

Studying Environmental Changes in Practices of Consumption: what relevance for China?

Renmin University of China
'SCORAI – China'
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Gert Spaargaren

Environmental Policy Group
Wageningen University

The Netherlands



- 1. Sustainable Consumption Research and China
- 2. Practice theory and its relevance for research and policy making on (sustainable) consumption
- 3. Analyzing 'sustainability transitions/changes' in
(networks of) practices which have a direct relevance for sustainable consumption

Sustainable Consumption Research and China

Background- papers by

- Wenling Liu et al. and
- Rosanne Verbeek on

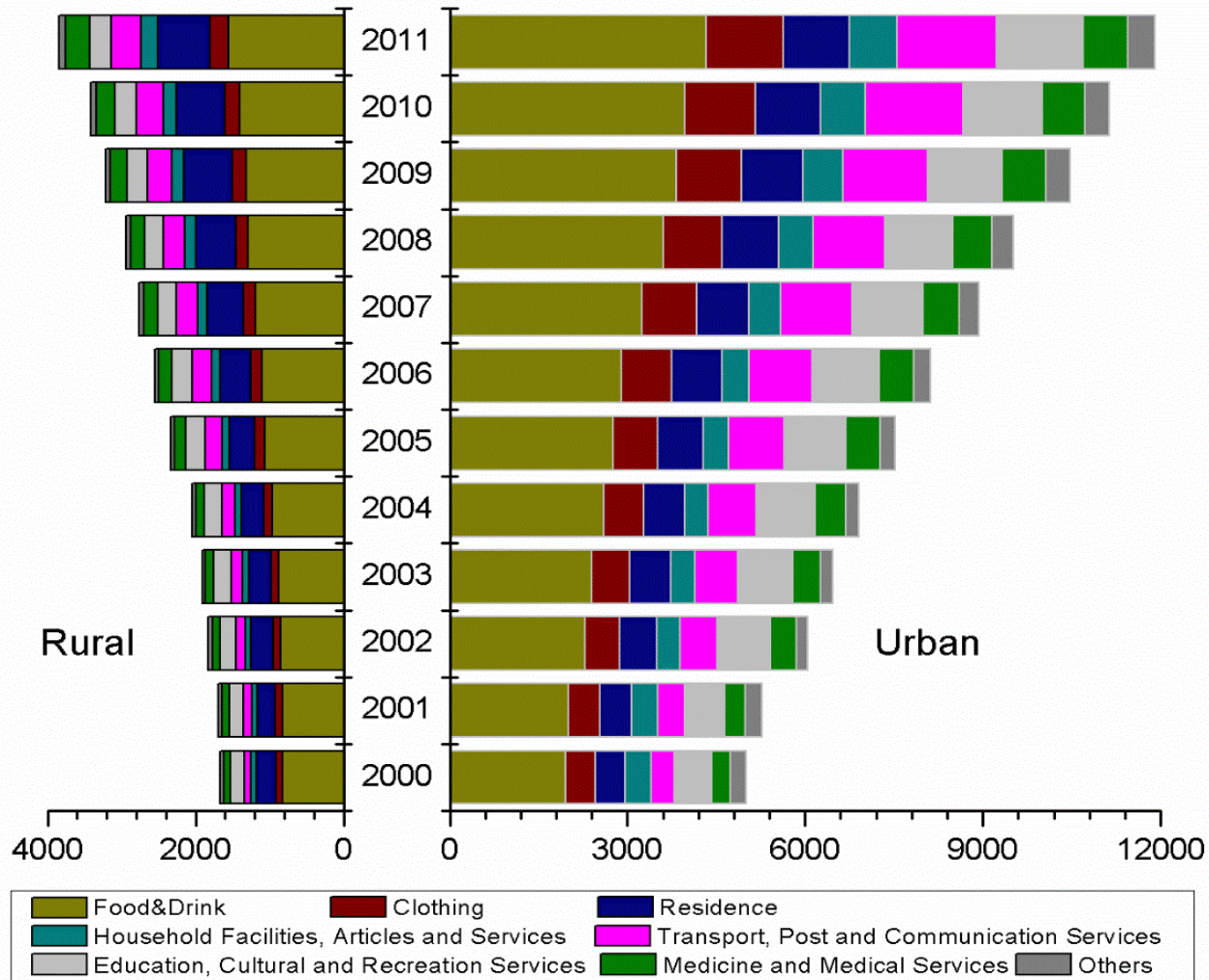
'China and Sustainable Consumption
Research'

