

Towards a 'Social Psychology' of Sustainable Consumption

**Research Fellowship
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Background

Consumer behaviour is key to the impact that society has on its environment. The actions that people take and the choices they make – to consume certain products and services or to live in certain ways rather than others – all have direct and indirect impacts on the environment, as well as on personal (and collective) well-being. This is why the topic of 'sustainable consumption' has become a central focus for national and international policy.

The terminology of sustainable consumption is relatively recent; it can be dated more or less to Agenda 21, the main policy document to emerge from the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. That document provided a potentially far-reaching mandate for examining and revising consumption patterns and - by implication – consumer behaviours, attitudes and lifestyles. A host of initiatives on sustainable consumption emerged during the 1990s, and by the time of the second Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, shortly before this fellowship commenced, changing consumption and production patterns had been identified as one of three 'overarching objectives' for sustainable development.

Despite this flurry of activity, agreement on what sustainable consumption is or should be about has proved remarkably difficult to negotiate. Some approaches have focused on the role of technological improvement and 'getting the prices right'. Others imply a far more radical overhaul of the status quo in which sustainable consumption is about the 'management of greed' in affluent societies. Neither position is unequivocally useful: the former because it offers little new to existing policies on resource productivity and economic efficiency, the latter because it underestimates the complexity of human motivations and risks alienating those whose behaviour it seeks to change.

In spite of these difficulties, it is clear that consumption remains an important issue in sustainable development. In particular, there is a very real need to ensure that environmental gains are not offset by rebound effects, that entrenched behaviours do not render sustainable technologies redundant and that the continued expansion of consumer expectation and demand does not simply swamp the efficiency gains made through cleaner and more sustainable products. Whatever perspective we take on sustainable consumption we are drawn inevitably towards the need for a clearer understanding of consumer behaviour and human choice.

Why do we consume? What do we expect to gain from consumer goods? How successful are we in meeting those expectations? What constrains our choices? And what drives our expectations in the first place? All these questions become vitally important in deriving policies which could help us protect the environment and improve our quality of life.

Objectives

The overall aim of this fellowship was to explore the conceptual foundations for a view of human behaviour which is consistent with the goal of sustainable consumption and to examine the extent to which such a model could inform the development of a new policy agenda for sustainable consumption. Specific objectives were:

1. to undertake a critical review of the recent and historical literature on consumption and consumer behaviour and to communicate that review in a variety of forms to both academic and policy audiences;
2. to identify key resonances and dissonances between different conceptual models of behaviour within the literature and to examine the implications of these for sustainable consumption;
3. to explore the potential to develop a new 'social psychology' of ecologically and socially responsible behaviour; and
4. to examine the implications of this work for the project of developing a coherent policy framework for sustainable consumption.

A complementary aim of the fellowship was to provide the research fellow with the opportunity to consolidate a broad interest in the conceptual foundations of sustainable consumption. By facilitating academic time away from teaching and administrative duties, the grant aimed to allow the fellow the opportunity to work towards two major publication projects: a collected anthology and an extended monograph, both on sustainable consumption. A short policy-maker's summary reporting the results of the work was also promised.

Methods

The basis for this fellowship was a critical review and exegesis of the extensive literature on consumption, consumer behaviour and behavioural change. The range of academic disciplines identified as contributing insights relevant to this topic was rather wide and included: economics, sociology, environmental studies, human geography, social and environmental psychology, anthropology, marketing studies, consumer research, and evolutionary biology. In its cross-disciplinary pursuit of writing relevant to a particular topic, the methodology is reminiscent of some approaches to the history and philosophy of ideas. In the later stages of the work, which synthesised and explored policy implications, there were also some elements of critical policy appraisal.

It was not the intention of this fellowship to engage directly in empirical research. However, the conceptual exegesis was grounded empirically in three specific ways. Firstly, the literature review extended to incorporate some of the empirical evidence supporting different conceptual perspectives. Secondly, the fellow developed contacts with empirically-based projects on sustainable consumption carried out by other research teams – both within the STP programme and outside it.

