

Green consumption: a ‘hobby’ only reserved for the elite?

Examining eco-friendly food consumption of different social groups through a practice-theoretical lens

Abstract

Within a context influenced by the individualization of responsibility as articulated through a neoliberal discourse of ‘green consumption’, the engagement of contemporary ‘citizen-consumers’ in the solving of the environmental crisis has become a normalized, yet disguised politicized consumption activity. In steering individuals to ‘make a difference’ via their personal consumption practices, a growing divide has been observed between a ‘grey’ and a ‘green’ class, respectively having low and high capital, with the latter making green consumption an exclusionary, elitist practice. This raises questions as to the feasibility of this individualized, political consumerist approach, as well as to the underlying factors determining green consumption practices. Using a practice-theoretical approach, this study aimed to examine the factors underlying these developments in order to gain insights as to how a more inclusive green consumption system could be developed. Findings of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 11 respondents of various backgrounds in the Netherlands, reveal that green consumption is not just a matter of class, and that there are not only distinct differences discernable *between* different groups, but also *within*, pointing towards the normalization of routines as naturalized during one’s previous position in a different social class. Lastly, findings indicate not just the usefulness of applying practice theory, but also indicate that more research needs to be done towards the mutual creative appropriation of different classes’ dispositions.

Keywords: green consumption, class, practice theory, environmental concern, eco-habitus

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Research Master Sociology of Culture, Media and the Arts

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

21 June 2019

Wordcount: 10.170 words

Journal of Consumer Culture, Sociological Perspectives, Sociology

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1. Introduction

“The climate concerns all of us and is owned by all of us. Therefore, the environment is and should be apolitical”. Interestingly, these were the words of economist and professor of market forces and competition Barbara Baarsma, during a discussion in a talk show¹ at the dawn of the Dutch provincial elections of 2019 (De Jonge & Van der Vliet, 2019). A heated debate in the context of these elections revolved around the Dutch climate deal as part of the Paris Agreements that were aimed at the reduction of carbon dioxide emission.

Despite a claim stating that the environment should not be political at all, reality is somewhat more complicated. In the year 2019, the environmental crisis and issues concerning sustainability seem to have left their niche status located somewhere at the margins and have shifted towards the daily mainstream discourse with news media no longer being in the position to simply ignore the topic but instead, covering it on a daily basis (Derbali, 2019). However, while the amount of attention towards environmental issues increases, the debate is becoming more hardened, politicized and, more importantly, more polarized at different levels. For instance, in the debate on the Dutch climate deal, advocates of this deal were referred to as ‘climate whiners’² by their political opponents (Samsom, 2019). This Dutch case illustrates some aspects of the growing division that is currently taking place on a wider, global scale. At the level of the issue of climate change itself, politicians worldwide are increasingly divided into, on the one hand, those concerned about the future of the climate and putting the issue on top of the agenda,—now even led by a growing group of young people striking for the climate as instigated by 15-year old Greta Thunberg (Carrington, 2019). Simultaneously, at the other extreme a group is on the rise supporting claims ranging from cynicism and skepticism to more serious denial of the existence of climate change at all, represented by prominent, often right-wing populist leaders such as Donald Trump or Thierry Baudet in the case of the Netherlands (Lockwood, 2018). Taken together with the influence of today’s permeation of fake news about this topic in the daily stream of information the average citizen is confronted with, one can argue the debate about climate change is taking place within a ‘climate of confusion’ (Mansell & Samsom, 2019).

If we are to acknowledge the existence of the worldwide environmental crisis, a crisis that requires urgent, decisive and real solutions, a second issue emerges that again reflects the “divisive nature of environmental issues” (Kennedy & Givens, 2019, p. 17). More specifically,

¹ De Wereld Draait Door, 13-3-2019, BNNVARA

² In Dutch, the word ‘klimaatdrammers’ found its origins during this debate about the climate deal.

the environmental crisis is being politicized by means of consumption, taking place within the discourse of ‘green consumption’. More precisely, this means that citizens are increasingly expected to take a stand in the issue of climate change and to ‘make a difference’ via their daily purchases and consumptions (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). This engagement of ‘citizen-consumers’ (Warde, 2017) into political issues fits well in the contemporary neoliberal context, in which citizens’ choices are regulated to a lesser extent through government policy. Instead, they are encouraged to take on more individual responsibility in dealing with the large amount of everyday risks of today’s society. Such an approach assumes that citizens are capable of, and in the possession of the required information that allows them to make the right decisions (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). However, taking into account the fact that such neoliberal strategies have led to growing inequalities, for instance giving rise to a large group of ‘new poor’ people (Lazzarato, 2009), one cannot expect all citizens to be in the position to participate in the consumption of products deemed environmentally-friendly. Besides, although this type of products is becoming slightly more affordable (Tilman, 2019), in the end ethical, green, eco-consumption decisions are often still the most expensive decisions (Tielbeke, 2017), uncovering the underlying idea that the richer the consumer, the more power he will obtain (Connolly & Prothero, 2008).