Sustainable Consumption Research and China

- China is expected to show spectacular growth rates in domestic consumption over the next decades →
- Long term climate targets will not be realized without confronting the climate impact of consumption
- Sustainable Consumption Research in China still has to gain a visible and specific 'profile' through →
 - Cultural framing of sustainable consumption
 - Role of citizens – consumers and civil society
 - Governance strategy at different levels (city, intern.)

SCP in China

Annual consumption expenditures per capita (Yuan)



Source: Wenling Liu et al. (forthcoming)



- The networks of researchers engaged in SCP research related to China (Rosanne Verbree) were

- Scanned with specific search-methodologies applied to the internet
- For 'Sustainable consumption in general' and for 'Food consumption' [mobility, leisure and energy left out for reasons of time]



- Show a reasonable number of articles
- Show a mixed composition of authors (China, US, Europe mainly) when looking at affiliations and names
- Are not very different in their emphases when compared with international research



Sustainable consumption (general)

AN, D.	GUENTHER, M.	MOL, A. P.	WEI, R.
BARRETT, J.	HAN, J.	PAN, Y.	WIEDMANN, T.
BARUA, A.	HAO, Y.	PAN, Z.	WOETZEL, J.
BI, J.	HARRIS, P. G.	PETERS, G. P.	WONG, Y. H.
CALHOUN, C.	HUBACEK, K.	QI, Y.	WU, G.
CAO, S.	ISENSEE, A.	REINER, D. M.	WU, Y.P.
CARTER, N. T.	JIA, X.	REUSSWIG, F.	XIAO, G.
CHAIPOOPIRUTANA, S.	JU, M.	SAUNDERS, C.	YAM, R. C.
CHAN, R. Y. K.	KHOR, N.	SCHROEDER, P.	YANG, G.
CHEN, L.	KIM, J. O.	SHANG, Y.	YANG, J.
CHEN, X.	KNORRINGA, P.	SHI, Y.	YUAN, Z.
CHENG, W.	LAU, L. B. Y.	SHISHIME, T.	YANG, J. X.
CHOI, H.	LEHRACK, D.	SIU, Y. L.	ZHAN, L.
COMBS, H.	LEUNG, T. K. P.	SUN, T.	ZHANG, B.
DRIVER, T.	LI, X.L.	TANG, E. P.	ZHANG, T.
FENG, K.	LIANG, S.	WAN, G.	ZHANG, Y.
FUJITSUKA, T.	LIU, L. C.	WANG, C.	ZHANG, X.
GAO, L.	LIU, J.	WANG, J.	ZHAO, H.-H.
GAO, Q.	LIU, Q.	WANG, P.	ZHAO, W.
GE, J.	LIU, X.	WANG, R.	ZHU, B.
GÉRARD, C.	LIU, Z.	WANG, Y. Y.-P.	ZHU, X.-D.
GUAN, D.	MARTENS, S.	WANG, Z.	
GUARIN, A.	MATHEWS, C.	WEBER, C. L.	

Source: Rosanne Verbree, 2014

Food Consumption (case-study)