Finally, under the broad banner of this work, the fellow has initiated several specific empirical research projects at Surrey. Methodologies incorporated in these empirical projects include surveys and focus groups, discourse analysis, Q-methodology, experience sampling and institutional analysis. Some supporting projects have also been initiated which explore the more quantitative (material flow) dimensions of environmentally-significant behaviours. Several of these projects use input-output analysis. Results from these supporting projects will be reported separately, and are not explicitly an output from this fellowship.

Results

It was not the purpose of the research undertaken in this fellowship to produce empirical results or quantifiable data sets. Rather, the intellectual outputs from the fellowship are discursive in nature. Reporting – in summary form – on ‘results’ of this kind is not altogether straightforward and risks being seen as peremptory and unsatisfying. However, a policy briefing paper¹ covering many aspects of the work was published by the Sustainable Development Research Network (SDRN) earlier this year and copies of this briefing are attached as one of two ‘nominated outputs’ from the award.

The briefing paper was itself prepared as an accessible summary of a much more substantial review document, also prepared for the SDRN.² This more extensive review of consumer behaviour and behavioural change in the context of sustainable consumption is available on the web at:

<http://www.sd-research.org.uk/researchreviews/documents/MotivatingSCfinal.pdf>

The larger document has not been included in the nominated outputs partly to reduce the sheer size of the end-of-award submission (the document is 170 pages long) and partly to reduce the immediate burden on rapporteurs! Nonetheless, it would clearly give a more detailed account of the extended critical review that lay at the heart of the fellowship work and would be useful supplementary material for any reader interested in accessing it.

In the mean time, it is clearly useful here to point to some of the principal avenues of thought pursued in the critical review and to indicate some of the main policy conclusions that flow from this. The approach taken in the following brief sections is to summarise key aspects of the work under four separate headings. Each section highlights a particular area of the intellectual work covered during the fellowship and identifies the principal outputs/publications where further details are to be found.

Consumption as the ‘Vanguard of History’

A key task for the fellowship was a detailed review of the literature on consumption and consumer behaviour. Any such review presents us rather quickly with a huge variety of different potential roles for consumption in modern society. These roles include, for example: the satisfaction of functional needs, the construction of identity, the pursuit of status and social distinction, the maintenance of social cohesion, an avenue for social and/or sexual selection, a forum for negotiating the boundary between the sacred and the profane, and a mechanism for the pursuit of personal and collective meaning.³

This multiplicity of roles for consumption is what led Gabriel and Lang to refer to the consumer as ‘unmanageable’ and inspired Miller to talk about consumption as ‘the vanguard of history’.⁴ Our consumption patterns offer a complex, yet telling picture of the kind of society we have become and of our relationship to material goods. Getting to grips with this complexity is challenging. But the critical analysis undertaken in this fellowship highlights two or three key lessons that emerge from the vast literature on modern consumption.

¹ Jackson, T 2005. *Motivating Sustainable Consumption*. SDRN Briefing 1. London: Policy Studies Institute.

² Jackson, T 2005. *Motivating Sustainable Consumption – a review of consumer behaviour and behavioural change*. A Report to the Sustainable Development Research Network. London: Policy Studies Institute.

³ Several fellowship publications discuss these different aspects of consumption in detail. These include (see page 9-10 below): *Models of Mammon* (2003), *Live Better* (2005) and *Motivating Sustainable Consumption* (2005)

⁴ See Miller, D *Acknowledging Consumption – a review of new studies*, Routledge, 1995.

The first of these is that no purely functional account of material commodities can provide a robust basis for analysing consumer behaviour or for negotiating more sustainable consumption patterns. Rather material artefacts must be seen as playing important symbolic roles in our lives. This symbolic role of consumer goods allows us to engage in vital 'social conversations' about status, identity, social cohesion, and the pursuit of personal and cultural meaning – in short to use the 'language of goods' to 'help create the social world and to find a credible place in it'.⁵

Another hugely important lesson from the literature is that, far from being able to exercise free choice about what to consume and what not to consume, people often find themselves locked in to unsustainable consumption patterns by factors outside their control.⁶ 'Lock-in' occurs in part through 'perverse' incentive structures – economic constraints, institutional barriers, or inequalities in access that actively encourage unsustainable behaviours. It also occurs because of social expectations or from sheer habit. At one level, consumer behaviour is simply the manifestation of everyday routine 'social practices' which are themselves the product of a 'creeping evolution of social norms'.⁷