Due to this, a widening gap has seemingly emerged, splitting citizen-consumers into two different worlds: a world of the ‘green’ class, in sharp contrast to that of the ‘grey’ class, reflecting the merging of ecological and economic inequality (Tielbeke, 2017). Thus, it is argued, living an environmentally conscious life has become a privilege, only reserved to rich, white, and highly educated people (Derbali, 2019; Marijnissen, 2018;) who have a strong ‘eco-habitus’ (Carfagna et al., 2014; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). With this, not only is there an uneven power dynamic based on income and class, but this is also based on race, tending towards ‘climate racism’ as well (Derbali, 2019). These observations are not just speculations, but were one of the main conclusions of a study on the socially conscious consumption behavior of Dutch citizens in 2016 by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, stating that “conscious consumption is a niche-activity, a hobby for the higher educated” (Tielbeke, 2017). What is more, eco-consumerism has become a status marker for this green ‘eco-elite’ and, thus, a means for distinguishing oneself from the mass. Interestingly, following the idea of ‘upscale spending’ would imply that people with lower economic and cultural capital will consume based on ‘emulation’, meaning that people from lower classes will attempt to copy the set standards of the elite class (Murphy, 2017). However, the eco-consumption behavior of this green elite

apparently continues to stay exclusively theirs, suggesting it does not trickle down to lower classes.

These tendencies raise questions as to what mechanisms are at play that interfere with this emulation process, obstructing lower classes to gaining access to the activity of eco-consumerism. In addition, if this said ‘green’ consumption ought to be an attempt to contribute to the solving of environmental issues, it does not seem to work if it continues to be an exclusionary activity limited to high-status actors. In other words, if the goal of eco-consumerism is to “catalyze a broad base of actors” (Kennedy & Givens, 2019, p. 17), a counterproductive process seems at play that only reproduces or possibly even enlarges inequality.

Taken together, keeping the current polarizing and politicizing debate in mind, this calls for research that goes beyond the perspective of the ‘citizen-consumer’ through the adoption and implementation of a practice-theoretical approach. Several studies have underscored the need for such an approach in researching green consumption and class, stating that the approach goes beyond the individual and instead takes into account the broader settings of people’s consumption behavior, viewing the individual as a mere ‘carrier’ of collective consumption practices (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014; Boström & Klintman, 2017; Paddock, 2015; Warde, 2017). However, except for a recent study by Kennedy and Givens (2019), most studies have primarily focused on consumers identifying themselves as ‘green’ or ethical consumers, and coming from higher social classes. The current study contributes to this scholarly debate by the inclusion of a more diverse sample that includes a variety of consumers in terms of their self-identification regarding green consumption, yet is also more heterogeneous in terms of race, age, and place of residency (urban and rural).

Findings of the study are based on semi-structured in-depth interviews held with 11 Dutch citizens of various backgrounds. Interviews focused on people’s daily consumption practices, predominantly with attention to their groceries and, hence, their food consumption. Interviews were carried out using respondents’ consumption diaries of one week as an elicitation technique in order to discuss their daily concerns regarding issues of sustainability and environmental problems. Aim of the study is to obtain more insights as to the influence of one’s social class position (based on cultural and economic capital) on people’s eco-consumption practices and ideologies. Thus, data derived from the interviews aimed to answer the following research question: With regard to green, eco-consumption practices, which

factors can explain the differences in views between people from different social-economic backgrounds?

The remainders of this paper will be structured as follows. The second chapter discusses how a neoliberal discourse of ‘green consumption’ has led to a growing societal co-responsibility and the emergence of a politicized means of eco-friendly consumption, altogether leading to the question of whether a growing division between more and less eco-friendly consumption practices are a matter of class or should be attributed to different factors. The third chapter will give an overview of the research design as based on a practice-theoretical approach and elaborates on the different procedures of data collection and data analysis, respectively resulting in a data set that was derived by semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The fourth chapter provides an overview of the three themes that were found during the data analysis process, presenting the themes of ‘organic consumption’, ‘food waste and recycling practices’ and ‘sense of agency’, respectively described per social class. The final and fifth chapter of this paper concludes with three main findings, that reveal both the existence of differences *between* classes which can be attributed to class as well, the existence of differences *within* classes and thus, internal inconsistencies, partly attributed to the workings of practices, and lastly, *similarities* between different groups.

