2006):

I think it's hugely empowering. Anything is empowering that you bring about through your own abilities and your own power, without being dependent on, or reliant on big companies or someone else. The huge companies that are offering you everything possible under the sun for 'wow, amazing competitive prices', are actually incredibly disempowering to the individual, taking away all the power that we used to have within community or a small set up, to do yourself, to run your own life, to be sufficient. [Stone-Hall/Jonathan]

Yeah, I think it is [empowering], and it's not just the vegetables, it's building our home, building this building... You look around and you can still feel part of you in it. You know, the nails, the four months we spent making the roof beams for this building... Having a laugh up in the top shed... There's quite a bit of you left in there... And that does empower you in the sense that you feel that you've left a mark and you have something strong to say. [HHP/Nick]

In most participants' view, their reconnection to production on a small, mostly natural and personal scale was also enabling of more ethical and 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, which again causes pollution. [Futurefarms/Janette]

Most importantly, reengagement in food gardening and partial self-sufficiency also meant responsible creation of a cyclical and circular link between production, consumption and disposal, which in turn enabled reduced environmental impact 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]

It's probably more responsible, in that you've got to be very careful about what you do to the soil. Now, if you don't do the right things to the soil, the soil micro-organisms migrate and disappear and you're leaving nothing for future generations... It's responsible in that you don't waste so much, you know. Waste is a terrible thing. [Futurefarms/Nick]

Food is a very important realm where we can reduce our environmental impact. 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 actually 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. You'll probably have more impact by looking at your food issues than tweaking insulation and so on. It would be great to do all of them, you know, but if you've got to have an order then food is actually a good starting point. [HHP/Nick]

Production, consumption and waste, therefore, become interlinked and intertwined in a web of empowered green and responsible signifiers, which enable participants' ethical concerns to be imagined, discussed, enacted and practiced in relation to their identities as new consumers. Sense of community, personal development, spirituality, empowerment, control and trust over quality and provenance, and ethical food production-consumption-disposal were part of the

ontological reframing and resubjectivized (Gibson-Graham 2006) ‘prosumer’ (Tapscott and Williams 2007) experiences of participants.

Changing Consumption through Production Reengagement

Most notably, therefore, production reconnection (to varied degrees) enabled control over, and the re-creation of preferred modes and practices of consumption. The communities seek 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. As seen above, values such as self-sufficiency and human-scale structures were clearly influential in their production efforts and indeed their lives (Etzioni 1998), and all communities apart from Fallowfields were dedicated to the production of at least some of their own food. At Futurefarms they grew vegetables, kept livestock for meat and encouraged local residents to bring their excess produce to sell at their stalls. Other communities had large vegetable allotments, orchards, and green houses. All apart from Spiritual kept livestock; HHP had its own farmed fish and apiculture. Most processed some of their own foods, while Woodland made flour, cheese, butter, cream, yogurt, jams and tofu, and were the most self-sufficient in this area. NCCs’ reengagement with food production encompassed diverse purposes, and the most externally-oriented concerned food miles and excessive packaging reduction.

Other items such as seeds, gardening materials, maintenance tools, cleaning products and essential food stuffs were bought rather than produced, but bulk-buying enabled social links through positive choices:

We purchase quite a lot of stuff from Suma, who are wholesalers... They supply a lot of organic, fairly traded products. From toilet rolls through to walnuts and dates. So we bulk-buy those for ourselves and we took a delivery on Sunday and it was split between three houses from

here, two houses from the neighbours, one person who's friends with the project, so it's about six people involved. Our community seems to be growing at the moment! [HHP/Nick]

Although usually local and bought from wholesalers, bulk bought foods were not always organic or the most ethical alternatives. While interactions with the marketplace were still needed and not eschewed, they were altered by the living arrangements and lifestyles of the communities, and by their diverse production and procurement practices. The communities' appreciation of the resources involved in producing foods and certain goods impacted members' consumption choices, but this varied across and within each of the communities.

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

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 want... You're bored with the other 15 shirts and pairs of jeans... It doesn't mean that I don't go and buy a Chilean bottle of wine. [HHP/Nick]

Indeed, the communities preferred positive consumption to attempts at frugality (Barnett, Cafaro and Newholm 2005; Shaw and Newholm 2002), and purchases of second-hand products

were also common in the communities; they played an important part in their overall environmental strategies and sense of accomplishment. Also, creative re-use of materials at HHP included turning the carcass of an old van into a garage for their tractor, and using cylindrical juice containers as water tanks for each house. Spiritual Community went even further and transformed used whisky barrels into houses. Consumer creativity with ‘new products from old’ reinforces alternative ways of consuming. 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 and differentiated sense of collective identity derived from their everyday production-engaged consumption activities.

