Values in education and action

Session 4

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Teaching Design in Unsustainable Conditions

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Observation and deliberation regarding unsustainable practices have become urgent, where today patterns of behavior and lifestyles are maintained and encouraged by systemic excesses of production, consumption and disposal.

While design plays a leading role in these patterns’ continuity, it also offers alternatives to teachers and practitioners. However, such alternatives have been explored only experimentally and ineffectively, given the magnitude of the problems that continue unabated.

If we consider that education plays an important role in the formation of design professionals, it is essential that students are educated so that they are able to deal with the today’s context and the future of society, and with all urgent and emerging issues.

Thus, the following question is quite pertinent: are the ways and means of current design practice and education leading us towards waste reduction and a sustainable future?

This study, based on concepts presented by Walker (2014), Kindlein (2014) and Whiteley (1998), and on the analysis of the teaching and practice led by Santos (2013), suggests that the reorientation of professional design practice towards the reduction and prevention of waste demand an unreserved reconsideration of design education’s paradigms.

Keywords: Design Education Paradigms; Design Practice; Waste Production; Waste Reduction; Sustainability.
Unsustainability

Our contemporary lives, and our ideas, values and practices, are still very Modern. As Walker (2014) points out, certain characteristics of Modern life still prevail: dependence on industrial production; mass production; scientific and technological progress, and advances associated predominantly with materials; and the problems associated with overproduction, obsolescence and the excessive waste of products.

Unsustainability, a predominating contemporary condition, is characterized by several aspects. According to Walker (2014), our current ways of living are unsustainable, devastating to the environment and responsible for social divisions and economic inequality. In the same sense, Santos (2014, 46) argues that aspects such as social exclusion and unemployment are directly related to our developmental model, as they are, "... part of a complex logic of economic, social, cultural and political relationships. . ." that affect us individually and collectively. The author (2014) goes on to argue that the lifestyle of a financially favored minority occupies a disproportionately large space, and that the consequences of the patterns of production and consumption that sustain it are environmentally and socially unjust.

Fortunately, it is possible to work towards positive change. According to Walker (2014), a more environmentally and socially responsible course that is just and inclusive, and potentially more satisfying for everyone, is possible provided that it is our common goal and that we critically analyze this unsustainable condition.

Walker (2014) argues that the prevailing economic system and its pattern of production and consumption are firmly based in consumerism and overproduction. These naturally entail excessive amounts of solid waste, including goods wasted and discarded by consumers, packaging and industrial waste.

In questioning unbridled consumption, both Walker (2014) and Kindlein (2014), the latter from the book *Bonheur Paradoxal* by Gilles Lipovetsky (2006), critically analyze the role played by advertising and planned obsolescence.

According to Walker (2014), the prevailing economic system, supported by the colossal marketing and advertising industry, requires continuous consumption of, principally, mass produced products. Therefore, as demonstrated by Kindlein (2014), we are bombarded daily by 'calls for consumption' via ads that promise to supply our mostly psychological and emotional needs. According to Kindlein (2014, 33), "the more needy a society feels, the more it consumes." In this way, an economy must promote needs before they can be met, and this is done by the marketing and advertising industry.

In comprehending our unsustainable condition, we must consider obsolescence beyond its relationship to the excess solid waste of discarded goods, and examine the high disposal rate of what are often still useful products. According to Kindlein (2014, 31), "planned obsolescence looks to reduce the life span . . ." of products, and for this several techniques are employed, ranging from weakening materials so that they do not last, to making the product obsolete through technology or aesthetics.

According to Walker (2014), in this context product design has become part of the marketing scheme in which designers apply innovations and changes to mass produced objects in order to drive sales and profits. These factors escalate in environments where it has become financially disadvantageous to repair a product, and where obsolescence has become commonplace. With the opening of new markets and the elimination of trade barriers in the late twentieth century, companies have sought to

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1 All the direct citations in the text were originally in portuguese. The translation is responsibility of the authors.
maximize profits by breaking down and distributing their production among developing countries, thus off-loading social and environmental production costs such as labor exploitation and soil exhaustion.

In today’s economy, according to Kindlein (2014), this logic based on disposal constantly reduces the lifespan of products and increases disposability. The accelerating rate of this generates leftovers, repeated disposals, and results in the production of excessive amounts of waste.

As Kindlein (2014, 29) points out, there is no possibility of sustainability in a world, "... based on the consumption of the greatest amount and with maximum possible acceleration ..." Thus, the contemporary challenge of sustainability is, as elucidated by Walker (2014), a perverse problem. The excess production, consumption and disposal that is responsible for the creation of excessive waste must be reconsidered.

If, according to Walker (2014), the prevailing economic system is the cause of the contemporary problem of waste generation, it is important to reiterate that, although it is difficult to implement a new economy, this may be feasible if radical changes occur. These changes would be fundamentally cultural and behavioral, and it would be essential that unbridled consumption and continuous replacement of products be viewed as undesirable, and prevented rather than encouraged. According to Kindlein (2014), we need new ways to produce, and it is even more necessary to discover new habits of consumption.

Design

Design, according to Walker (2014), is essentially related to the nature of our material culture and, consequently, to our patterns of behavior and lifestyles, which presuppose certain patterns of production, consumption and disposal.

Walker (2014) goes on to note that both design and the way in which it is conducted are directly related to the meaning, technical and psychological longevity, adaptability, repairability and, ultimately, the nature of the disappearance of the products that constitute our material culture. Thus, these are directly related to standards of production, consumption and disposal, and to all supported and derived aspects of this predetermined pattern. Excessive waste production is among these aspects. Thus, according to Walker (2014), regarding a possible change in the current patterns of production, consumption and disposal, design plays the role of catalyst.

Actions have been taken lately concerning our unsustainable condition. Walker (2014) points to some of these related to products, such as energy efficiency and a reduced use of materials. However, the author (2014) notes that even if such practices are beneficial, their effect is limited since, among other factors, their impact on our material culture is far from substantial. Walker (2014) also argues that the adoption of these practices can even be counterproductive, since, apart from assuming that they are sufficient, they can result in no impact, or worse, due to increased consumption and the so-called 'rebound effect'. These efforts, though no insubstantial, have only the slightest effect on the excessive production of waste as they sometimes end up maintaining or even promoting it.

Thus, in this context, design priorities must extend far beyond the palliative and limited practices such as those mentioned above. According to Walker (2014), these priorities must fulfill the principles and requirements of sustainability more comprehensively. In this light, the question posed by Santos (2014, 53) becomes quite pertinent. "What
changes are needed to move from unsustainable and inequitable development to a more sustainable and just development? And what are the implications for design?"

To subvert this unsustainable scenario, it is essential to substantially change the purpose and practice of design, because only in this way can a new economic system be realized. Walker (2014) affirms that a change in the direction of design is essential, with values and priorities different from those currently encouraged. As he points out (2014, 20), it is essential that the designer stop "...complying with cynical practices, such as technological and psychological obsolescence ...", once the main goals of which are to create dissatisfaction that encourages the consumption of new products.

