How material and social contexts shape everyday food practices in France: a focus on sustainability issues.

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Abstract

This paper aims at showing how material infrastructures, as well as constraints and resources–social, economic, material and temporal–combine and shape everyday food practices and renders them more or less compatible with sustainability. We use an ethnographic study conducted in France, based on in-depth and repeated interviews with around 30 "ordinary" consumers aged between 30 and 87 years, to identify three ideal-typical logics of everyday food practices, each coherently linking the structure of supply, provisioning, and cooking practices. Through this typology, we show that logics of provisioning are not reducible to supply infrastructures–although they frame the available products–but also rely on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the households. These logics are presented in section one, while section two discusses the structuring role of material equipment in everyday sustainable food activities.

Keywords

Environmental concerns, food consumption, France, practice theory, sustainability, typology

Introduction

If the focus on everyday life to tackle processes of social change is quite recent (Pink, 2012), the "practise turn" in sociological theory (Schatzki et al., 2001) entailed new approaches in the analysis of daily consumption (Warde, 2005). Among them, food practices are currently scrutinized, as examples of how people integrate (or not) public or private recommendations in their mundane activities. This applies to various norms and activities, such as the diffusion of nutritional prescriptions among Danish women (Halkier, 2009), the adoption of new cooking appliances (Truninger, 2011) or the management of food waste (Evans, 2011). This theoretical framework found a relevant application in the field of sustainability, since it provided new insights into the understanding of consumption and new ways of thinking about political intervention (Evans et al. 2012). Generally speaking, practice theory focuses on the analysis of social practices, understood as a nexus of "doings" and "sayings" holding together through collective understandings, procedures and engagements (Warde, 2005: 134). If practice theory is a pertinent approach to the study of everyday life since it allows a focus on habits and routines (Warde and Southerton, 2012), the more material dimensions of the practices often remain out of scope. For instance, the construction of "cooking styles" by Halkier (2009) relies on cooking skills, shopping practices and commitment to cooking, but eludes the variability in access to different shopping places, according to where people live. Drawing on a more "standard" sociological approach with references to cultural sociology, Johnston et al. (2012) show, however, the influence of food supply in the definition of eating styles. Moreover, to study the implementation of sustainable[1] food practices, we need to elucidate both the sensitivity of households to sustainability and the practical "do-abilities" (Wheeler, 2012) of the associated activities.

We suggest here to insist on the social context of food practices, in two complementary ways. First, we highlight the importance of supply structure to determine the range of available shopping, and we show how food provisioning organises within this range. As far as sustainable practices are concerned, the availability of "green" products in the shops, the opportunity to recourse to short supply circuits, are not always evenly distributed among all geographic places, notably according to the size of the cities people live in; besides, public collective infrastructures, such as selective sorting or composting equipment, are restricted to some areas. The location people live in, whereas in town centre or at the periphery, also has a strong impact on the available space available in the home, which can in turn play a role on the domestic equipment, on the storage capacity of food as well as of waste to be disposed of. Second, the social context of the household structure, its constraints and resources, also intervene to shape how people can, or not, take hold of the opportunities offered by the collective infrastructures.

The article aims at showing how material infrastructures, as well as constraints and resources–social, economic, material and temporal–combine and shape everyday food practices and render them more or less compatible with sustainability. We use an ethnographic study conducted in France, based on in-depth and repeated interviews with around 30 men and women, aged between 30 and 87 years. In order to avoid over-reporting, participants were told the study dealt with ordinary food consumption practices in general–how they went shopping, stored food, prepared meals, ate, used leftovers, did the washing up, with no specific mention of sustainability issues. Each of them was interviewed from two to four times. As Evans (2012) underlined, the home is the most appropriate place to study everyday consumption, yet interviews are not sufficient to tackle both the "doings" and the "sayings" of consumers. Taking pictures of the various domestic spaces relating to food practices–rooms (kitchen, dining room, living room) and storage places (cupboards, fridges, freezers, but also closets, sculleries and garages) was used as a complementary investigation device: inventories of food products and equipment were the occasion to shed light on discrepancies between reported and effective practices (notably concerning the use of convenience foods). Committed or militant consumers, who have been well identified in recent sociological literature (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2009; Halkier and Holm, 2008; Hughner et al., 2007; Micheletti and Stolle, 2012), were voluntarily excluded. We focused on "ordinary" consumers, who were recruited by personal contacts and snowballing on a residential basis, in two specific locations: an apartment building in a northern district of Paris, and a neighbourhood in a small town in the North of France. Although the sample is not representative, both districts are socially mixed, so the age of the participants, their level of income and the household composition greatly vary. Each fieldwork was conducted in a limited area to enable comparisons between households with similar food provisioning options, and similar recycling collective equipment. The Parisian fieldwork features a wide range of shopping locations within walking distance, from hard discount to high quality supermarkets, frozen food stores, convenience stores, bakeries, a large farmer's market running twice a week, etc. The provincial neighbourhood is characterized by far less options accessible by foot, and the small nearby farmer's market operates once a week. By comparing those two locations where shopping supply is contrasted, we show how the consumption logics are framed by supply, and how this framing does not account for the whole explanation of food practices.