Thus, conceptualizations of such behaviours as escape (Kozinets 2002), resistance or subversion (Giesler and Pohlmann 2003) become irrelevant in light of the communities’ collective efforts to reconnect to, and rejoin, interdependent processes (production-consumption-disposal); in relation to their attempts to locally and personally reinvent what they perceive as the shortcomings of passive, production-disengaged consumption and its effects on their everyday lives (Tormey 2007).

Production-Engaged Ethical Spaces

An important theme emanating from the narrative presented above is the relevance of place. We see place as both groundedness/location and as an ‘event in space’, imbued with possibilities for new systems of meaning to emerge (Gibson-Graham 2006). Similar to what has been argued by Kozinets (2002), place is fundamental to the NCCs in this research, particularly in respect to the strength of the communities’ ties and norms, and their ‘prosumer’ abilities and meanings. Clearly the type of communities that took part in the research played a role in this.

However, these NCCs were organized 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. They were, therefore, physically constituted and long lasting (one for over 50 years), which differs from ephemeral notions of consumer community formations (cf. Cova 1997; Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007). Despite their long-lasting spatial manifestations, however, memberships were more fluid, ephemeral, and physically and virtually networked; more so in some of the communities (e.g. Fallowfields, Sunny-Valley) than in others (e.g. Woodland, HHP).

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

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

Indeed, Cynthia and Norman viewed Stone-Hall as an ‘ethical space’ (Low and Davenport 2007); a safe-shell from consumer temptations and an aid in self-disciplinary techniques (Foucault 1988):

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

They were not free from personal desires or the managerialization of personal identity (Gordon 1991); 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 varying degrees, the NCCs in this study provided moral foundations and supportive social contexts (Jacobs 2002) for the performance of a collective consciousness; the enactment of collective spaces for ethical, production-engaged consumption. Therefore, NCCs should be seen as ‘ethical spaces’, capable of hosting, facilitating and shaping the new imaginings for greener and ethical forms of production-consumption. 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, participants constantly negotiated between their enterprises of the ethical self and the priorities of their communities, which could be particularly problematic where personal and community goals were misaligned (Fallowfields). There were still personal trade-offs and what could be viewed as inconsistencies, but as argued by McEachern, Carrigan and Szmigin (2007) their flexible but nonetheless considerate approaches

to production-consumption, as well as their reconnection to production through ‘community’, helped them to overcome the difficulties and issues of accommodating their multidimensional ethical concerns with their budgets and wants. Although some participants made more efforts than others in their pursuit of production-engaged ethical consumption, which sometimes meant taking a high moralizing 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 consumption might be enacted through community spaces.

As ethical spaces, the NCCs (except Fallowfields) guided individual members toward ethical producer-consumer behaviour, which in turn highlighted the importance of group and community in consumption issues (Cova 1997; Cova and Cova 2002; 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 accommodating meanings of the good life and the new consumer.

Discussion: Living Production-Engaged Alternatives

We believe that conceptualizations of resistance are largely irrelevant in light of the communities’ collective efforts to reconnect, locally and cyclically, interdependent processes of production-consumption-disposal. Indeed, previous resistance theorizations, both in respect to NCCs and other literature, resonate with outdated and dualistic terms and roles (i.e. ‘consumers’ and ‘producers’), which are found in our marketing and consumer research literature (as noted by Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau forthcoming). Media and cultural studies scholars (e.g. Jenkins 2006, Tapscott and Williams 2007), however, have furnished us with new notions of producer-consumers and consumer-producers, which in turn have been displacing old relations

and meanings of production, consumption and their interrelatedness. Although Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau's (forthcoming) work is mainly concerned with the theorization of online community formations and their societal and marketing implications, we believe that the communities in this study also present a similar type of self and collective creativity and drive to that discussed by these authors.