Papanek (2007) affirms that concern both for the environment and for the most disadvantaged in society should guide these changes of design's direction and the establishment of new priorities, and this can, in turn, be the catalyst for positive changes towards a sustainable future. He emphasizes, as Walker (2014) does, the need to change current lifestyles, so that they are able to assimilate the most radical changes.

Papanek (2007) highlights the importance of ethics in design, and of the designer thinking dispassionately and conscientiously about their projects. The author (2007) suggests strategies for a new direction in design aiming for increased sustainability. Among these are design for disassembly, the participation of individuals in solving problems wherever possible and necessary, and the designer functioning as an entrepreneur. Regarding this last strategy, Papanek (2007) stresses the importance and necessity of the existence of small businesses as they are able to change quickly, innovate, take risks with more security, and benefit from new circumstances and demands. The author (2007) states that companies of this size can profit reasonable and properly compensate their employees, though they are unlikely to grow to the point of becoming big businesses with phenomenal profits and scales of production.

Walker (2014) states that new forms of enterprise need to address innovation holistically, so that their products, even those mass-produced, synthesize local materials, abilities and cultural preferences. This includes utility, and also the symbolic and even more profound aspects of humanity rich in culture and meaning. While products must be long-lasting, they must also continuously adapt to changes. Walker (2014) goes on to argue that the great challenge is to redirect activities towards innovation in these ways so that a reasonable profit is genuinely aligned with the principles and requirements of sustainability.

Considering the changes required, one can elaborate a scenario where design becomes the catalyst for positive change, and both environmentally responsible and socially beneficial. If it is oriented towards new patterns of behavior and lifestyles which require new ways of production, consumption and disposal, design can act in a context where waste reduction and even prevention may be feasible.

**Education**

The reorientation of design towards sustainability requires a new type of professional. The way a designer operates is primarily the result of their training. Pedagogy adopted to address new goals will give shape to the activity of future professionals.

Whiteley (1998) critically reflects on types of designers, relating them to their pedagogies. These are:
The formal designer: This type originates in the Bauhaus, when design pedagogy strove for utilitarian functionality, form and function, and materials, and required theoretical studies were limited to practical issues. The use of this educational model has decreased considerably, but some institutions still employ a ‘rationalized curriculum’ and continue to condemn theoretical disciplines as irrelevant.

The theoretical designer: This is the opposite of the formal type, and advocates the study of theory as necessary to inform and explain. However, design students of this type are often unable to relate learned theory to practical activity. Theoretical discussions are essential, constructive and enriching, but the theoretical designer may end up becoming as remote and irrelevant as the formal designer.

The politicized designer: The ‘green’ and ‘ethical’ requirements of this type tend to be dogmatic, dualistic and exclusive, and somewhat simplistic and reductive. However, the politicized type employs a commendable social-political consciousness that is absent among consumerist designers.

The consumerist designer: This is the most common type currently found in design education, and is usually justified by existing job requirements and market realities – which also summarizes most concerns in the field. Rarely are questions about a product’s necessity raised, or about its social, moral, personal or environmental impact. The primary question is whether a product is desirable from the consumer’s point of view. In its theoretical outlook, historical analyses and ideologies are disregarded in favor of business management studies. Thus, there is no attempt to offer content that would allow students to develop a critical perspective on their role in society. This pedagogy is configured as a kind of training for easy and direct assimilation into the market.

The technological designer: This type works under the assumption that the latest technology offers the best solution, no matter the design problem. The imperative of technological advance characterizes this type, which asks “how?”, but never “why?”

Whiteley (1998, 69) concludes that all of the above pedagogies have fundamental limitations, requiring the development of a new model capable of generating a professional that fits, “. . . the needs at the end of the millennium,” and is therefore able to deal with sustainability issues. The needs from the end of the last millennium are even more urgent today.

Santos (2013) takes a passage from Papanek (1974) where he writes that the main problem with design schools is that they appear to teach a lot about design, but little about its context. The author concludes that, due to this decontextualization, designers fail to address the real problems and needs of our unsustainable scenario.

Therefore, the unsustainable condition we live in reveals the urgency for creating a new designer, the result of a new model of education proposed by Whiteley which he calls the valued designer. It is appropriate here to transcribe the author’s proposal (1998, 69):

"We need . . . creative and constructive designers with independent views, who are neither 'lackeys of the capitalist system' nor ideologues of any party or doctrine, nor 'technological wizards', but rather professionals able to perform their work with understanding, innovation, sensitivity and awareness. Design schools have a responsibility to foster these qualities in the student, and not an attitude of resignation, to meet the vicissitudes of a consumerist system obsessed with quick profits and the very short term. Schools and colleges should meet the needs of all of society and not only those of companies that employ designers directly."
The content with which the valued designer is educated should provide support for students to found their practice on well-considered social, cultural, political and environmental perspectives. Such content can and should contribute to awareness of values in design education. Whiteley (1998) points out that certain values, be they ecological or consumerist, etc., must be understood by the student from a balanced historical perspective, and which should hereafter be included in the academic disciplines.

According to Whiteley (1998), it is necessary that students be truly educated to become 'designer-citizens', conscientious and engaged; only then will designers bear their responsibility in regard to sustainability. Otherwise, students trained merely practically and technologically will become 'citizen-designers', and simply conformist and obedient. Santos (2013) urgently calls attention to the need for designers to comprehend the critical challenges we face so that they can prepare themselves as agents of intervention.

Whiteley (1998) writes that in order for the valued designer's educational model to promote critical and original work, it must allow for a range of authentic results and be willing to defend social and cultural ideals that go beyond consumerism and its subsequent environmental degradation. Only in this way will designers be able to deal genuinely with issues such as excessive waste production.

Santos (2014) argues that educational experiences can be of great importance in this regard as they offer students new insights and possibilities for learning, and, consequently, new contexts for taking action.

The elective course AUP0479 Design of Sustainability

Whiteley (1998) and Santos (2013) emphasize that education is the core of experimental and professional design practice, and a powerful means of disseminating ideas in various contexts where issues regarding our unsustainable condition can and should be considered. Santos (2013) demonstrates the need for change in design education paradigms, especially in emerging countries. She (2013) argues that teaching design simply to suit market requirements and a financially privileged minority of consumers must give way to education oriented toward the real needs of local populations. In this sense, the author (2013) highlights the importance of integrating typical unsustainable problems, such as excessive waste production, with the goals of design.

In regard to a new education paradigm oriented to address real needs and design problems, instead of the luxury of a privileged population, Santos (2013) analyzes an undergraduate education program at the University of São Paulo.