Thus, different logics can be identified–logic referring here to a coherent system of both practices and representations, implemented by consumers in specific economic and social conditions–, characterized by similar everyday practices, and structured by similar kinds of resources, constraints and socio-cultural properties such as occupational status, cultural capital, family situation, etc. These logics will be presented in section one, while section two discusses the

structuring role of material equipment in everyday sustainable food activities. The conclusion aims at drawing more general findings about the analysis of everyday life.

1. Food practices framed by supply organization, cooking skills and household constraints and resources

We identified three ideal-typical logics of everyday food practices, each coherently linking the structure of supply, provisioning, and cooking practices. Through this typology, we will demonstrate that logics of provisioning are not reducible to supply infrastructures–although they frame the available products–but also rely on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the households.

Low cooking investment and short-range supply

The first logic mainly concerns one-person households and "empty nests" from middle and upper-lower classes. These consumers all live in the second location of our study, an outlying district of a French provincial town. They have limited financial resources; their food budget is scant, with substantial attention given to price per kilo and value for money. Infrastructures of provision are quite constrained by the retailing supply: the food shops within walking distance are few. Stock-ups at the nearby supermarket are done by car. A few supplementary shopping locations are used, mainly other supermarkets where specific products are routinely purchased, cheaper or considered of better quality. Among couples, men voluntarily do not get involved in shopping tasks, viewed as time-consuming chores. Likewise, their cooking skills and interests are very limited, which may be linked with the traditional division of domestic work among low-educated, working classes.

Food choices are highly routinized, and comprise very few processed and convenience foods. Likewise, frozen products are bought in limited quantities. It may be due to a lack of space–a small freezing compartment–or to a limited use of such products. Households have little time constraints, and for the oldest of them, have long-established food habits with low use of convenience foods. Noteworthy is the limited knowledge of sustainability labels: participants give very little attention to "ethical eating" (Johnston et al., 2012). Conversely, branded products are strongly valued and routinely favoured over entry-level products, cheaper but considered as of lower quality.

For instance, Roselyne[2] (60, divorced, two independent children, specialised helper in pre-school, province) does not cook very much for herself, but she insists on the fact that she values quality. Almost all her provisioning is done at the nearby supermarket. She rarely eats meat, but

when she does, she buys it at the meat department of the supermarket, and asks for qualitative choice cuts:

> I don't eat much. So I buy… I treat myself, I buy myself something nice… If I buy pork, I… I like eating filet, I won't go for… for something cheaper that I won't enjoy.

In this specific meat arbitration, labels are not mentioned. Quality assessment practices are based on the selection of the cut and on cost: the high price is interpreted as a guarantee of quality.

Thus, strategies for quality are routinely implemented within the supermarket. Arbitrations are made between branded and private labels, entry-level and quality products, fresh or not, etc. Thrift shopping involves food purchase arbitrations in which the avoidance of discount, short-dated products or private label brands is a source of self-esteem.

Moreover, maintaining a kitchen garden and buying fresh and local products through short food supply chains are common. Yet these eco-friendly practices are not related to environmental motivations by participants: they are incorporated in daily routines as cost-saving practices. This disconnection with environmental issues may be explained by the fact that short food supply chains involve shopping locations such as farmers' markets or local farms where the food products are not marketed as "green": since eco-friendly products are, in France, often far more expensive than conventional ones, "green" tends to be equated with "expensive". Hence, households with limited income in search for quality and good value for money may have sustainable food provisioning practices although they do not qualify them as such.