These lessons emphasise the difficulty associated with negotiating sustainable consumption patterns. But they also highlight another key feature in the literature: namely, the social and institutional context of consumer action. The 'sociality' of consumption is inherent both in the symbolic role of material goods and in the evolution of social practices. Some implications of this sociality for policy are discussed below.⁸

The Social Psychology of Consumer Action

A considerable effort was made in the course of the fellowship to review the underlying models of human behaviour relevant to a comprehensive understanding of consumer action. This work culminated in the review of consumer behaviour and behavioural change prepared for SDRN (*Motivating Sustainable Consumption*, 2005). A significant component of that work was an in-depth review of different social-psychological and socio-economic understandings of both 'intentional' and habitual behaviours.

The starting point for the review was the traditional rational choice model that underlies conventional economics. This model contends that consumers make decisions by calculating the individual costs and benefits of different courses of action and then choosing the option that maximises their expected net benefits.

Perhaps unfortunately, consumer actions are not always so straightforward as the rational choice model suggests. We do not always deliberate carefully over costs and benefits. We do not always act in our own self-interest. Individual choice is

⁵ The use of the term social conversations in this context draws on the early work of G H Mead (*Mind, Self and Society*, University of Chicago Press, 1934). The idea of 'language of goods' is taken (in particular) from Douglas and Isherwood's *The World of Goods* (Penguin Books, 1979). The final quotation is from Douglas' seminal essay 'Relative Poverty, Relative Communication' (in Halsey, A (ed), *Traditions of Social Policy*, Basil Blackwell, 1976, p27).

⁶ This viewpoint is most clearly encapsulated in an emerging literature on 'ordinary consumption' based on the work of authors such as Elizabeth Shove (*Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience*, Berg, 2003) and Alan Warde ('Consumption as Social Practice', paper presented to the ESRC/AHRB workshop on New Theoretical Approaches to Consumption, Birkbeck College, Oct 2003). See also Dale Southerton's STP project on Kitchens and Bathrooms.

⁷ I am grateful to Alan Warde for this evocative phrase.

⁸ These lessons are discussed in more detail in (see page 6) *Symbolic Goods* (2003), *Models of Mammon* (2003), *Consuming Paradise* (2004), *Motivating Sustainable Consumption* (2005) and *Live Better* (2005).

continually tempered by social constraints. And sometimes we just don't deliberate at all, acting through instinct, emotion or habit, rather than reason.

Expectancy-value⁹ theories (like rational choice) suggest that behaviours flow from our attitudes. But all too often there is a yawning gap between attitudes (for example our concern for the environment) and behaviour (for instance our willingness to travel less by car). This 'value-action gap' suggests that sustainable consumption policy must do more than tackle attitudes and hope that behavioural change will follow.

At any rate, what is clear – both from the failings of rational choice theory and from the limited success of conventional policy in changing behaviours – is that more attention needs to be paid to the underlying structure of both behaviours and motivations, as well as to the situational factors that shape and constrain people's actions and choices. *Motivating Sustainable Consumption* attempted this task and the reader should refer to the online report (or the policy summary) for further details.

At the end of the day, in policy terms, it will always be necessary to strike a balance between parsimony and completeness. A 'grand unified theory of human behaviour' is probably impossible. But a pragmatic synthesis of the dimensions of human behaviour is a useful starting point for policy design and there are some useful examples of such syntheses in the literature.¹⁰

In summary, in this kind of synthesis, my behaviour in any particular situation is a function partly of my attitudes and intentions, partly of my habitual responses, and partly of the situational constraints and conditions under which I operate. My intentions in their turn are influenced by social, normative and affective factors as well as by rational deliberations. I am neither fully deliberative nor fully automatic in this view. I am neither fully autonomous nor entirely social. My behaviours are influenced by my moral beliefs, but the impact of these is moderated both by my emotional drives and my cognitive limitations.

Policies for Sustainable Consumption

Until quite recently, consumer policy has been influenced heavily by concerns for consumer sovereignty and by an allegiance to the rational choice model. From this perspective, the role of policy appears to be straightforward, namely to ensure that the market allows people to make efficient choices about their own actions.