The elective course AUP0479 Design for Sustainability <aup479.jimdo.com>, created by Santos (2013) in 2003 at the University of São Paulo’s Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, offers students a design-oriented approach to populations marginalized by society. The course focuses on problems of waste disposal among the community known as the Autonomous Paper, Cardboard, Scrap and Reusable Material Collectors Cooperative (COOPAMARE), located at Pinheiros, a São Paulo city’s neighborhood. The course begins by providing students with theoretical content as the basis for discussions on gender, class oppression, social equality, and especially on how design has contributed to these conditions and values over time. In the second phase, on-site meetings are held with members of COOPAMARE which allow students to understand
the complexity of members’ daily lives and conditions. Finally, students develop and present design projects suited to the needs of the COOPAMARE community.

According to Santos (2013), this educational experience opens the possibility of considering alternatives to teaching design oriented solely toward the market, as it is in most schools today. The author (2013) argues that the benefit of this experience is the mutual creation and sharing of knowledge between teachers, students and COOPAMARE members. Moreover, Santos (2013) points out that this experience fosters in students a critical reflection on the relationship between design, society and material culture, enabling the development of a real understanding of possible design alternatives and considering new fields of activity, such as COOPAMARE, that are directly related to the problem of waste.

Along the existence of the course, it is observed an extreme diversity of projects undertaken by the students. Among them, it is possible to establish some categories and point out some specific projects, following exemplified below.

- Mechanisms to optimize the collection activity: Project *Adjustments to wagon*, 2003, from the students Andrea Perez, Cecília Bracale, Emerson Miki Ihara, Felipe Ferraz and Fernando Mello (figures 1 and 2);

![Figure 1: Collectors resting device](image1)

![Figure 2: Wagon cover](image2)

- Proposals of signaling and awareness of the surrounding population: Project *Proposal to COOPAMARE brand*, 2006, from the students Charlotte Kamp, Fernão Morato, Larissa Ribeiro and Valéria Contessa (figure 3), and Project
Identification Boards, 2006, form the students Joyce Delatorre, and Marisa Bueno e Souza (figure 4);

Figure 3: Applications for the COOPAMARE brand

Figure 4: Identification boards for the wagon

- Architecture and landscape projects to improve the cooperative’s daily life, some of them from waste: Project Green Spaces for COOPAMARE and Oficina Escola, 2009, from the students Volker Minks, and Julia Maria Gomes (figures 5 and 6), and Project Insulation with UHT packaging, 2009, from the student Vinicius Murad (figure 7);
Figure 5: Project green spaces, Volker Minks

Figure 6: Project green spaces, Julia Maria Gomes

Figure 7: Insulation with UHT packaging
Final thoughts

Our unsustainable way of life, the preeminent contemporary condition, is related to determined and reinforced patterns of behavior and lifestyles in Western society. These are based on a system of excessive of production, consumption and disposal that is responsible for waste products that are not, or cannot, be reabsorbed, treated or ignored. The prevailing economic system that benefits a financially favored minority is
oriented toward unbridled consumption, the consequences of which are social and environmental injustice.

As design is deeply related to our patterns of behavior and lifestyles, it can play a subversive role in regard to our unsustainable condition. Though design has begun to address issues of sustainability, it has not done nearly enough. If we consider the professional designer’s toolset, area of activity and critical stance, which are drawn primarily from academic education, new designers will require new modes of design education. It is therefore necessary that we depart from existing professional types and education models. The reorientation of professional design practice toward the reduction and prevention of waste necessarily demands a reconsideration of design education paradigms. These new paradigms, not simply geared to market requirements, should promote the emergence of new design professionals, potentially more able to deal with questions concerning the reduction and prevention of waste and unsustainable practices. The existence of new models of design education, though still nascent, point to the emergence of these new designers.

Of course changing the prevailing economic system that is geared to unbridled consumption and responsible for excessive waste production is a complex issue. It is relevant to note that large corporations, as well as marketing and advertising, play important roles in this system, and stand as obstacles to the efforts of these new designers. Further, it is essential in the education of these new professionals that, once they are in the market and occupy decision-making positions, they are well prepared to act effectively towards a more sustainable way of life. It is also important to highlight the potential advantages of the designer operating as a small business entrepreneur, capable of innovating sustainable solutions and responding to emerging demands.

Regarding this unsustainable condition, it is important to note that its various aspects are closely related. Therefore, every action that in some form opposes unbridled consumption acts positively, either directly or indirectly, against excessive waste production. This can be seen in the case of the education program reported in this study. In addressing design from a perspective not of the consumer but of the real needs and problems of a marginalized population, this program introduces students to a new field of activity that opposes those market-oriented goals which are typically presented, and thus demonstrates possible design alternatives. These new possibilities, in turn, contribute directly or indirectly to the reduction and prevention of waste. Also, in the case of the COOPAMARE community, the problem of waste is even more relevant as it is part of their daily lives.

Education experiences like this have become increasingly important in the academic environment. If education is the core of experimental and professional design practice, it is imperative that it genuinely reorients itself towards sustainability. Deliberation on the reduction and prevention of waste is, by definition, deliberation on design practice and education.

Acknowledgement

Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES).
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The Medium is the Message: Reinvesting in Environments and Communities Changes Habits – Station North Arts and Entertainment District Case Study

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Design thinking, systems-based design, human-centered design approaches

“Environments are invisible. Their ground rules, pervasive structure, and overall patterns elude easy perception.” (McLuhan 2001, 83–84).

The title of this paper is inspired by McLuhan’s aphorism “the medium is the message.” McLuhan reminds us that our environments include symbols and codes that simultaneously contextualize the past, present, and future. And, most importantly, progress/change is usually defined with antiquated metaphors, language, and symbols. It is in this language game that designers engage with change and are challenged to offer models and ideas to transform production and consumption habits.

In response to the Unmaking Waste 2015 conference theme “Transforming Production and Consumption in Time and Place,” Design professors Inna Alesina and Lori Rubeling present several design projects where the Station North Arts and Entertainment District, known as Station North, is a primary subject for addressing how systems-based approaches create change.

To give structural context to their discussion of systems-based approaches, Alesina and Rubeling invert the excess consumption model in order to mirror an opposite proposition: How do we stimulate and envision sustainable and healthy environments in disinvested urban spaces? Alesina and Rubeling contend that behind excess consumption is the specter of inherent waste. And at the scale of urban environments, waste takes on the form of a loss of constructive space, as voids or waste scenarios within the environment. The waste scenarios of Station North include: a border vacuum defined by three transportation corridors and a sixty-acre cemetery; a food desert; under populated residential neighborhoods; and anemic economic and demographic diversity.

Since 2003, Alesina and Rubeling have conducted design studio course curriculum that incorporates Station North as a locale and subject to explore human-centered approaches to solving design problems. Design students from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and Stevenson University (SU) were challenged to consider emergent sustainable values in their practice of designing messages, objects and environments. Several design scenarios asked students to utilize design thinking methodologies as they partnered with community stakeholders, helping them re-imagine their environment. This paper presents a variety of systems-based approaches that have been tested to re-imagine production and consumption assumptions, behaviors and opportunities for actualizing change.