Meals are frugal; the cooking time is quite limited but homemade food prevails. Everyday routines shift to more elaborate meal preparations on special occasions, particularly when children come home for a meal or for holidays. Food waste is said to be scarce, and leftovers are easily re-used in usual ways. In addition, the fact that perishable food products are purchased in small quantities may be another reason of limited food waste. Louise (87, widow, eight children, former shorthand typist then housewife, province), who says she doesn't need "extraordinary" shopping, does not buy much fruit each week, and sometimes no fruit at all: some oranges and mandarins, two or three apples, sometimes one grapefruit and kiwis. She buys more whenever her children and grandchildren visit her. Likewise, she purchases few vegetables, because her daughter, whose husband grows a kitchen garden, often brings her the potatoes and cauliflowers she needs to make soups. When she does purchase vegetables, again she buys them by a specific amount: to make her soup, she needs three carrots, two or three turnips, leek, and one or two courgettes.

Furthermore, waste sorting is easily implemented in daily life. It is a habit, which is not questioned or associated with a political commitment.

Thus, this logic comprises limited environmental preoccupations but eco-friendly practices. Provisioning and cooking patterns are simple, routinized and therefore environmentally efficient, but there are little opportunities for innovations within mass-market products.

Mobilization of a diversified supply in order to fit the demands of culinary competence

The second logic of food consumption is characterized by diversified provisioning locations and frequent shopping, favouring fresh, quality products. Participants belong to the same age group and generation as those in the preceding logic, but they live in Paris and have more financial resources. The food budget is substantial: as expected among privileged households (Plessz and Gojard, 2013), fresh vegetables and refined products are favoured, while processed food products are few. Convenience products are reluctantly purchased and discredited (pre-packed salads are, for example, compared to tasteless paper). Frozen products, whose taste is described as fairly poor, are viewed as last minute stopgap solutions with practical benefits.

Roles and responsibilities in food activities within the couple are quite stabilised and clearly defined, more equally shared than in the previous logic, which concerns less educated couples. Men are significantly active in provisioning and cooking activities (Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny: 2011, Larmet, 2002; Szabo, 2012).

Homemade dishes are favored, even though everyday meals are simple and contrast with more elaborate dishes prepared for guests, whether children and their partners, friends and neighbors, or acquaintances. Culinary sociability is often quite developed, based on exchanges of shopping places to recommend, recipes, techniques, and mutual invitations.

Thus, provisioning is multimodal, and substantial time is allocated to this activity. The frequency of shopping sequences and the extended and diversified area of provisioning are part of a thoughtful strategy to access quality products at good prices, in the vicinity and above. Participants go shopping at several supermarkets, and purchase different products according to the price and quality differences. Regular and frequent shopping sequences to the local market lead to in-depth knowledge of stalls and storekeepers, sometimes known for decades. Thus, the careful selection of the provisioning places suggests distinctive practices (Bourdieu, 1979). Paradoxically, participants underline their concern for good value for money and their sensible purchasing decisions; they insist on their reasonable habits, arguing that they would not purchase overpriced products. Yet their provisioning practices may be ostentatious, especially when practitioners have had ascending social trajectories. Yves (69, married, two independent children, former vice-president of an advertisement agency, Paris), who did not graduate from baccalaureate but "got by fine" with a successful career in advertisement, is "passionate" about food. He owns a whole shelf of cooking

books, follows several cooking websites, and exchanges recipes with his friends. Before his wife got cancer, they would have guests for a meal two to three times a month. He pays little attention to prices, and has no idea about his weekly food budget. He goes to the supermarket as rarely as possible; every Saturday morning he drives to a far-away fishmonger's shop and sometimes goes through Paris to buy spices in "a tiny store packed with exoticism".

Moreover, routinization as a time-saving device and as a relief from reflexivity (Halkier, 2009) relies on the use of brands and quality labels as a sign of gustative quality and/or safety. For instance, quality labels are frequently used for poultry and eggs, "free-range" more often than "organic". Labels of origin are used for poultry and meat (Bresse chickens, Chalosse beef), smoked salmon (from Scotland or Norway, equalling to different levels of quality). The variety of shopping places and the financial resources allow shopping practices more varied than in the preceding logic. Quality is referred to specific food shops, whereas in the former logic quality was constructed within the supermarket. A greater implication of men in food practices also contributes to this wider diversity.

The purchase of organic products[3] is quite limited but regular among privileged consumers. Their high prices are mentioned as a major barrier, but do not prevent purchases. The private benefits allocated to organic foodstuff, in terms of health and taste, are more decisive for consumers than public benefits–environmental benefits, animal welfare, etc. (Lamine, 2008).