For the most part, this has been seen as the need to correct for 'market failures'. These failures occur, for example, if consumers have insufficient information to make proper choices. In this perspective, policy should therefore seek to improve access to information. In addition, private decisions do not always take account of social costs. Policy intervention is therefore needed to 'internalise' these external costs and make them more 'visible' to private choice.

Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that policies based on information and price signals have had only limited success in changing unsustainable behaviours. In one extreme case, a California utility spent more money on advertising the benefits of home insulation than it would have cost to install the insulation itself in the targeted

⁹ In this kind of theory, choices are made on the basis of the expected outcomes from a choice and the value attached to those outcomes. A range of 'adjusted' expectancy-value models uses this basic idea to go beyond rational choice and unravel explicitly the psychological antecedents of consumer preferences. The most famous is Azjen and Fishbein's *Theory of Reasoned Action* which models behaviour as a function of both our own expectations and attitudes and our perceptions of what others think.

¹⁰ One such example is provided by Triandis' early theory of *Interpersonal Behaviour*. (Brooks/Cole, 1977).

homes.¹¹ Price signals too are often insufficient to overcome the barriers to more sustainable behaviour. In some cases, more sustainable choices are already cost-effective, but are not taken up for a variety of reasons.

The rhetoric of ‘consumer sovereignty’ and ‘hands-off’ governance does not help much here because it regards choice as individualistic and fails to unravel the social, psychological and institutional influences on private behaviours. Some behaviours are motivated by rational, self-interested, and individualistic concerns. But conventional responses neither do justice to the complexity of consumer behaviour nor exhaust the possibilities for policy intervention in pursuit of behavioural change.

Motivating Sustainable Consumption (2005) set out the basis for a concerted policy strategy aimed at removing perverse incentive structures and making pro-environmental behaviour easy.¹² This strategy has several key components. These include:

- enabling and facilitating access to more sustainable choices;
- ensuring that incentive (and penalty) structures support rather than hinder the desired changes;
- engaging consumers in community initiatives on sustainable consumption; and
- exemplifying the desired changes in Government policy and practice.

Most importantly, the evidence suggests that policy plays a vital role in shaping the social context within which we act. Governments influence and co-create the culture of consumption in a variety of ways. In some cases, this influence proceeds through specific interventions – such as the imposition of regulatory and fiscal structures. In other cases it proceeds through the *absence* of such interventions. Most often it is a combination of both.

A key lesson from this review is the importance of community based social change. Individual behaviours are shaped and constrained by social norms and expectations. Negotiating change is best pursued at the level of groups and communities. Social support is particularly vital in breaking habits and in devising new social norms. Government can play a vital role in initiating and nurturing community-based initiatives for sustainable consumption.

Towards a ‘Social Psychology’ of Sustainable Consumption

Perhaps the most ambitious aspect of this fellowship was the broad aim to ‘explore the conceptual foundations’ for a view of human behaviour that might be consistent with sustainable consumption – what in broad terms was cast as a ‘social psychology’ of sustainable consumption. Many of the lessons flowing from the literature on consumption and from the underlying models of human motivation seem to suggest a kind of insatiability inhabiting modern society. In some accounts, this insatiability is ascribed to human nature itself. In others, it is deemed a function of modern institutions. In yet another, it is ascribed to cultural expectations. In all cases, it offers little obvious prospect of wholesale shifts in the sustainability of people’s behaviours.

¹¹ Cited in McKenzie Mohr D 2000. Promoting Sustainable Behavior: an introduction to community-based social marketing. *Journal of Social Issues* 56(3), 543-554.

¹² In addition to the extensive discussion in *Motivating Sustainable Consumption*, the policy implications of sustainable consumption are also discussed in *Policies for Sustainable Consumption* (2003), *Negotiating Sustainable Consumption* (2004) and *Regulate Consumption?* (2005)

Attempting to get beyond this apparent intractability has been the most fascinating aspect of the fellowship work. It has entailed an as-yet unfinished journey through some surprising and eclectic intellectual territory, including a two-thousand year old debate about the nature of 'needs', anthropological insights on the importance of classification and naming, a thoroughly modern theory of commercial 'branding', and the sociology of religious (and secular) theodicy.