Keywords: systems-based design; human-centered design; 100-Mile Challenge; Slow Food Movement; Station North Arts and Entertainment District
Part 1: Introducing the Station North “Saddle” Footprint

Station North is one of 22 State of Maryland (USA) arts and entertainment districts. These districts are an economic legislative initiative established by the State of Maryland in 2001. The most current economic data concludes that in 2013, Maryland’s 22 arts districts generated 458 million dollars in state GDP (Maryland State Arts Council 2013).

The primary transportation corridors intersecting Station North are Charles Street and North Avenue. On workdays, the primary north/south commuter-traffic demographic is white-collar professionals. They are commuting to and from the city’s downtown business districts. The primary east/west commuter-traffic demographic is service workers. They are commuting, mostly on public transit, back and forth to the city’s major employer, the Johns Hopkins Hospital campus.

Station North’s 100-acre footprint comprises three neighborhoods: Barclay, Greenmount West, and Charles North. A large portion of Station North is included in the Baltimore’s Heritage Area. Its primary business corridor is located in Charles North. Greenmount West and Barclay are primarily residential neighborhoods.

Station North’s arts and entertainment designation was founded upon the influx of artist and college student populations choosing to live, create, and invest in its blighted neighborhoods, an example of bottom up behavioral change. Station North is also an example where sustainable “multi-local” (Manzini 2006, 77) social scenarios can be analyzed and tested.

“… the multi-local society appears as a society based on communities and places that are, at the same time, strong in their own identity, embedded in a physical place and open and connected to other places/communities.”
(Manzini 2006, 82)
Part 2: Systems-based design case studies

Inna Alesina’s Framework

The intention of Inna Alesina’s systems-based design methodology is to engage design students with wicked design problems. Alesina requires students to map a product’s manufacturing systems in order to imagine less-waste system processes with the goal of designing sustainable manufacturing systems. Students consider policies and laws that inform production systems and are also encouraged to perceive, analyze and incorporate social concerns in their design thinking processes.

This maximalist point of view also considers this principle: To create real change requires designers’ to reconsider linear design processes as cyclical processes. Alesina’s systems-based hypothesis explores how can we consume things without creating waste.

Alesina’s model integrates and nests consumer communities within manufacturing communities envisioning the shortest distance between the two. Design briefs where she has tested this model include: 100-mile ecological-based design challenge; Test Kitchen for Change; and the Bread Zoo.

Ecological-based design: 100-Mile Challenge

As we prepare students in their role as designer-citizens, we should remind them, as John Thackara said, to “design people in and not out” (Thackara 2005, 190) of the design process. He summarizes the principles of sustainability as to “minimize the waste of matter and energy, reduce the movement and distribution of goods, use more people and less matter” (190). The 100-Mile project addresses the need for designers to manufacture tangible things responsibly. It also challenges designers to reclaim local manufacturing processes and to integrate locally resourced materials into their methodology.

Alesina’s 100-Mile project, was first conceived in 2010 as a collaboration between students majoring in Environmental Design at MICA and students majoring in Industrial Design at The University of Washington (UW), Seattle campus.

Being located on opposite coasts of the United States, some of the materials students used were remarkably similar. For example, bamboo was invasive in both locations, it was introduced in both environments as ornamental plant in 1882 (USDA, National Agricultural Library).

But experimental designs were different from both groups evoking the natural and cultural environments of the cities of Seattle and Baltimore. The Seattle-based group experimented with rosin glues, molding bio plastic and making rain gear. The Baltimore group explored weaving, craft and embroidery. This could have been influenced by the instructors, but the environment of each school and locale surely play a role too.
To start their material exploration, MICA students received help from the Conservation Department at The National Aquarium, Baltimore and the Weed Warriors program. Students collected and researched materials in Baltimore City public parks contiguous to the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Invasive plant species such as bamboo, Phragmites Atlantis, and vines were studied. Students also collected abundant natural materials (such as driftwood, local clays) and industrial waste materials (such as oyster shells and cloth). Their fabrication explorations took place in various MICA fabrication studios.

In this project, students experimented with how materials, methods of production, human behaviors, artifacts, and spaces work together as nested systems. In subsequent years, the 100-Mile project evolved to include a social design perspective: artifacts produced were designed as experiments to be replicated elsewhere and used as examples for sustainable and affordable materials that can be manipulated without use of energy-heavy processes.

This project has evolved over the five years since it has been conducted, here are some takeaways for design educators:

In the beginning of ecological projects, students usually respond to the aesthetic qualities of the given materials. Things like fasteners, glues, bonding methods become an afterthought. It is helpful to remind students to see the big picture. In *The Upcycle* William McDonough and Michael-Braungart assert “we will always be asking what is next? We want you to think of every component of your design as being borrowed. It
will be returned one day to the biosphere or technosphere” (McDonough and Braungart 2013, 212-213).

Strategies to help students address The Upcycle assertion include when using off-the-shelf components, research long-term sustainable solutions for that particular application. Students also get to sample key texts on this subject and have links and tools to return to when desired.

An additional need of students is where can they get data to support their proposals. Life Cycle Calculators can be useful for traditional product design, but for non-traditional scenarios, students can only approximate the impact. While scenarios can start the conversation, students had to reach outside the area of their expertise and collaborated with experts such as science and business students.

Another student outcome was that after completing the 100-Mile Project, they petitioned to move this sustainability class earlier in the curriculum, so that they can get several chances to practice this type of thinking with other design scenarios.

Test Kitchen for Change Workshops and The Bread Zoo

![Test Kitchen for Change breadmaking class in a local church.](image)

The Test Kitchen for Change (TKFC) design brief investigates how to engage communities around the subject of sustainable bread production. During the initial research, it became apparent that the craft and accessibility of artisan bread is desired.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that industrial food production has detrimental effects on our health and the health of the planet. What and how we eat affects our health, culture, environment, and opinions about governmental policies that shape and restrict urban agriculture. TKFC applies the tools and knowledge of the design process to facilitate healthier relationships between humans and nature.

TKFC is Inna Alesina’s 2013 Maryland Institute College of Art MFA graduate design thesis project.
TKFC was inspired by the Slow Design movement and the writings of Ezio Manzini and Alastair Fuad-Luke, both empowering the grass-roots social innovations and creative communities. Creating experiences, not artifacts, is a paradigm shift in thinking for many (product) designers. “In this new context, professional designers can also play an important role by operating in two main ways: designing with and designing for communities”. (Manzini 62, 2014)

![Figure 5: Containers for sourdough starter culture inspired by the shape of budding yeast cells.](image)

The breadmaking process consists of short tasks performed between longer stretches of time during which fermentation happens, the process is hard to achieve with industrial production. The main goal of the TKFC workshop is to engage participants in the hands-on experience of crafting a loaf of bread, feeding sourdough starter, and learning specific baking techniques.

TKFC attempts to create communities; teaching people how to integrate different tempos in their lives; to become self-sufficient; to revive old traditional crafts; to connect to nature; and to regain control over the food system.