2. Theoretical framework

Discourse of citizenship and 'sustainable' development

During the past decades, starting around the end of the 20th century, many scholars have observed an increasing influence of neoliberalist approaches in the political and economic discourse. This neoliberal tendency is visible in developments such as the increasing withdrawal of governments as responsible for regulating the behaviors of citizens, a strong belief in the self-regulation of economic markets, and likewise, a growing reliance on individuals as the ones to solve (formerly) social problems now considered individual problems (Lazzarato, 2009). Thus, a gradual shift seems to move away from governmental regulation through the implementation of policies, towards a focus on the idea of citizenship (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014). Hereby, individual choices seem more important than ever before, with citizens being responsible for their own lives through the choices they make (Sorón, 2010). With the many choices to be made on a daily basis, individuals are increasingly also confronted with the risks associated with such choices. Instead of being protected against risks by institutional social safety nets, individuals now have to take individual responsibility when confronted with risks (Lazzarato, 2009). This neoliberal tendency is disseminated throughout many different areas, ranging from global issues of poverty and unemployment to the environmental crisis, burdening individuals with a growing responsibility in the solving of climate issues, thus creating individualized solutions to collective problems.

With regard to the particular issue of climate change and sustainability, the debate is taking shape within a discourse of 'sustainable development', which is said to focus on reaching ecological sustainability and thereby tackling the problem of climate change (Wanner, 2015). At first glance, this may seem an optimistic development. However, as Wanner (2015) argues, in reality this discourse revolves around the 'neoliberalizing of nature', which in fact is merely an attempt to maintain neoliberal capitalism by the privatizing, marketizing and commodifying of nature. Newer strategies too, for example talking about 'green growth', 'green economy' or 'green consumption' may seem rather innovative and revolutionary as compared to the discourse of sustainable development. However, these too are, in fact, part of - in Gramsci's words - a 'passive revolution' that tends to neutralize counter-hegemonic challenges to the dominant capitalist order (Wanner, 2015). In other words, such new attempts seem to eventually only reinforce the capitalist discourse under the guise of trendy terms such as 'green growth'. In doing so, as Wanner (2015) argues, these discourses are not about sustainable development in ecological, but rather, in *economic* terms: they foster the 'sustainable' development of

neoliberal capitalism (Wanner, 2015). As Soron (2010) argues, this capitalist discourse would already become visible in the term ‘green consumption’ itself, which could be interpreted as a rather contradictory term, on the one hand promoting ‘being green’, yet on the other hand simultaneously fostering consumption that would be part of the problem in the first place.

Co-responsibility and ‘citizen-consumer’ approach

Within this context, thus following the notion of the individualization of responsibility in solving the problem of climate change, one of the most important ways to achieve this is by means of consumption, as it is the ultimate activity that centralizes individual choice. This is especially applicable to the consumption of food, since food consumption, as an everyday activity, is where many choices have to be made and the awareness of risks is at its highest level (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). As already observed by many scholars throughout the past twenty years, consumers are nowadays burdened with ‘societal co-responsibility’ (Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Halkier, 1999; Soron, 2010). They are not only held responsible for creating the climate problem through their consumption practices in the first place, but also viewed as the ones responsible for *solving* the problem via their personal consumption practices as well (Boström & Kintman, 2017; Soron, 2010). In doing so, the environmental crisis is being “privatized, depoliticized and rendered into discrete problems amenable to consumer-oriented solutions” (Soron, 2010, p. 178), whereas the more structural underlying and potentially problematic system is consistently being neglected. Moreover, with the governing of consumption (Adams & Raisborough, 2010) or, in other words, the ‘citizen-consumer approach’, this neoliberalist notion of democratic citizenship merges perfectly with individual consumption behavior (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014; Carfagna et al., 2014; Boström & Klintman, 2017; Paddock, 2015; Soron, 2010; Warde, 2017; Wheeler, 2012). Thus, consumers are now engaged in contributing positively to environmental problems by incorporating environmentally friendly behaviors or lifestyles into their everyday consumption decisions, practices and routines, and are expected to make a difference through the way they do their everyday purchases (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). By doing so, consumption has become politicized, a ‘politics of choice’, and environmental concerns are “put on the consumer’s ‘kitchen table agenda’” (Halkier, 1999, p. 27).