It is too soon to report definitively on the outcomes from this 'intellectual pilgrimage'. But some early attempts to construct a working synthesis of these different strands have been made. *Beyond Insatiability* examined in detail the sometimes fierce intellectual debates surrounding the concept of human needs.¹³ *Live Better?* explores the dialectic that haunts the question of whether (or to what extent) material consumption is 'good for us'.¹⁴ *Consuming Paradise?* articulated four broad propositions concerning the relationship between material artefacts and human well-being and discussed the implications of these for sustainable consumption policy.¹⁵

In the final analysis, this aspect of the work serves to warn against simplistic prescriptions for change. Material goods and services are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of our lives. Through them we not only satisfy our needs and desires, we also communicate with each other, negotiate important social relationships, and pursue personal and cultural meaning. In this context, motivating sustainable consumption may be as much about building supportive communities, promoting inclusive societies, providing meaningful work and encouraging purposeful lives as it is about awareness-raising, fiscal policy or persuasion.

Activities

During the course of the fellowship, the fellow attended and contributed to a wide variety of different meetings, workshops and conferences. Specific activities included the following:

- attendance at two annual ESRC STP researcher conferences (Jan 03, Jan 04);
- presentation of a working paper (*Beyond Insatiability*) at an ESRC/CRIC seminar (May 03)
- an invited plenary presentation on sustainable consumption at a workshop on voluntary simplicity, organised by the US Simplicity Research Forum (Jun 03);
- preparation and presentation of a review paper on *Policies for Sustainable Consumption* for the UK Sustainable Development Commission (Sept 03);
- presentation of a working paper (*Symbolic Goods*) at a workshop on 'New Theoretical Approaches to Consumption' co-organised by STP and the ESRC/AHRB 'Cultures of Consumption' programme (Oct 03);
- two presentations of the fellowship work to DEFRA's Advisory Council on Consumer Products and the Environment (Nov 03 and July 04)
- participation in three linked workshops on sustainable consumption hosted by DEFRA and co-organised by ESRC STP, DEFRA and Green Alliance; a keynote presentation was given at the first of these (Jan – Mar 04);

¹³ Jackson, T, W Jager and S Stagl 2004. *Beyond Insatiability – needs theory, consumption and sustainability*, Chapter 5 in Reisch, L. and I. Røpke (eds) *Consumption – perspectives from ecological economics*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.

¹⁴ Jackson, T 2005. *Live Better by Consuming Less? Is there a double dividend in sustainable consumption?* *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 9(2), 19 - 36.

¹⁵ Jackson, T 2004. *Consuming Paradise? Unsustainable Consumption in Cultural and Social-Psychological Context*. In Hubacek, K, A Inaba and S Stagl (eds) *Driving Forces of and Barriers to Sustainable Consumption*, Proceedings of an International Conference, University of Leeds, 5th-6th March 2004.

- an invited keynote paper (*Consuming Paradise?*) at an international workshop on sustainable consumption organised by Leeds Institute for Environmental Science in collaboration with UNEP and the European Society for Ecological Economics (Mar 04);
- invited presentation to the National Consumer Council's Forum on Responsible Production and Consumption (Apr 04);
- an invited paper presentation at an international workshop on sustainable consumption at the Free University of Brussels (Jun 04);
- the invited keynote lecture at the launch meeting of the Heterodox Economics Network (HEEDNET) (Jul 04);
- attendance at several meetings of the ESRC/AHRB Cultures of Consumption programme meetings and of the ESRC Environment and Human Behaviour (EHB) programme (Oct 03 – Jun 04);

A very significant body of activity was generated through the SDRN review (*Motivating Sustainable Consumption*). This work fed directly into the Sustainable Development Strategy review and numerous presentations of the work have been made (or are promised) to academic and user audiences. These include:

- lecture at the launch presentation of the SDRN review (*Motivating Sustainable Consumption*) to an invited audience of 130 people at the British Academy (Jul 04);
- invited keynote lecture at a policy seminar on 'The Politics of Persuasion' organised by Demos/Green Alliance and DEFRA (Jul 04);
- presentation to the policy seminar on 'Sustainable Consumption' organised by SDC/DEFRA/ESRC (Sept 04);
- invited presentation to the Ministerial Task Force on Sustainable Development, chaired by Rt Hon Margaret Becket, Secretary of State for the Environment, and other DEFRA and DTI Ministers; (Oct 04)
- invited presentations to a variety of academic institutions including: the Environmental Psychology Research Group (EPRG), University of Surrey, SPRU (Univ of Sussex), the University of East Anglia, the Donald Bren School of Business and the Environment in Santa Barbara, California, and the University of Cardiff;
- invited plenary lecture, international workshop on Meeting the Future: A research agenda for sustainability, organised by the US Environmental Protection Agency (May 05);
- presentation to a special seminar of the UK Round Table on Sustainable Consumption, attended by members of the Welsh Assembly Government and the Consumer Council for Wales (Jun 05);
- invitation to make a keynote presentation at an international conference on Responsible Consumption, organised by the European Commission (Sept 05).