Initially Inna Alesina investigated non-traditional food services, such as a mobile kneading service or a community-supported bakery, however, her design solution changed as she began to iterate TKFC instruction–performances. From feedback gathered, Alesina learned that participants preferred to make bread at home and at a time that works with their schedules. What was also needed was first-hand interactive instructions and support. In order to make an impact in the Station North community, Alesina started to conduct more educational hands-on events. Small-group breadmaking classes were conducted without a special kitchen space, large equipment, or health department permits, factors that complicated other TKFC scenarios.

Each TKFC breadmaking event is a “prototype.” Alesina adapts the TKFC experience for every group, space, and audience. By providing the main ingredients—flour, special yeast culture, and instructions—TKFC inspires participants to use what they already have to make bread. Kitchen chemistry, wild foraged and sprouted ingredients, cooking with fermented foods are additional topics covered in TKFC.
The primary feedback loop that occurs at TKFC events is that participants are very eager to learn and try new things. Inspired by that, Alesina began to curate and design a collection of educational kitchen objects. These objects have multiple functions, which are tested and evolve with each event. The kitchen object collection is titled *The Bread Zoo*. It is comprised of hand-held tools and vessels, along with books, videos, and malted grain specimens— all of these objects comprise a small bread museum. The *Bread Zoo* reminds some participants of their family rituals and makes the experience more meaningful for them.

The TKFC demonstrates that no tangible artifact has to be connected to the design process. Sometimes ephemeral or edible things can be even more creatively satisfying. Students who participated in these events observed that hands-on workshops are an important element that helps people make behavioral changes. Instead of proposing “a solution,” Alesina now asks her students to envision and prototype scenarios where people will be engaged and behave differently.

**Lori Rubeling’s Framework**

“How do we teach our selves and communities to recognize “signals of social innovation?” (Manzini 2006, 78)

An arts and entertainment designation is a systems-based scenario. The significance of the Station North’s location for suburban college students is that it requires them to immediately address their preconceptions and assumptions about visual communication design (VCD). The SNAED scenario offers multiple viewpoints and opportunities for this cohort to broaden their application of the design process; to engage with an unfamiliar urban environment; and to be a collaborator in the district’s emergent creative industrialization.
Between 2003 and 2006, Stevenson University students engaged in several ‘enabling solutions’ scenarios (Manzini 2006, 86-87). Beginning with the first case, the district’s arts and entertainment designation, students simply engaged with the mission and vision of the State of Maryland arts district legislation. Students started by exploring its footprint: documenting the environment and proposing scenarios that relate back to arts district audiences.

SU design students were forced to work outside their comfort zone. Students’ creativity and conceptual skills were developed through discovering how to generate concepts in unfamiliar environments and contexts and practicing how to incorporate specific environments in their designs. They were also challenged to analyze transactional communication systems feedback loops that originate from unfamiliar demographics and audiences.

Students were also required to reflect on their personal experiences while researching and completing their design scenario projects. Several students learned that their families had once lived in the Greenmount West neighborhood. Being forced to research urban blight humanized students’ preconceived ideas of the residents of Baltimore City and city life in general. The experience enlightened most students’ moral and ethical compasses.
During the 2006 six-month legislative session, the SNAED scenario explorations were exhibited in the Portraits & Exhibits Galleries in the State of Maryland Senate Office complex. The design team organized the 2003-2006 design propositions and projects into three connective ideas: exploring SNAED’s environmental conditions; identifying the communities who live and work in the district; and conveying underlying economic segregation. The exhibit display panels were designed to capture the experience of walking in the Station North environment.

There was intentional assessment in play by organizing a public presentation of Station North. This public display elevated a conversation between the three-year cohort that engaged in SNAED scenarios, offering proof that an expanded VCD practice was valued. The exhibition also offered validation of Baltimore’s emergent creative industrialization; the exhibition synergistically verified the State of Maryland economic initiative vision.

Station North Friday Market

The next evolution of SU design students practicing SNAED design scenarios was facilitating the Charles North Business Committee’s (CNBC) goal to create a farmers’ market, the Station North Friday Market. The design brief was predicated on previous CNBC projects, most notably Second Saturday programming, a monthly flea market, and semi-annual music festivals. Stevenson students were asked to design the logo identity for the farmers’ market.

A human-centered design methodology was used to facilitate this partnership and to define the farmers’ market identity. In initial CNBC meetings, it became apparent that the CNBC’s real goal was not to simply add another event venue. With this understanding, and through practicing transactional communication processes, the design team lead all of the stakeholders to expand the design brief to include: demographic research; a promotional concept and publicity plan; and to test the farmers’ market prototype before it became a weekly event. Foot traffic data was also collected to determine the market’s location.

In executing a systems-based approach to envisioning the audience, location, and promotions scenarios, the CNBC determined that the market was a good idea but that could not be supported with the limited resources available. This was a disappointment because the students had become committed to participate in launching the market scenario. The lesson learned was the difference between starting with a preconceived solution vs. an open-ended scenario. 2

2012-2015 Station North Collaborations

Between 2012-2014, Stevenson University design and honors students continued their collaboration with SNAED scenarios: collecting demographic information during Final Friday programming; researching Community Sourced Art (CSA) Share cohorts and models; and sharing Station North demographic research with Dr. Meghan Rich as she researched her paper “Murals and Art Spaces: Artist-led Revitalization Without Gentrification?” These opportunities scaffolded from all the previous systems-based scenarios and relationships that were established beginning with the 2003 scenario.

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2 The market scenario research was included in SNAED’s 2011 National Endowment of the Arts Our Town Grant proposal, which was awarded to the district.
A significant collaboration during the 2013-15 timeframe was offered, a curatorial partnership with Case[werks] Gallery and Showroom. Station North partnered with Case[werks] when it submitted its Our Town Grant proposal, in which it commissioned the Gallery@Case[werks] to generate exhibitions to represent general themes specific to the arts, design and urban place making culture.

A systems-based approach in creating gallery programming was explored. Throughout this two-year exhibition program, the curatorial point-of-view was to select subjects and installation environments where creative coalitions were suggested, tested and realized. Works from architects; artists; bookmakers; graphic, furniture, product, and textile designers; filmmakers; photographers; and poets were featured. Works were sold; poems were written; design commissions requested; commercial partnerships made; emergent technical and creative processes compared and critiqued; and most importantly, SNAED’s multi-local narrative was further defined.

Rubeling’s curatorial approach was to be iterative because gallery environments are powerful spaces to introduce, inform, and provide structure to sustain creative markets and civic partnerships.

Part 3: Systems-based Learning Outcomes

"A large laboratory of possible futures." (Manzini 2006, 79)

As designer-educators, Alesina and Rubeling continually examine the assumptions and methodologies that designers’ use to create and produce messages, objects, and environments. It becomes self-evident in many of the case studies the experimental nature of human-centered design methodologies and systems-based processes, where one can never predict outcomes and next steps.