Notwithstanding, participants express "green goodwill" and voluntarily implement specific green provisioning practices. However, this "green goodwill" is both limited and reflexive: it involves specific products only, and it implies practical derogations to one's own "rules" regarding environmentally friendly consumption. For instance, fair-trade products may be tried and viewed as a source of personal gratification, in that the label, conversely to the organic label, is perceived as "ethical" in a broad sense (Johnston et al., 2012). Pierrette (65, married, two independent children, former primary school teacher, Paris) expresses the tension between altruistic motives and pragmatic considerations about quality and taste:

> So several times, we decided to do fair-trade purchases, it is a right thing to… and it gives you good conscience, sometimes, to buy these products, but every time we've been disappointed! I mean, really. The chocolate is not good, we think! Actually we are a bit hard to please for chocolate. The coffee was not great… The tea, not good at all… Anyway, every time we tried… So, we gave up.

This example suggests that privileged ageing consumers are ready to incorporate ethical concerns to their consumption routines as long as the gustative quality of the ethically-labeled product is equivalent to the conventional one. This concern for taste may explain why purchasing decisions more often take into account environmental matters when dealing with household

products than with foodstuffs. Indeed, these consumers more frequently choose green washing liquids and washing powder. But again, the environmental benefit is not sufficient to change a routine if the quality of product turns out to be poor. Soap nuts or green detergents may be tried, but if found inefficient, long-established routines are resumed. Yet privileged ageing consumers do have sustainable practices that are routinized in everyday life, such as waste sorting, use of as little detergent as possible, or recourse to traditional household cleaners such as spirit vinegar and baking soda, whose cheapness and efficiency are often underlined. Paradoxically, the routinized use of green products is not incompatible with the also routinized use of conventional products, even negatively characterized as “chemical” or “toxic”.

Many participants point out their inconsistent attitudes, combining efforts for greener practices (for instance, making their own compost), and at the same time using harmful products and having consumption practices that clearly come into conflict with environmental concerns (letting the tap water run while doing the dishes, for example). As Wheeler (2012: 137) suggested, incoherent performances should be linked to practical “do-abilities” in daily life, rather than to a lack of information or motivation.

Family constraints are limited, and everyday routines are characterized by few unexpected events. The departure of the children from the parental home is associated with reduced amounts of food purchased, better management and less food waste. Consumers follow mental landmarks to overtake the use-by date, and allow themselves an overrun, which varies in time according to the estimated sanitary risk. The period of extension differs from one product to another, and from one individual to the other. Tolerance is high for long-life products such as sugar or flour, whereas meat, deli or eggs are more cautiously treated and quickly consumed. The use-by date is checked both at purchase time and later at home; perishable products are well-identified and managed. Moreover, the amount bought and prepared is well adjusted; freezing is used to extend the lifespan of the produce; leftovers are used up in rather elaborate and repeated ways, but also in renewed dishes, as in the preceding logic. Cooking skills also explain limited food waste: they facilitate the use of potential wasted food products, and enable several meals with one ingredient, thus avoiding the lassitude of having the same dish several times in a short lapse of time.

How constraints and resources affect the link between supply and cooking practices

Significantly, this third logic is not related to a specific kind of commercial supply, since it applies to both locations of the fieldwork. Thus, although supply may have a structuring effect on provisioning practices, as shown by the two preceding logics, it is not sufficient to fully explain them.

The third logic of food practices mainly involves middle-class active couples with children, dealing with strong temporal, financial and familial constraints. As a consequence of the limited time devoted to shopping and cooking, provisioning habits rely on stock-ups at the supermarket, done by car around once a week, usually with partners and children. They are completed with purchases at closer supermarkets, the farmer's market or convenience food stores (butcher's shop, deli) for better quality products, such as fresh vegetables, meat or fish. Provisioning to the nearby market is less regular, and purchases to local producers are far fewer than in logics one and two. Thus, the food budget is substantial and family-oriented. Provisioning activities are mostly endorsed by the mothers, while men tend to have responsibility of specific food products, such as bread or meat.