<p>ALLDRICK, A. BAI, J. BIAO, X. BOURNE, S. BRADLEY, F. BURNS, A. C. BU-ZHUO, P. CARACCILO, F. CHAIPOOPIRUTANA, S. CHAN, R. Y. CHAUMET, J.-M. CHEN, A. CHEN, J. CHEN, M. CHEN, S. CHEN, W. CHEN, Y. CHEN, X. CHENG, C. CHENG, L. CICIA, G. COMBS, H. CONNOLLY, A. DAVEY, G. DAVIS, J. DE ABREU, L. DEANS, K. DEL GIUDICE, T. DESEVEDAVY, F. DU, L.</p>	<p>EGELYNG, H. FABINYI, M. FAN, B. FAN, H. FAN, S. FONG, Q. FONSECA, M. FU, X. GAO, H. GAO, J. GARRETT, T. GENG, Y. GIORGI, L. GOMERSALL, K. GRUNERT, K. G. HALBERG, N. HILDEBRANDT, T. HO, P. HO, S. C. HOLST, R. HU, D. HUANG, G. HUANG, J. HUANG, W. HUI, Q. Y. HUI, X. JIA, H. JIANG, B. JUN, H. JUSSAUME R.A, JR.</p>	<p>KEQIANG, Z. KIM, R. B. KLEDAL, P. R. KLEIN, J. KNIGHT, J. KRYSTALLIS, A. LANG, G. LAU, L. B. LEI, P. LI, P. J. LI, T.-Y. LI, Y. LIAO, C. LIN, L. LIU, J. LIU, L. LIU, R. LIN, X. LIU, Y. LOBO, A. LONE, T. LÜ, L. MA, C. MA, S. MARCHESINI, S. MASCITELLI, B. MCCLUSKEY, J. J. MCLOUGHLIN, D. MERRIFIELD, C. MIAO, B.</p>	<p>MICU, A. OLYNK, N. J. ORTEGA, D. L. PAGNATTARO, M. A. PAULL, J. PEI, X. PEIRCE, E. PERREA, T. PIENIAK, Z. PRÄNDL-ZIKA, V. PRAY, C. QI, Y. QI, X. QIAN, Y. QIAO, J. QIAO, Y. QIN, J. QIU, H. REARDON, T. ROBERTS, R. ROZELLE, S. RUAN, Y. RUNDLE-THIELE, S. R. SANDERS, R. SAVENIJE, H. H. G. SCHUMILAS, T. SCOTT, S. SHELMAN, M. SHEN, J. SHEN, L. SHEN, X.</p>	<p>SHENG, J. SHI, Y. SI, Z. SIRIEIX, L. STERNFELD, E. SØRENSEN, B. T. SULITANG, T. TANDON, A. TANG, F. F. TAYLOR, D. A. THIERS, P. THØGERSEN, J. TIAN, X. TIMMER, P. TINGYOU, L. TURNER, J. L. VEECK, A. VEECK, G. VERBEKE, W. VERMEER, E. B. WAHL, T. I. WANG, H. WANG, H. H. WANG, J. WANG, M. Y. WANG, R. WANG, S. WANG, T. WANG, X. WANG, Y.-H. WEN, T.</p>	<p>WU, L. WU, S. XIANG, L. XIANG, H. XIANJUN, L. XIAORONG, W. XIE, B. XILIU, J. XING, F. XU, L. XU, P. YANG, H. YANG, J. YANG, R. YANG, W. YAO, L. YI, Q. YIN, S. YU, H. YU, M. YU, X. YUNGUAN, X. ZENG, L. ZENG, Y. ZHANG, X. ZHAO, R. ZHAO, Y. ZHOU, D. ZHOU, Y. ZHU, B. ZHU, Q.</p>
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Source: Rosanne Verbree, 2014



Ad 2: the 'practice approach' and its relevance to research on sustainable consumption

- Sociology of Consumption as developed by Alan Warde and others has strong reliance on Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens in particular = Practice Theorists
- Practice theories are being applied to Sustainable Consumption by a fast growing number of scholars in social sciences

Practice Theory: some authors

General sociology

- Anthony Giddens
- Pierre Bourdieu
- Theodore Schatzki
- Andreas Reckwitz
- Robert Schmidt
- Elizabeth Shove
- Bruno Latour
- Randall Collins (GS)

Sociology of consumption

- Alan Warde; Frank Trentman;
- Rick Wilk; Hal Wilhite; Stuart Barr
- Dale Southerton ; Gordon Walker; SPRG-network UK; Lenneke Kuijer;
- Nicky Gregson; Mika Pantzar
- Mika Jalinien; Bente Halkier;
- Kris van Koppen; Lydia Martens;
- Kirsten Gram-Hanssen; Inge Ropke
- Karl-Werner Brand ; Julia Guivante
- Roberta Sassatelli; David Hess
- Peter Oosterveer; Bas van Vliet;
- Monica Truner; Tom Hargreaves;

- Why is it needed in the first place?
- What does it look like as a framework for research
- Is it applicable to China as well?