This paper offers various intersections of systems-based design-scenarios from an urban framework context. Student experiential learning is emphasized for it develops self-reliance and requires students to think about user experiences beginning with
themselves. If the practice of design is also a practice of engaging change, what systems-based processes provide for student learning is the practice of tuning into the signals of change.

References


Multidisciplinary designer Inna Alesina was born in Kharkov, Ukraine, where she studied industrial design. Her work spans many disciplines including object design, performance wear, ergonomics, communication design, and most recently food systems. Alesina co-authored a book with Ellen Lupton, “Exploring Materials: Creative Designs for Everyday Objects” (PAPress 2010). Inna is a design faculty at the Maryland Institute College and a Visiting Assistant Professor of Art at Stevenson University.

Lori L. Rubeling, Professor of Art +Visual Communication Design, teaches at Stevenson University School of Design in Baltimore, MD (USA). Between 2003 and 2014, she conducted practice-led research in the City of Baltimore Station North Arts and Entertainment District. She is also just completed a two-year curatorial residency at The Gallery@Case[werks] and is a board member for D Center Baltimore.
Sharing values: The relationship between values and meanings in collaborative consumption

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Sustainable Design and Consumption

Collaborative consumption (also referred to as the ‘collaborative economy’, or the ‘sharing economy’) is an emerging socio-economic model based on sharing, bartering, gifting, swapping, renting, lending and borrowing enabled by network technologies and peer communities (Botsman and Rogers 2011). When enabling shared access to under-used assets and thereby making use of spare capacity, it reduces the environmental impact of consumption and prevents unnecessary waste. Often underpinned by belief in openness, inclusivity and the commons, sharing may additionally encourage meaningful interactions and trust between strangers (Stokes et al. 2014).

The aim of the research project which informs this paper was to investigate how consumers’ values may contribute to the acceptance, adoption and wider diffusion of collaborative consumption. Drawing from two different, if not contrasting, theoretical perspectives to understand consumer behaviour, social psychology and social practice theory, the exploration was conducted through a mixed methods study using Ecomodo, a UK-based online sharing platform, as a case study. Initial quantitative research was carried out to measure its users’ values through Schwartz’s Portrait Value Questionnaire (cf. Schwartz et al. 2012). A subsequent strand of qualitative research was carried out to explore values in the specific context of collaborative consumption.

This paper focuses on this latter phase and presents findings from 10 semi-structured interviews which uncovered the values associated with alternative ways of consuming in the areas of transportation, holiday accommodation, clothing and consumer goods. In particular, it explores the relationship between individual values and socio-cultural meanings and the potential benefits of combining psychological and sociological insights in order to understand consumer behaviour. Finally, it considers the importance of engaging values in order to move away from individualistic and wasteful consumerism towards sharing and more sustainable patterns of consumption.

Keywords: Collaborative consumption; Sharing economy; Social practice theory; Social psychology; Values.
1. Introduction

‘Collaborative consumption’ is a term first used by Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers (2011, xv) to describe “traditional sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting and swapping, redefined through technology and peer communities.” These alternative models of consumption allow people to access and share goods and services instead of needing to own them outright. Increasingly based on peer-to-peer (P2P) online marketplaces, collaborative consumption capitalises on the social, environmental and economic idling capacity of underused assets including resources, time, spaces and skills. Examples are car and bike sharing schemes (e.g. Zipcar), P2P ridesharing (e.g. Uber, BlaBlaCar), P2P lodging (e.g. Airbnb, Couchsurfing) and goods/skills exchange or transaction sites (e.g. eBay, Freecycle).

The potential benefits of these innovative practices in response to individuals’ capacity for over-consumption include preventing or reducing waste through avoiding unnecessary purchases, increasing or extending the usable life of products, and saving or making money through leveraging unused assets or sharing existing items. Furthermore, they can create new business opportunities for companies and add social value from the community interactions they put in place. In particular, alternatives to individual ownership are believed to build social capital by rediscovering social ties and fostering trust and reciprocity between strangers (Stokes et al. 2014).

For this capacity to bring economic interests in line with positive environmental and social impacts, collaborative consumption has been considered as a possible contributor to sustainable consumption and production. However, the real effect that collaborative activities are currently having on economies, communities and the environment (e.g. waste reduction, income generation, community connection, local economy impact) remains extremely difficult to assess (Jacob 2015; Leissman et al. 2013; Schor 2014). In addition to this, the success of collaborative consumption in unmaking waste goes back to questions of lifestyles and the rebound effect – if sharing saves money will people simply spend money on other forms of consumption.

2. Values and social practices

A large body of academic research has attempted to understand what motivates behaviour and drive behavioural change drawing from different disciplinary perspectives, including social psychology and sociology (cf. Jackson 2005). The aim of the research project which informs this paper was to investigate how consumers’ values may contribute to the acceptance, adoption and wider diffusion of collaborative consumption.

2.1 Values in social psychology

Social psychological models of (pro-environmental) consumer behaviour aim at identifying the determinants of behaviour accounting for different attitudinal (e.g. values, attitudes, beliefs), contextual or situational factors (e.g. interpersonal influences, government regulations, financial constraints), personal capabilities (e.g. knowledge, skills, available resources) and habits or routines (Stern 2000).

In particular, much attention has been devoted to the study of human values, considered as motivational constructs located within the individual and translating into behaviour (cf. Corner et al. 2014). A commonly agreed definition of values conceptualise them as “trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or group” (Schwartz et al. 2012, 664). Schwartz
identified 19 basic individual values (Table 1) and ordered them in a circular motivational continuum according to their compatibility or conflict. The values are consequently divided into four distinct clusters: ‘openness to change’ vs. ‘conservation’, and ‘self-enhancement’ vs. ‘self-transcendence’ values (Fig.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Conceptual definitions in terms of motivational goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-direction-thought</td>
<td>Freedom to cultivate one’s own ideas and abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-direction-action</td>
<td>Freedom to determine one’s own actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>Excitement, novelty, and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonism</td>
<td>Pleasure and sensuous gratification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Success according to social standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-dominance</td>
<td>Power through exercising control over people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power-resources</td>
<td>Power through control of material and social resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face</td>
<td>Security and power through maintaining one’s public image and avoid humiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security-personal</td>
<td>Safety in one’s immediate environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security-societal</td>
<td>Safety and stability in the wider society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>Maintaining and preserving cultural, family, or religious traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity-rules</td>
<td>Compliance with rules, laws, and formal obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity-interpersonal</td>
<td>Avoidance of upsetting or harming other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Recognizing one’s insignificance in the larger scheme of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence-dependability</td>
<td>Being a reliable and trustworthy member of the ingroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence-caring</td>
<td>Devotion of the welfare of ingroup members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism-concern</td>
<td>Commitment to equality, justice, and protection for all people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism-nature</td>
<td>Preservation of the natural environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Schwartz’s 19 values defined in terms of their motivational goal (Schwartz et al. 2012, 669).