In trying to overcome the passivity of disengaged consumption and its unintended/undesired side-effects, the communities in this study play with, and reorganize, marketplace signs, discourses and practices, and the market thus becomes both hegemonic and liberating. Such drive facilitates their participatory, localized, varied and everyday micropolitical interventions (Tormey 2007) as production-reconnected consumers who take matters into their own collective hands. We suggest they are situated both as neo-liberal and radical (Gibson-Graham 2006) in their active and entrepreneurial prosumer-citizen actions. They make the distinctions and relationships between production, consumption and disposal uneasy and problematic (Tapscott and Williams 2007; Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007; Jenkins 2006), and suggest alternative and entrepreneurial (not always easy) possibilities for renewed, reconnected and fluid social relations through the economy. In these communities, marketing becomes a facilitator for new types of productive-consumptive relations, and an integral part of the cultural structure of enduring communities (Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau forthcoming) of production-engaged consumption. This is not to downplay the (at times) different interests of firms in relation to individual 'prosumers' (see Jenkins 2006), but to highlight the possibility of a strategic, and fluid, reversibility of power relations (Gordon 1991) through marketing becoming everyone's discourse and practice.

The NCCs in this study can be seen as political, at once reflective of a politics of consumer choice (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti and Follesdal 2007), and of a reinvented politics of production-consumption reconnection; fostered by, and fostering of a sense of empowerment

and ethical accomplishment, which facilitates participant's self-resubjectification (Gibson-Graham 2006). The communities make use of governmental and commercial sources of funding where available, and although one can see increased vigilance over the integrity of some of the communities by committed members (Gibson-Graham 2006), this does not always occur (i.e. Fallowfields). Nevertheless, NCCs' discursive and practical reconstructions of their lifestyles as 'good ways of living' are self-aware and caring, and also full of trade-offs and contradictions. They conceive the opportunities for politicized and localized transformation led by empowered people, however, without aiming for large-scale transformation (Gibson-Graham 2006).

We view this as buttressed by a sense of alternative hedonism (Soper and Thomas 2006; Soper 2007), as people reshape their own notions of the good life, not with a view to change society at large (although Spiritual is more active in this respect), but with the aim to restructure the meanings of their own lived experiences as seductive alternatives (Soper and Thomas 2006; see also Kozinets 2002). NCCs' production-engaged consumption projects, ranging from complete lifestyle commitments (Stone-Hall) to single-issue engagements (Futurefarms), can be viewed as alternatives of what it means to live in joy and to a high standard, and as imaginings against (and with) which to check and re-evaluate consumer culture (Soper and Thomas 2006).

Through their reconnection with production, NCCs are finding alternative forms of sensual enjoyment, moral conduct, spirituality, environmentalism and empowerment (Soper and Thomas 2006). They have sought alternative satisfactions, and the most successfully established NCCs (HHP and Spiritual) have drawn on new technologies and renewed productive-consumptive attitudes that pose disengaged work-to-consume lifestyles as something disjointed, outdated, and replaceable. With varying degrees of success, they try to see their accomplishments and goals as having desirable outcomes; as engendering pleasures resonant with, rather than against, human desires (Soper and Thomas 2006).

Below we attempt a fluid categorization of the NCCs in this study according to two dimensions. The first concerns the communities' degree of entrepreneurial (Cova, Kozinets and Shankar 2007) and 'grounded' reconnection to production, encompassing the use of technological innovations, the formation of cooperative businesses, degree of self-sufficiency, degree of engagement with vegetable gardening and own-food processing, degree of production-engaged ethical consumption, and degree of engaged disposal. The second dimension comprises the communities' level of commitment, including dedication to community work (full-time or part-time), degree of lifestyle change (live-in, live-out or both), and degree of commitment to 'prosumer' issues (single through to interrelated concerns).

[Insert Figure Two About Here]

In this way, Spiritual (SP) is the most committed and entrepreneurial of the NCCs (the most 'Engaged Alternative'), followed by HHP (HH), Stone-Hall (ST) and Sunny-Valley (SU). Engaged Alternatives present the most comprehensive solutions to members' desired lifestyles, and exhibit intricate symbolic dimensions in relation to prosumption. They are marketing literate and use marketing discourses to their own advantage. Marketing, in these communities, is an enabling tool, and provides them with the means to engage in prosumption. Social marketers could look to these communities as best- (or better-) practice examples of green prosumption. Woodland (WO), on the other hand, is 'Committed' and engaged, but lacks community business initiatives. Communities in this category are less interested in using marketing discourses and tools, but could benefit from the provision of localized products and services that would enable them to achieve their lifestyle aims. Futurefarms (FU) are 'Visionaries'; very reconnected to localized food production, but committed only to a single issue (food) on a part-time basis. They are interested in getting more people involved and, as such, could benefit from social marketers' expertise and act as catalysts of behavioural change at a localized level. Fallowfields (FA), on the other hand, are the least committed and innovative (the 'Apprentices') in their approach to

alternative production-consumption and community life. They could, for example, benefit from networking with similar communities in order to learn from their successes and failures.