Nutritional prescriptions are given a high level of attention, and efforts are made to favour fresh products and "homemade" food, which correspond to norms of "proper food" (Moisio et al., 2004). Sodas and industrialized foodstuff, and more broadly sugar, fat, additives and conservatives are avoided to some extent. Nutritional preoccupations outweigh environmental ones, especially when children are very young, mothers aspiring to provide them healthy eating habits (Carrigan et al., 2006).

Purchasing decisions are influenced both by the price and preference of family members for specific products and brands; similar to what Hamilton (2012: 83) reported on clothing among low-income families, compliance to children's favourites is seen as part of "good motherhood". Indeed, mothers, who play a central role in food preparation, face strong family constraints, notably as the tastes and needs of all family members have to be taken into account in the provisioning choices as an expression of family care (DeVault, 1991; Miller, 1998).

Quality and origin labels are granted far less attention than in logic two. Generally, organic purchases appear as an additional constraint in an already strongly constrained mode of food shopping. Participants tend to point out the fact that the purchase of *fresh* products is not even routinized, in spite of the strong adherence to nutritional prescriptions, and the association made between fresh vegetables and healthy, "proper" cooking (Plessz and Gojard, 2014):

> Well, that's something that really doesn't matter to me. I think that buying fresh products is already… a big gesture *(she laughs)*. (Corinne, 45, divorced, in couple, two children aged 8 and 13, linguistics researcher, Paris)

In this context, "local" products, widely defined as such, appear as a more legitimate and responsible attribute than organic, and an alternative to this label, often viewed as untrustworthy

and commercial. Likewise, seasonality and origin are valued for fruits and vegetables both for taste and health reasons, rather than environmental ones.

Brands, on the contrary, are strongly valued and relied on, although the choices appear as less stabilized than in logics one and two, with experimentations and shifts from one brand to another, or to a quality label. Selected brands may either be the object of a family consensus, or a thoughtful attention to one member of the family. Convenience foods are far less discredited than in logic one and two, especially as pre-packaged salads or frozen vegetables, processed or not, may be a way of increasing vegetable consumption. Their timesaving and practical benefits are valued; their purchase may also be a way of dealing with lack of culinary skills. For instance, Valérie (42, divorced and remarried, two children aged 10 and 20, part-time employee in a home care association and bar manager, Paris) only buys fresh potatoes and chicory: all the other purchased vegetables are frozen, non-processed but pre-sliced, as she does not know “what to remove and peal”. However, a sense of guilt (Thompson, 1996) may arise from a comparison with alternative and more legitimate–but tedious–ways of doing.

As far as meal preparation is concerned, everyday meals are simple and children-oriented, with the same “successful” recipes being repeated overtime. Indeed, improvising or trying new ones are risky, and may lead to food waste. Time preparation is limited, and feeling “pressed for time” (Southerton and Tomlinson, 2005) is recurrently mentioned as a source of discrepancy between legitimate and “proper” food practices, and effective ones. As underlined above, rewarding efforts are associated to homemade meals.

Thus, nutritional and environmental prescriptions are far less easily coordinated in food provisioning and cooking than in logic two. Other daily practices convey green goodwill in a more profitable way than food purchases, such as water consumption, food waste or waste sorting. Using a trickle of water when doing the dishes, teaching children to cut the water in the shower when soaping, and not spending too much time showering, appear to participants as highly legitimate everyday practices, both thrifty and eco-friendly, learnt during their own childhood.

Strategies to limit food waste are different from those implemented in logics one and two. Leftovers are re-used in less elaborate and more flexible ways, and are more often “forgotten” in the fridge. The amounts to prepare are not always well-managed, with doubts about the “right” quantity to cook. Last-minute changes in planned patterns are a source of mismatch between what is purchased, cooked and consumed (Evans, 2011). Thus, constraints of family coordination derive from the children’s unpredictable tastes and schedules, but also from the tensions between concerns for food waste and for food safety (Watson and Meah, 2013), particularly vivid in households with young children. Conjugal coordination may also be another source of food waste, especially when

both partners are involved in shopping. Tensions may arise from differentiated opinions on what and how much to buy, on the disposal of leftovers, or on the handling of use-by dates.

Green goodwill is more explicitly voiced than in logic one; as in logic two, it is expressed in the choices of household products rather than in food. Basic but efficient products are favoured, such as spirit vinegar, bleach, water and soap, and underline a concern for simplified housework. Personal experience and "tricks" inherited from one's parents are mobilized to implement an everyday economy of simplicity. The purchase of various and elaborate cleaning products and wipes tends to be reduced, in favour of eco-friendly multi-use products, which are also cheaper.