Figure 1: Circular motivational continuum of 19 basic individual values. Adapted from Schwartz et al. 2012, 669.

Although certain types of values are predictive of positive engagement with social and environmental issues (cf. Gutierrez Karp 1996; Stern and Dietz 1994), values are generally considered to have a weak influence upon behaviour, often mediated through other variables, and low predictive power for ecologically conscious consumer...
behaviour (Pepper et al. 2009). The so-called ‘value-action gap’ (cf. Blake 1999) identifies the observed discrepancy between endorsed values and actual behaviour. In other words, values often do not translate linearly into behaviour.

2.2 Meanings, competences and materials in social practice theory

Social practice theory provides an alternative, sociological perspective to conceptualise human action, which takes social practices rather than individuals as the unit of analysis. A practice – e.g. a way of driving, walking, cooking – results from the connection of underlying ‘meaning’, ‘competence’ and ‘material’ elements (cf. Shove et al. 2012) (Fig. 2). Cooking as a practice, for example, consists of raw ingredients, pans and pots, hobs and gas pipes, knowledge of how long things need to be cooked for, and sets of ideas of what a ‘proper’ lunch means or what following a healthy diet entails.

Figure 2: Elements and linkages sustaining practices. Adapted from Shove et al. 2012.

Practices and (more or less sustainable) patterns of resource consumption are linked in reproducing what people take to be ‘normal’ and, for them, ordinary ways of living and doing (Shove 2003). This shifts the focus from determining the antecedents of behaviour (as in social psychology), to understanding the dynamics of the routinisation of practices and their underlying shared notions of normality.

However, in moving from the ‘individual’ to the ‘social’, social practice theory is vulnerable to critique as it reduces people to “more or less faithful carriers or practitioners” (Shove et al. 2012, 63). This raises a series of considerations over the primacy of structure or agency (i.e. the role of the individual) in shaping behaviour. Further, it is possible to question the degree to which conceptions of normality that are culturally and socially constructed play out through personal actions in practices. It thus becomes apparent that the extent to which shared understandings, social expectations and conventions (i.e. the ‘meaning’ element of practices) may be mediated by and through personal traits and characteristics, including individual values, needs further investigation (Piscicelli et al. 2015).

3. Methodology

Social psychology and social practice theory provide two different, if not contrasting, theoretical perspectives to understand consumer behaviour. Drawing on their possible complementarity, the relationship between values and collaborative consumption has
been explored through mixed methods research. Ecomodo\(^1\), a UK-based online platform for P2P lending and borrowing, was used as a case study.

Initial quantitative data collection and analysis measured 63 Ecomodo users’ value priorities through Schwartz’s Portrait Value Questionnaire (cf. Schwartz et al. 2012). In line with previous studies on values and pro-environmental behaviour, respondents scored higher in ‘self-transcendence’ and ‘openness to change’ and lower in ‘self-enhancement’ and ‘conservation’ values (Fig.1) compared to the general UK population (i.e. non users) (cf. Piscicelli et al. 2015).

A subsequent strand of qualitative research was carried out to examine whether and how individual values could act upon the ‘meaning’ element of collaborative consumption practices (i.e. lending, borrowing, bartering, swapping, sharing, trading, renting and gifting). 10 Ecomodo users participating in the previous quantitative phase of data collection were reached and one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted between July and September 2013 in different UK locations. A series of prompts were used to uncover values associated with alternative ways of consuming in the areas of transportation, holiday accommodation, clothing and consumer goods. For each, three alternative scenarios (i.e. private ownership, business-to-consumer and peer-to-peer) were described. Interviewees were asked to assess them and associate any relevant values from the 19 values proposed by Schwartz. (Fig.3).

4. Values and collaborative consumption

In the context of transportation, interviewees were asked to assess three possibilities for getting around their city or travelling to one: to buy and own a private car; to join a car sharing scheme such as Zipcar; to check online through BlaBlaCar.com for other travellers going the same way and share a ride. Schwartz’s values (Table 1) most directly associated with these options were: ‘Self-direction-action’, ‘Power-resources’, ‘Face’, ‘Security-personal’ and ‘Universalism-nature’.

‘Self-direction-action’ and ‘Power-resources’ were discussed in relation to ideas about freedom, control, flexibility, convenience, practicality, comfort and notions of ‘acceptable availability’. Accordingly, they were associated positively with private ownership (e.g. Brian: “You want to own your car, you want to know it is there”) and negatively with the other options, in which access to a car may be limited (e.g. Holly: “[Car sharing] seems like a great idea, for other people. … I am quite often wanting to

\(^1\) http://ecomodo.com
transport a fair number of people and be quite spontaneous about it, and have the car on my doorstep”). ‘Face’ was negatively linked to having a car, which is conventionally regarded as a status symbol, a sign of personal affluence, success and power (e.g. Brian: “Owning a car is a lot about your public image, I think. Most people want to own cars because it’s about social status. It’s not just owning a car, obviously, it’s owning the ‘right’ car”). ‘Security-personal’ was positively associated with car ownership and negatively with lift sharing (e.g. Thomas: “There are obviously potential issues you have to be very careful of when lift sharing. I don’t think that would anyone steal my car, but there is potential for carjacking. I’ve lift shared with two women in the past and obviously that didn’t bother me, but for them I could see that could potentially be an issue”). ‘Universalism-nature’ was discussed in terms of resource efficiency and waste. As such, it was associated negatively with having a car and positively with car and lift sharing (e.g. Amy: “Now that I live in a big city with really good public transportation, a car seems… just like a complete waste, … I guess a bit of ‘protecting nature’ comes back into it”).

In the holiday scenario, interviewees were encouraged to imagine planning a short vacation somewhere. The options under evaluation were: to buy and own a private vacation home; to book online a hotel/hostel through Hostelworld.com; to look for a house or spare room offered by someone on Airbnb.com. Values considered most relevant were: ‘Universalism-concern’, ‘Power-resources’, ‘Universalism-nature’, ‘Stimulation’, ‘Self-direction-action’, ‘Security-personal’, ‘Conformity-interpersonal’ and ‘Benevolence-dependability’.

Ownership of a holiday home was largely considered “unfair”, “greedy” and “selfish”, thus negatively associated with ‘Universalism-concern’ (e.g. Brian: “There are people who need houses and you have got holiday houses: it’s not a good mixture, really. It’s inequality at its absolute worst”). As a symbol of material wealth, status and success, it was also negatively associated with ‘Power-resources’. Left unused for most of the time, holiday homes were believed to go against ‘Universalism-nature’, which was, by contrast, positively associated with Airbnb (e.g. Brian: “I would never own a holiday home. It is just so inefficient. It is just ridiculous. … You just can’t tie up that amount of resources to one person or one family, and then let these empty for most of the year”). ‘Stimulation’ was seen as conflicting with the sense of obligation and “feeling tied in” that arises from owning a vacation home. Conversely, the range of available choice makes the online hotel/hostel option well aligned with ‘Self-direction-action’. ‘Security-personal’ was negatively associated with online hotels/hostels and Airbnb, which were also negatively linked to ‘Conformity-interpersonal’ (e.g. Emma: “It might be that I would feel that I have to spend more time with the family that owned the house, whereas in fact I just wanted the room and the breakfast and to go out each day”). Finally, the possible unreliability of a P2P service such as Airbnb led to it being negatively associated with ‘Benevolence-dependability’ (e.g. James: “[With Airbnb] there is not necessarily any validation or particular standards that apply. So, it can be a bit hit and miss in terms of what you get”).