As put by Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau (forthcoming), we consider these categories as non-exhaustive and fluid. The communities may become more or less committed, and/or more or less entrepreneurial over time, and thus move from one category to another. We also believe that other 'place'-based NCCs could be analyzed according to such dimensions and, most importantly, according to the meanings of their reconnection to production and their prosumption styles. This categorization may aid researchers interested in this area to gain a more nuanced understanding of the NCCs phenomenon. In particular, it could aid social marketers interested in advancing, i.e., sustainable consumption, fair trade and other social welfare causes, to understand the varied discourses, practices and symbolic dimensions involved in the interrelationships between prosumption, markets and culture.

Concluding Notes

This study has drawn on varied theoretical perspectives to explore and gain an alternative understanding of production-consumption at New Consumption Communities. Intrinsic to the concept of NCCs is a sense of community between production-engaged consumers who question market practices deemed inadequate and/or unfair. Previous studies of NCCs and other studies on consumer communities have represented such phenomena as radical forms of resistance to prevailing ideologies of consumer culture. However, our ethnographic reading suggests that the communities are more interested in entrepreneurial and production-engaged discourses, practices and choices than in acting against consumer culture or markets. This interpretive frame is supported by their varied production-engaged consumption practices, which in turn have been problematized in relation to notions of consumers, producers and their interrelationships, and situated within consumer – now convergence (Jenkins 2006) – culture. Finally, we have devised

a fluid classification of the researched NCCs, and offered a view of alternative consumer behaviour that goes beyond current ‘anti’ discourses in the extant literature.

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Table 1: NCCs' Profiles

Community	Profile
Fallowfields Community (pseudonym)	Founded in 1950 as an educational trust. Eighteen members at the time of research. Some shared and some independent housing. Values based on living 'a peaceful life'. During fieldwork the community was undergoing an ethos-searching period, with environmental causes gaining prominence.
Futurefarms (real name)	A UK-based community cooperative formed in 2004 in Martin, Hampshire. Its eight founding members resided separately, but in the same parish. Their aim was to produce as much of their daily food as possible on local lands. The non-profit cooperative was set up as a response to members' concerns with food mileage, detrimental to the environment and indicative of the poor relationship between producer and consumer.
HHP - Hockerton Housing Project (real name)	The UK's first ecologically sound, energy-efficient, earth-sheltered housing complex, launched in 1998. It was built by five resident families who produced 100% of their own wind energy, grew organic food, and had their own sewage, water collection and filtering systems. Members were committed to a community business that comprised guided tours, educational and specialist workshops. HHP (henceforth) considered itself a best practice example and catalyst for sustainable living.
Spiritual Community (pseudonym)	Pioneering, holistic enterprise whose aim was spiritual (non-religious) education. Rural-based eco-village with several communal buildings for workshops, housing, ethical shops and hall used for conferences and performances. Inspirational example to other communities. Around 500 permanent and volunteer members and thousands of visitors per year. Non-profit charity, with body of trustees. Devoted to sustainability with energy windmills, organic sewage system, and eco-housing. Had its own community currency.
Stone-Hall Community (pseudonym)	Holistic education centre ran by a resident cooperative group and administered by a trust. Main building with guest rooms, as well as several communal areas such as, e.g., the laundry room and community kitchen. Reared livestock, grew produce, and were committed to recycling. All members worked full-time for the community. Had environmental goals, with own water spring, reed-bed sewage, composting and wood burners.

Sunny-Valley Community (pseudonym)	Co-housing cooperative in shared house on rural land. Eleven members celebrated the community's 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 (pseudonym)	Co-housing initiative formed 30 years ago. Fifty-eight members at the time of research. Rural. Volunteers supplemented the community. Spaces were communal with shared kitchen, laundry, social rooms etc. Values included self-sufficiency, cooperative living and low environmental impact.

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
Futurefarms	One-day visit	Five depth interviews of one hour each with community members [33,500 words]	Website, visits to market stalls and gardening fields
HHP - Hockerton Housing Project	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.

Figure 1: Reconnection to Production and its Symbolic Dimensions

Figure 2: A Fluid Classification of New Consumption Communities