This logic of food practices is therefore characterized by limited environmental preoccupations and limited eco-friendly food practices, although inherited thrifty everyday habits are actually sustainable, from leftovers disposal to energy consumption. At the same time, practical matters are decisive in the arbitrations resulting from conflicting concerns, as suggests the recurring difference made between one's parents way of doing the dishes–using basins–and one's own habit, considered as environmentally not friendly but far cleaner, of letting the water pour, which Corinne (45, divorced, in couple, two children aged 8 and 13, linguistics researcher, Paris) calls "an ecological aberration".

Thus, the typology underlines that food habits cannot be isolated from their material and social context: the first two logics differ mainly by the location, which implies different food supply organizations, and by the socioeconomic properties of the households, as those who live in Paris have higher incomes and diplomas. Supply is a crucial element here: people with high incomes and diplomas living in the provincial town could not adopt the provisioning and cooking styles displayed in Parisian logic two. Although the snowballing method led to rather homogenous groups of interviewees in each fieldwork site, the locations themselves were purposively chosen as socially mixed and we did not identify "prototypical eating styles" in the interviews, as did Johnston et al. (2012). The third logic differs from the first two, since it applies mainly to households with working parents and children, whose time constraints structure daily timetables (Southerton, 2006): homemade cooking requires time availabilities and is favoured by financial constraints; processed products, which are both fast to serve and storable, are a way of handling unexpected changes in routines and time constraints. In this perspective, standards and food practices perceived as "proper" should be analysed with regard to everyday realities of what is pragmatically doable (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014).

Another result of this study is the disconnection operated by French households between activities that are compatible with sustainable preoccupations and such preoccupations: among

these "ordinary", non-committed consumers, environmental reasons are almost always overcome by others linked with food taste, money-saving, habits taken during childhood, etc. (see also Dubuisson-Quellier and Gojard, 2014). It becomes impossible then to describe them as sustainable practices: although they do not contradict sustainable objectives, they are not connected with the corresponding "sayings". From here, we depart from an analysis in terms of practices to adopt an approach in terms of activities, in order to emphasize the practical dimensions of the "doings", whatever the reasons why people adopt or maintain these sustainable activities.

2. Discussion

In this second section, we rely on the typology to focus on the structuring role of material equipment in the sustainable food activities of everyday life. By material equipment, we refer to the commercial environment, to the public devices aiming to facilitate shifts to more sustainable habits–recycling and compost bins, glass containers, etc.–and finally to the domestic sphere itself. At these three levels, material equipment varies in use and volume from one location to the other, and among participants. According to the social context, it may be a resource or a constraint, facilitating or conversely hindering the conversion to more sustainable food activities at all stages, from provisioning to waste sorting and composting. In addition, we point out that the way participants invest the existing material equipment is linked to their social background.

Provisioning

As it was showed in the first section, supply has an influence on shopping habits. More specifically, sustainable provisioning may be all the more routinized as it is simple to adopt and maintain in daily life. Thus, in logic one, food supply is far more limited than in logic two, which explains that "ethical food" is mostly reachable in supermarkets through labelled produce, although a nearby farmer's market runs every Wednesday morning. However, alternative provisioning is implemented in so far as it is easily integrated into routines, and facilitated by the proximity to rural areas. For instance, Renée (73, married, two independent children, former housekeeper then child-minder, province) and her husband drive once a month to a farm a dozen kilometres away to buy eggs, and sometimes in addition, rabbit, poultry or fresh vegetables and fruit. They purchase at least seven trays of 30 eggs, each costing five euros 50, for themselves but also for their neighbours and relatives who pre-pay them. Here too, good value for money is the main attribute granted to this specific source of provisioning.

The second logic, characterized by a wide range of provisioning locations, comprises routinized sustainable ways of food supplying, but these alternative consumption activities are not necessarily committed or political; they are a response to a search for convenience and good value for money, rather than to social and environmental motivations. Financial and time resources, concern for gustative quality and mobility during vacation time favour the purchases of local foods. Specialized food stores and local producers are therefore easily reached. As for the third logic, alternative supply options are not mobilized due to time constraints. The participants living in Paris make a restricted use of the available provisioning resources. Supply is therefore an example of a collective infrastructure that is not used in the same way by all consumers, just like waste sorting and composting equipment.