Individualist paradigm

- **Individuals as key actors**
- **Attitude and behavioral change decisive for social innovation and change**
- **The 'micro' /individual as intervention level**
- **End-Users/ Consumers determine the fate of green products and ideas**
- **Social (soft) instruments targeting citizen-consumers**

Structuralist paradigm

- **Producers/states as key actors**
- **Technological innovation within production sphere decisive for social change**
- **The 'macro' /system as intervention level**
- **Behaviour of End-Users/ Consumers determined by system dynamics**
- **Direct regulation targeting producers of products and services**

Individualist paradigm

- **Neglect of influence of context on consumption behaviour**
- **Emphasis on cognitive awareness and rational choice**
- **'ABC-models' do not deliver in predicting behaviours**
- **Too 'voluntaristic'**

Structuralist paradigm

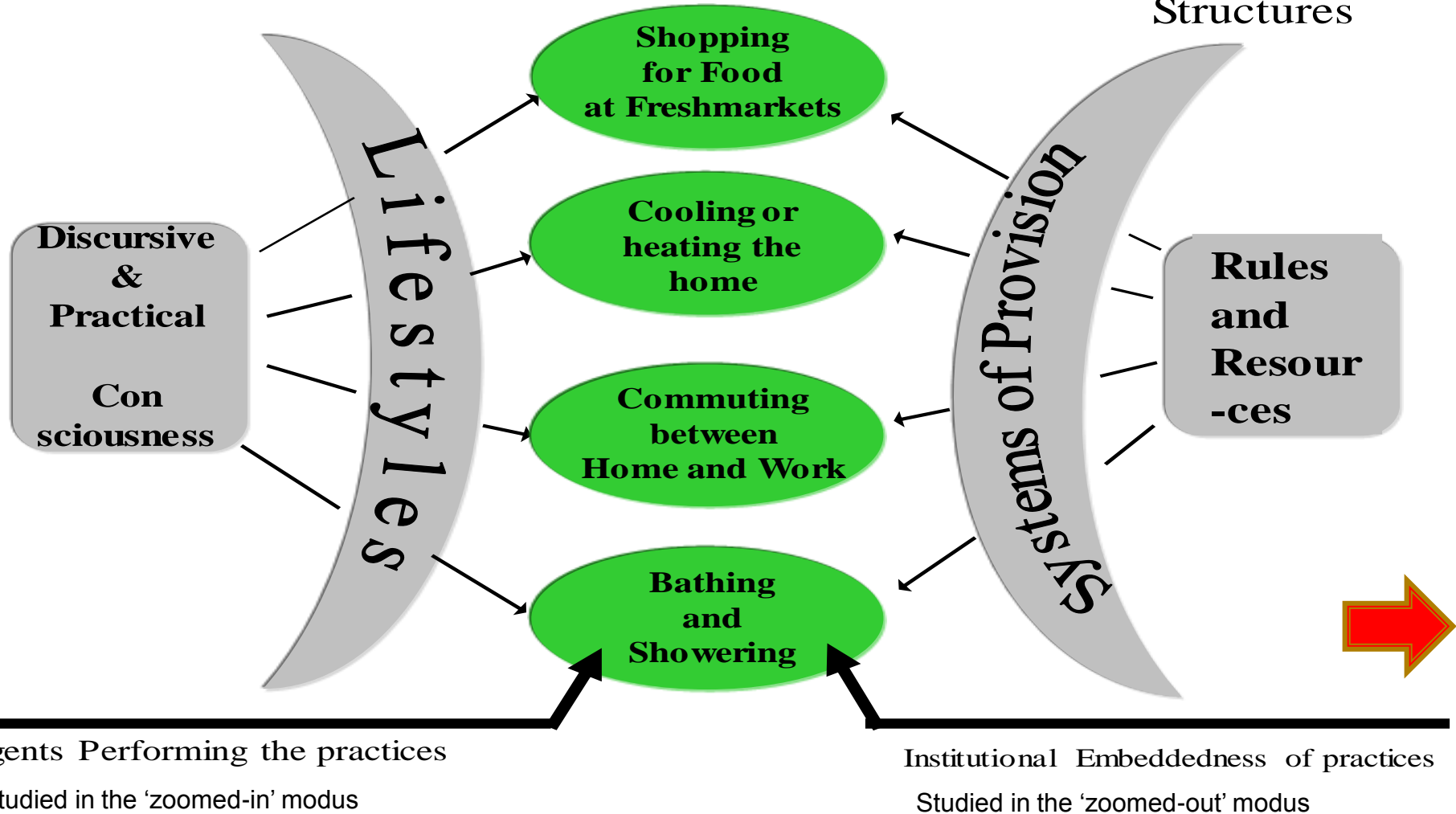
- **Environmental change organized behind the back of citizen-consumers**
- **Engineering approach which does not fit the lifeworld**
- **Isolated technical solutions do not work**
- **Too 'deterministic'**

CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR RESEARCH ON SOCIAL PRACTICES

Individuals

Social Practices

Systems and Structures



Characteristics of Practices

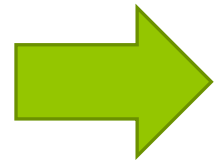
(def.) Shared ways of 'doings and sayings'

- Highly routinized and taken for granted
- Performed by members/participants who possess knowledge and skills which are relevant to the practice
- 'Governed' by Teleo-Affective Structures (TAS)
- Material elements/components are (co) constitutive parts of practices
- Practices are situated in time-space

China Scorai Network to develop Chinese version of this table

FOOD	LEISURE AND TOURISM	DWELLING THE HOUSE	BEING MOBILE; TRAVELING	CLOTHING & PERS. CARE	HOBBY AND SPORTS
DINING OUT	NEW-YEAR HOLIDAY	GARDENING	BUSINESS TRAVEL	SHOPPING FOR CLOTH	DANCING
SHOPPING FOR FOOD	CITY TRIPS	REDECORATING KITCHEN/ BATHROOM	CITY BIKING	JACUZZING/ FITNESS	PLAYING ...BALL
COOKING FOR FRIENDS	COSTAS/BEACH HOLIDAYS	INDOOR CLIMATE CONTROLL	COMMUTING	SHOWERING	HORSE RIDING
FOOD ON THE MOVE	LEISURE PARKS	MOVING HOUSE	SLOW TRAVEL	LAUNDRING	DOGS AND PETS
EATING IN THE CANTEEN	VISITING GAME PARKS	MANAGING THE SMART ENERGY SYSTEMS	BUYING A CAR	SEWING AND MENDING	RUNNING/BIKING
KITCHEN-GARDENING	OUTDOOR RECREATION	REFURNISHING THE HOUSE	LEISURE TRAVEL	COLLECTING OLD CLOTH	DYO

Ad 3. Analyzing sustainability transitions in (networks of) practices




two modalities of studying changes in practices:

- 1. strategic action/ performance of the practice
- 2. institutional analysis/practice as embedded entity
- Davide Nicolini: ZOOMING IN and ZOOMING OUT as a way to combine 1 and 2 in one research design