In the area of clothing, interviewees were invited to consider the alternatives of: buying a new item of clothing in a shop; looking online and hiring a designer brand garment for few days; swapping an item of clothing they own for another one with somebody online or at a swapping party. Values most directly associated were: ‘Hedonism’, ‘Face’, ‘Achievement’, ‘Universalism-nature’, ‘Stimulation’ and ‘Self-direction-action’.

Clothing was related to the way in which people express themselves and are judged by others, thus criticised for its emphasis on public image and conformity to (dispraised) social standards. Therefore, buying new clothes was negatively associated with ‘Face’
and ‘Achievement’ (e.g. Connie: “People like to be in the ‘right’ shops, they like to be seen with those bags that say whatever the brand is on the side of the bag. There’s something there about keeping up with the Joneses as well”). Clothing was also related to ideas of self-gratification. However, ‘Hedonism’ and ‘Stimulation’ were associated negatively with buying new clothes and positively with hiring and swapping solutions where the pleasure and “thrill” of getting something new occur “without the guilt”. This reading was motivated by their underlying perception of fashion as (environmentally and socially) unsustainable. Buying new clothing was negatively associated with ‘Universalism-nature’, which was positively linked to hiring and swapping options (e.g. Brian: “You cannot continue to buy things at the rate we are buying things. It just can’t happen. … Buying clothes it’s awful. Fashion is awful. Someone told us that we need to change the way we look every year and it’s a disaster”). Considerations of convenience and practicality, however, explain the lack of success of these latter options, which were seen as limiting ‘Self-direction-action’ (e.g. Isabel: “Renting online sounds like a good idea, sounds like it would be ecological and sensible, but I didn’t find it very practical. … I would say that the socially responsible thing to do would be clothing swapping, but I just think it’s a bit silly and trendy and I think it will pass”).

The scenario proposed for consumer goods was the purchase of a new piece of furniture at IKEA and the need to assemble it. Interviewees were asked to evaluate several options: buying or owning a DIY set of tools and assembling it by themselves; opting for the IKEA assembly service; advertising the task they need to have done on TaskRabbit.com and pay for someone from their neighbourhood to do it. Values considered most relevant were: ‘Power-resources’, ‘Self-direction-action’, ‘Self-direction-thought’, ‘Stimulation’, ‘Achievement’, ‘Benevolence-dependability’, ‘Security-personal’ and ‘Benevolence-caring’.

Owning the tools and being able to carry out odd jobs was positively connected with ‘Power-resources’ and ‘Self-direction-action’. Ideas of self-reliance, learning, enjoyment and personal satisfaction were mentioned in relation to DIY. As such, it was also positively associated with ‘Self-direction-thought’, ‘Stimulation’ and ‘Achievement’ (e.g. James: “You might get ‘Stimulation’ through giving it a go yourself, … because you like fiddling around with screws and drills”). ‘Benevolence-dependability’ was positively linked to professional assembly services, considered more reliable than the P2P option, TaskRabbit (e.g. Thomas: [In TaskRabbit] this person might let me down, might damage it, might not actually be that good at it, and therefore they would just damage the new item of furniture”). Additionally, outsourcing household errands was negatively associated with ‘Security-personal’ (e.g. Martha: “I would be slight worried about the ‘personal security’ side of [TaskRabbit], more than the having an electrician or someone like that coming around. Which is daft, really. But, you know, it’s just worrying about whether they would actually subsequently break into your house, or they take something while they were there or whatever”). However, ‘Benevolence-caring’ was positively associated to TaskRabbit for its potential to build trust between strangers and empower local communities (e.g. Emma: “[TaskRabbit] is a very nice option. I really like this, because it’s a ‘caring’ thing. And it’s good for the society, it’s good for your local community, you might make contacts and you might recommend them to other people so you might be helping someone in some way”).

5. Discussion and conclusion

Combining a social psychological appreciation of values with a practice-based framing of different ways of consuming, the investigation provided insights on interviewees’
understandings of their behaviour and the social practices they may engage in. In particular, the analysis revealed the values that Ecomodo users relate to diverse modes of travelling, finding accommodation, getting new clothes, and doing odd jobs.

When Schwartz's 19 values were associated with the different options (and, thus, their underlying practices), connections were made in relation to specific meanings (i.e. cultural conventions, social norms, collective understandings) and notions of normality. The relationship between values and meanings proved to be either positive or negative. However, the association was often not univocal. If related to different meanings, the same value can be associated with a practice positively and negatively at the same time. For example, ‘Benevolence-dependability’ was negatively associated with TaskRabbit in relation to the possible service unreliability, but positively linked to it when related to the idea of strengthening local communities. Moreover, people can make a particular association positively and negatively, thus reflecting differences in individual value priorities. For instance, ‘Stimulation’ was positively or negatively associated with hiring and swapping clothes according to how this value was generally hold important by interviewees.

Endorsement of a set of (pro-environmental) values alone is not sufficient to explain why people carry out certain practices but not others: personal perceptions of ‘value’ (e.g. what is considered to be convenient, efficient and practical) come into play. More specifically, if the values individuals aspire to and their perceptions of value are aligned (+) with the meanings of a practice, engagement in that practice may result more likely (a). On the other hand, a misalignment (-) between values, value and meanings may hinder such engagement (b).

(a) Values -> Meanings (+); Value -> Meanings (+)
(b) Values -> Meanings (-); Value -> Meanings (-)

Intermediate situations may also occur: endorsed values may be aligned with meanings, while perceptions of value are not (c), or the reverse may be true (d).

(c) Values -> Meanings (+); Value -> Meanings (-)
(d) Values -> Meanings (-); Value -> Meanings (+)

This may lead people to find a way around the perceived inconsistency between their endorsed values and actions, or to reject certain practices in favour of alternative ones.

To summarise, efforts to move away from individualistic and wasteful consumerism towards innovative practices and more sustainable patterns of consumption should consider the role that values and perceptions of value have in the acceptance, adoption and diffusion of social practices. Acknowledging the existing relationship between values, value and meanings has important implications for the design of services for collaborative consumption. This should aim at providing ‘design cues’ able to convey desired meanings and activate values supportive of sharing, while addressing the key aspects of perceived convenience, efficiency and practicality.

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