Outputs

The fellowship has already delivered a number of academic and policy-related outputs, including 5 published academic papers (3 journal papers and 2 book chapters), 3 published conference papers, 3 substantive reviews (commissioned by research users) and 1 short policy briefing, widely disseminated in the user community. Two books, three further book chapters and several journal articles are in various stages of preparation.

The most substantial output from the project so far was the report *Motivating Sustainable Consumption*, prepared for the Sustainable Development Research Network. This 170 page report reviewed the evidence base on consumer behaviour

and behavioural change. In particular, it examined the models of human behaviour underlying different understandings of consumption, and identified the main policy avenues for influencing consumer behaviour.

Progress towards the two major publication projects (the Earthscan Reader and the monograph) has been steady, but a little slower than originally anticipated, partly as a result of the extensive user engagement in the later stages of the fellowship. The Earthscan Reader has also been delayed slightly by unexpected administrative difficulties in negotiating financially acceptable permissions for the contributing papers. A final manuscript is expected to be delivered to Earthscan by Sept 1st.

The first draft of a monograph based substantially on *Motivating Sustainable Consumption* – has been prepared. An agreement in principle has been negotiated with Edward Elgar to publish this work. It is hoped that a final manuscript will be delivered to the publisher by end December 2005 or January 2006. A full list of published and promised outputs is provided below:

- Jackson, T. (in preparation) Earthscan Reader in Sustainable Consumption. London: Earthscan.
- Jackson, T. (in preparation) Negotiating Sustainable Consumption – towards a social psychology of sustainable living. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Jackson, T. (in preparation) Sustainable Consumption. In Atkinson, G, S Dietz and E Neumayer. A Handbook of Sustainable Development. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Jackson, T. (in preparation) The Social Psychology of Sustainable Consumption. In Lewis, A (ed) *The Cambridge Handbook of Psychology and Economic Behaviour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jackson, T, E. Papathanasopoulou and P Bradley (in preparation) Affluence or 'Lock-in'? An examination of the carbon implications of UK household consumption.
- Jackson, T 2005. Live Better by Consuming Less? Is there a double dividend in sustainable consumption? *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 9(2), 19 - 36.
- Sinclair, P, Jackson, T and Mellor W 2005. Towards an Integrated Regional Materials Flow Accounting Model, *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 9(2), 69-84
- Jackson, T. 2005. Motivating Sustainable Consumption – SDRN briefing 1, London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Jackson, T. 2005. Motivating Sustainable Consumption – a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change. London: Sustainable Development Research Network.
- Jackson, T. 2005. Can we (should we) regulate cultures of consumption? Chapter 8 in Vass, P (ed) CRI Regulatory Review 2004/5. Bath: Centre for the Study of Regulated Industries.
- Jackson, T 2005. Lifestyle Change and Market Transformation. A report prepared for the Market Transformation Programme. London: DEFRA.
- Jackson, T 2004. Negotiating Sustainable Consumption – a review of the consumption debate and its policy implications. *Energy & Environment* 15(6), 1027-1051.
- Jackson, T, W Jager and S Stagl 2004 Beyond Insatiability – needs theory, consumption and sustainability, Chapter 5 in Reisch, L. and I. Røpke (eds) *Consumption The Ecological Economics of Consumption*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 79-110.
- Jackson, T 2004. Chasing Progress? Beyond measuring economic growth. London: New Economics Foundation.
- Jackson, T 2004. Consuming Paradise? Unsustainable Consumption in Cultural and Social-Psychological Context, in Hubacek, Klaus, Atsushi Inaba and Sigrud Stagl (eds) *Driving Forces of and Barriers to Sustainable Consumption*, Proceedings of an International Conference, University of Leeds, 5th-6th March 2004.