zoomed-in modus; situated practices and their ways of being performed

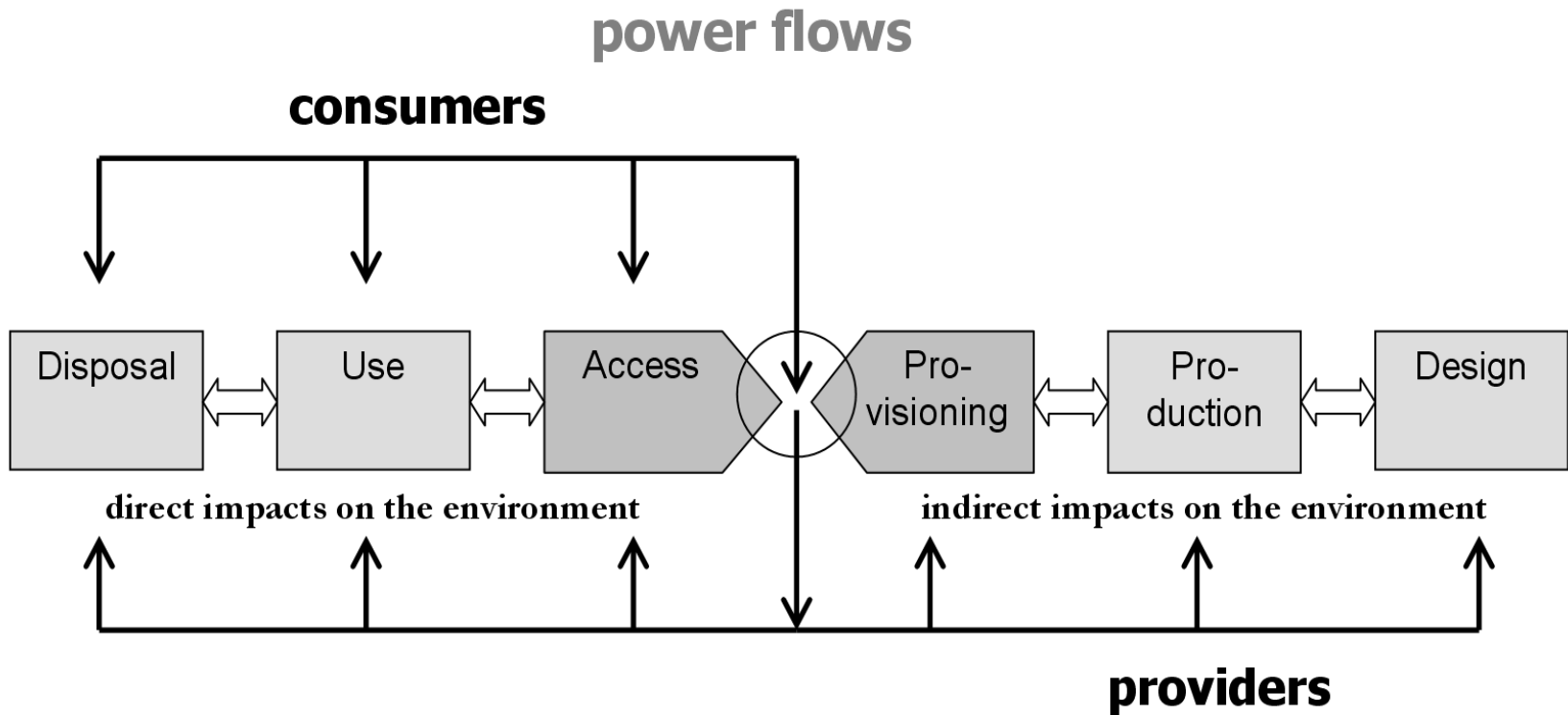
- New practices emerging (waste separation at source) and old practices 'fading away' (biking in Beijing)
- Practices being transformed by the up-take of new technologies, information, ideas (bathing becomes showering in the UK)
- Practices being transformed/reconfigured by new ways of performing the practice (skilled gamers inventing ever more complex games)
- Etc.

zoomed-out modus; practices embedded in wider networks or chains

- How many; how prominent; with what geographical scope; which rhythms and locales
- Positioning in the network/chains (up-stream; down-stream etc.) 
- Managed relationships with other practices
 - ❖ strong – weak relations
 - ❖ synergy or competition
 - ❖ coupling and de-coupling
- Groups of switchers/coders involved in practice making-breaking-connecting



Positioning Practices in Chains



Using Practice approach for SCP-research in China

- Identifying high-impact (LCA/CO2) practices of consumption in distinct domains of everyday life
- Getting to know their dynamics of reproduction and change: to what extent are citizens/consumers co-responsible and given the power to help change the practices
- Looking for ways to make them more sustainable by
 - Doing away with them
 - Developing competing alternatives
 - Substituting key elements (objects, values, knowledges)
 - Reconfiguring the relationships with other practices
- Find ways to attract (new) members to sustainable practices

Food

- LCA for relevant practices
- Trends, best practices, existing policies
- Feasible (policy) options for ecological modernization of the practices via:
- Improved performance and/ or de- and re-linking with other practices

Domestic Energy uses

- LCA for relevant practices
- Trends, best practices, existing policies
- Feasible (policy) options for ecological modernization of the practices via:
- Improved performance and/ or de- and re-linking with other practices

Urban mobility

- LCA for relevant practices
- Trends, best practices, existing policies
- Feasible (policy) options for ecological modernization of the practices via:
- Improved performance and/ or de- and re-linking with other practices

ETC.



one examples from ENP-
research: (discussed later)

having lunch in a canteen
(and how to connect this to climate change)

Thank you for participating
with me in this practice