Storing

Domestic equipment, and notably spatial resources and constraints, must be taken into account when analysing everyday food practices and sustainability issues: they may facilitate strategies aiming at limiting food waste (by freezing surplus, leftovers or products with an imminent sell-by date); or conversely they may lead to mismanagement of the stock and waste, by facilitating storage of excessive quantities. As expected, Parisians have small storage spaces available, mainly located in the kitchen and nearby (corridors, closets), whereas the vast majority of participants from the provincial town live in houses and benefit from additional storage places. Larger kitchens may count more numerous cupboards; garages, basements or sculleries may also be convenient places to store voluminous freezers or food reserves.

Freezers are today commonly used as “a device of convenience” (Shove and Southerton, 2000: 314), yet freezing is not as routinely executed in logic three as it is in logic one and two. It may be linked to a sense of incompetence, a lack of appropriate equipment–plastic boxes, labels–or even a lack of available space, when the freezer is already full. Moreover, in logic one, the short supply range may explain the extensive use of the freezers, and the recurring possessions of two of them–one in the kitchen, and the second one in another room, as a long-term storage place, next to water bottles, wine, and food reserves. Finally, self-consumption may render freezing home-grown vegetables necessary to avoid wastage.

Gardening

Kitchen gardening relies here on domestic equipment only[4]. Many participants living in the periphery have access to fresh vegetables through a relative who have a kitchen garden, or have one of their own. Self-consumption was also identified in logic two, among Parisians, but is not

comparable. Due to lack of space, potted herb plants and fruit are grown. These activities are a source of self-gratification and, just as underlined in section one about cooking practices, they may have an ostentatious dimension. For instance, Bernard (65, married, one independent child, former chemist in a pharmaceutical company, Paris) and his wife are proud to grow on the balcony raspberries, strawberries, currants, and what they call "real tomatoes"–not cherry tomatoes. He explains their granddaughter is "completely enraptured" by their taste, far superior to that of "greenhouse tomatoes". Environmentally concerned, Bernard uses "a little bit" of fertilizer, no pesticides and regularly renews the soil. These activities, which give them "crazy work", are strongly invested and rewarding, although the production in itself is quite limited.

Waste sorting

In both locations, the public facilities set up by municipal services also play a decisive part in the shifts in domestic routines, by providing the material resources that enable sustainable tasks to integrate everyday housework. Thus, the glass containers and recycling bins supplied in both locations may well also explain that supplementary eco-friendly tasks, such as recycling, are not perceived as additional constraints. In the three logics, virtually all participants, whatever is their level of income and education, report waste sorting. Many of them relied on the leaflets and posters provided as a source of information explaining the colour codes. Often described as "automatic" and long-established, recycling tasks–although more recent than traditional housework–have been incorporated into domestic routines, and are viewed as highly legitimate. In logic three, women appear as more engaged; they tend to initiate and supervise it more often, especially in households with children (Oates and McDonald, 2006: 427). They answer their children's questions, repeat instructions, and re-sort after them as well as their partners, who often turn out less prone to regular waste sorting. Although waste sorting is done out of habit, it is related to environmental preoccupations, and gives a sense of satisfaction and of duty done. Recycling is often given a playful dimension: bringing glass to the container is, for example, turned into a family walk, children enjoying the noise of broken glass. Children may also play a role in domestic recycling, bringing home new knowledge and skills from school. Shared concerns and collective participation contribute to the efficiency of sorting:

> There were many things I actually didn't know. Now, finally, everyone has understood and it works pretty well. It's no laughing matter. Now, everyone now does sorting, and rather well. For instance, at first the kids didn't know if the yogurt pot went to the grey bin or if it went to the yellow bin. Now it's all clear for them, so… yes, glass… they understood well that when you throw the bottle, you remove the cap… Now they get it, it's all good, so everyone is sorting. (Valérie, 42, divorced and remarried, two children aged 10 and 20, part-time employee in a home care association and bar manager, Paris)

Whereas waste sorting demands family coordination and rewarding efforts, the procedure is greatly facilitated in logic one by the storage space available in detached or semi-detached houses, which favours the possession of several voluminous bins. In other words, waste sorting is all the less questioned that space constraints are few and make its incorporation to everyday routines possible. In logic two, city-centre dwellers have more articulate discourses on environmental issues, but due to the space constraints they face, their everyday practices are not necessarily eco-friendly. Thus, Yves's wife routinely sorts waste and laments that her husband "doesn't care at all" about waste sorting. He uses logistical arguments, mentioning their cramped kitchen:

> Waste sorting is bullshit I think. There used to be people who were employed for sorting waste on sorting lines. It's not a nice job, but at least it generates jobs. Now, you have to do it yourself. And… I don't see how that's possible, because when you live in a house, you can possibly sort the waste but when you live in a flat, where do you want me to put two bins? (Yves, 69, married, two independent children, former vice-president of an advertisement agency, Paris)

However, he does waste sorting in their holiday home in Brittany, which is more spacious than their Parisian flat. This example underlines that practical considerations on the spatial organization of the household explain why material equipment, whether collective or domestic, may not suffice to a change towards more sustainable ways of doing.

Composting

Our fieldwork comprises both collective and household composting equipment: many interviewees living in the provinces have a compost bin in their garden, and view composting as a taken-for-granted activity. Compost is used as a fertilizer for the kitchen garden. On the Parisian site, a compost bin was set up in the common garden of the apartment building, but the new equipment is far from being used by all residents. Chantal (64, married, one independent child, former secretary, Paris) is quite sceptical; she argues that she cannot imagine "going down ten floors to empty [her] plate", and that food waste may smell bad if kept in the kitchen. Yves, quoted above, does not compost either, as he considers that "good" composting requires organic or untreated waste only. On the other hand, his neighbour and friend Georges (69, remarried, one independent son, one son at home aged 23, former employee in heat engineering, Paris) is very much involved in both waste sorting and composting. He sometimes re-sorts waste in the collective garbage room, and removes the bags, since, he explains, the recyclable waste has to be put loose into the bin. Georges relates his environmental conscience to his rural origins: he mentions a

grandmother “of peasant stock”, defines himself as a “countryman” and a “peasant”, and remembers growing vegetables as a child.

Thus, material resources, whether domestic or collective, are not used and invested for food activities in the same manner depending on the social properties of the participants and on the constraints they face. The social context has an influence on the way environmental norms are handled and integrated into one’s everyday routines. Waste sorting is massively implemented–although more easily with space available–whereas other sustainable activities such as composting reveal that available equipment is not enough to trigger change towards a more sustainable everyday life, if the participants lack the social dispositions to use it.

Conclusion

In this paper, we showed that the organization of supply has a structuring effect on food provisioning, but this effect is modulated by the constraints and resources of each household. Social properties, time and budget constraints all impact the degree to which consumers subscribe to different norms and standards related to nutrition, but also to commercial labels, organic standards, etc. They also determine the feasibility of some food practices, along with private and public equipment. Thus, the example of the concern for sustainability and the associated activities enables to point out the role of waste sorting equipment but also of storage space in the homes, in order to understand how people can integrate (or not) waste sorting in their everyday life routines.

More generally, we underlined the pivotal role of material equipment on mundane practices–not only public infrastructures, but also commercial environment and household. The various components of more sustainable food activities relate differently to the social environment and context: whereas some seem deeply connected with location (sorting equipment for example) or even habitation (with its specific spaces and private equipment), some seem more dependent on commercial infrastructure; and others, such as disposal of leftovers, on household composition. Our focus on food activities, from shopping to waste management, allows both to disentangle those different scales–and identify what pertains to community equipment, to the retailing system, and to the household structure–and to show how they are intertwined: a given location, with specific supply and local equipment, does not entail a unique logic of food provisioning, for instance.

Thus, our results highlight the interconnection of equipment and social context, in two complementary ways: the social properties of household members–especially those committed to food practices–explain their sensitivity to standards and norms that can modify daily routines. On

the other hand, the constraints of daily life, and the resources available to handle material equipment, explain that new sustainable activities can be routinized, or not.

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[1] We understand "sustainable" in a broad sense, as environmentally-friendly and as part of a competitive and fair economy. Sustainable food consumption favours organic, seasonal and/or local products, labelled or not; fair-trade products; and recourse to short supply chains. It also encompasses cooking practices, use of leftovers, waste sorting, etc.

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

[3] In France, organic consumption is still quite limited, although fast-growing. Today, the market share of organic food products for home use is approximately 2,4 %, nearly twice as much as in 2007. Since the early 2000s, organic food sales have increased by around 10 % every year, according to the Bio Agency–a public organism promoting the development of organic agriculture in France.

[4] Kitchen gardening may occur in a collective structure through allotments, but our fieldwork does not comprise any.