- Jackson, T and E Papathanasopoulou 2004. Material Implications of Household Consumption: with reference to UK expenditure patterns between 1968 and 2000. ISEE International Conference, Montreal, Canada, July 2004.
- Jackson, T 2003. Models of Mammon – a cross-disciplinary survey in pursuit of the sustainable consumer, in Craig T (ed), *Crossing the Boundaries*, proceedings of the 3rd UK Environmental Psychology conference, Aberdeen, 23rd-25th July, 174-195.
- Jackson, T 2003. Beyond Insatiability – needs theory and its relevance for sustainable consumption. Manchester: ESRC/CRIC seminar.
- Jackson, T. and L. Michaelis 2003. *Policies for Sustainable Consumption*, Sustainable Development Commission, London.
- Jackson, T. 2003 Sustainable Consumption and Symbolic Goods, paper presented to the ESRC/AHRB workshop *Coming to Terms with Consumption: theoretical and methodological perspectives*, 9th - 10th October.

Impacts

This fellowship has already been influential in a variety of different user communities. From rather early on, it became clear that the project coincided with a considerable 'policy hunger' for insights into the topic of sustainable consumption. An early report, *Policies for Sustainable Consumption*, provided the basis for the Sustainable Development Commission's submission to DEFRA's consultation on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The report itself attracted some publicity in the press and was covered by several quality dailies.

Several of the SDC's recommendations were incorporated into the Government's Framework on Sustainable Consumption and Production, including the recommendation to establish a Round Table on Sustainable Consumption. In April 2004, the fellow was himself appointed to the Sustainable Development Commission, and as part of his role in the Commission asked to sit on the Round Table. These two appointments have provided a unique opportunity to engage directly with the policy community on aspects of the fellowship work.

The SDRN report (*Motivating Sustainable Consumption*) played a similar role in relation to the Government's new Sustainable Development Strategy. Launched as part of the Government's Strategy Review process (*Taking it on*), the report was influential in framing various elements of the new Strategy and is referred to explicitly in the Sustainable Development White Paper.¹⁶

The SDRN work has also informed the development of the Government's new Climate Change Communication strategy, fed into a review of domestic energy behaviour being carried out under the Climate Change Policy review by DEFRA's Sustainable Energy Programme, informed DEFRA's research programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production and contributed to a variety of other government initiatives on behaviour and behavioural change, including a Home Office review of policies for addressing anti-social behaviour. The fellow has been invited to sit on a cross-departmental working group on Changing Behaviours.

In May 2005, DEFRA asked Prof Jackson to 'showcase' the SDRN work (and its input to the Sustainable Development Strategy) at an international conference on Sustainable Development Research in Washington, DC. Several media appearances have been made in connection with the fellowship work.

¹⁶ DEFRA 2005. *Securing the Future*. London: HMSO.

Future Research Priorities

The fellowship has provided a unique opportunity to establish and build an on-going work programme on the economic, social and psychological dimensions of sustainable consumption. Several new projects have already been initiated. These include an EPSRC-funded project on the social and institutional aspects of energy consumption in buildings and several PhD projects.

In addition, a proposal has been developed – building on the fellowship work – to establish a cross-departmental research group at the University of Surrey on lifestyles, values and energy consumption (RESOLVE). This research group has now been recommended for funding by ESRC under the TSEC programme subject to certain conditions. Specific working objectives of the proposed research group will be:

- to explore material, economic, psychological, sociological and cultural accounts of the relationship between lifestyle choice and energy demand;
- to develop theoretical and empirical understandings of the potential for long-term lifestyle change in moving towards a sustainable energy economy;
- to understand the economic, social and psychological implications of a technological transition to a sustainable energy economy;
- to develop an empirical 'evidence base' for effective policy intervention in energy-related behaviours and practices;
- to engage effectively with policy-makers, opinion-formers and the media in developing and communicating this new body of research.

From a personal point of view, this fellowship has been a unique opportunity to strengthen my own research contribution at a critical point in my career. There is no doubt that I will look back on it as a critical turning point in my academic life, and an unprecedented opportunity to establish a research programme for the future which has direct relevance to emerging policy needs.