Problem of the value-action gap

Despite the initial sense of empowerment with the involvement of citizens now as decision-makers regarding environmental problems, this citizen-consumer approach is problematic for several reasons. First of all, in focusing on consumer practices that take place in everyday life

settings, it tends to overlook the fact that ‘the everyday’ involves quite some complexity as it is subject to various factors (Adams & Raisborough, 2010; Halkier, 1999). In public campaigns targeting individuals to change their consumption behavior, often a mismatch occurs between the campaign and the complexities of the everyday realities people are facing (Boström & Klintman, 2017). Reasoning from the assumption that these citizen-consumers are sovereign, rational beings that autonomously base their choices on a combination of considerations of time, money, information, values, and preferences and, therefore, are in the position to make appropriate, rational decisions (Soror, 2010; Warde, 2017), may be a too naive approach.

Much scholarly work has been written on the ‘value-action gap’, stating that the tendency of viewing consumers as rational beings fails to notice the influence of processes that are intuitive and emotion-driven, that happen more on an automatic, rather than an intentional, calculative and conscious basis (Boström & Klintman, 2017; Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Warde, 2017; Wheeler, 2012). That is, even if an individual has all the ‘right’ knowledge and skills to make a decision that is considered ‘wise’ or ‘right’, —in this case in light of environmentally friendly consumption— many consumers’ subsequent actions are not consistent with the intended underlying values they aimed to pursue. Hence, it should not be forgotten that “consumption is a highly complex, dynamic, and multi-relational social phenomenon” (Wheeler, 2012, p. 127). Moreover, related to this problem is the fact that the idea of the rational consumer is based on a so-called ‘ABC’-approach, respectively referring to attitude, behavior, and choice (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014; Boström & Klintman, 2014; Shove, 2010). This approach has its foundations in social-psychological theories that, despite being relevant, are too individualized and simplified as they tend to overlook the wider context within which this consumption behavior takes place. Therefore, taking into account the broader settings within which people consume is relevant and necessary if one aims to actually move beyond the citizen-consumer approach and the dominant framing of the individualization of responsibility.

Theories of practice as an alternative

An increasingly acknowledged, alternative way in researching one’s consumption behavior, is through the application of practice theory, which has demonstrated to be an ideal approach that avoids falling back into the emphasis on individual choices, shifting attention away from the rational, calculating individual. This theoretical approach of practices focuses on “repetition, habit, routine and convention” (Warde, 2014, p. 293), meaning that routines preponderate simple rational actions, that the everyday ‘flow’ of consumption is more important than the deliberations and decisions consumers are making, and therefore, the emphasis lies on ‘doing’

rather than ‘thinking’ (Halkier, Katz-Gerro, & Martens, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2014). Practice theory assumes that consumption is not so much a matter of individual choice, but rather that consumption practices, habits and routines are instead collectively shared and socially organized (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014; Paddock, 2015; Warde, 2017). Hence, individuals are embedded in practices: a consumer should be viewed as a ‘carrier’ of practices and individuals are then “practitioners engaged in the practice of everyday life” (Halkier et al., 2011, p. 6). From this point of view, individual behavior is purely an expression or outcome of social practices. With this, the focus also shifts away from the idea of individual responsibility, moving towards collective responsibility as the starting point of change. Underlying this practice-theoretical approach is the idea that, although some practices might have been intentional and thought-through at some time, they have become naturalized through repetition and are now considered habitual, ordinary and inconspicuous (Halkier et al., 2011). But it also implies that practices are part of a wider cultural, social, historical system or context that may change over time and space (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014). Thus, reasoning from a practice-theoretical approach points towards the inclusion of the wider settings surrounding people’s consumption in the first place. The value-action gap, assuming there is a discrepancy between people’s values and their subsequent behavior, should then be viewed as socially situated instead of being an individual problem.

Thus, within the framework of individualized responsibility, little attention is given to structural factors that are beyond the reach of individuals. More specifically, taking into account the fact that one’s consumption activities take place within a context of unequally distributed resources, power, and information, one cannot assume that every single individual, regardless of socio-economic background, will —or is in the position to— act similarly in taking responsibility for the environment (Boström & Klintman, 2017; Soron, 2010). Reasoning from this perspective, these inequalities will make a generic solution for environmental issues rather inconceivable. As a consequence, in steering people towards the adoption of green lifestyles, a widening gap can be observed between those who dispose of the resources and corresponding power to consume environmentally-friendly, and those who do not. This raises several questions, for instance, if consumers ought to be contributing positively to a global issue like the environmental crisis, how will a growing division between consumers able and unable to contribute, affect people’s sense of agency? Following this line of thoughts, with the continuing focus on individual responsibility and ‘citizen-consumership’, inequality would likely be perpetuated and reproduced, resulting in unsustainability rather than sustainability.

Eco-habitus: a question of ‘green’ versus ‘grey’?

Yet, besides this gap based on access to resources, within the individualized context embedded with risks and choices, according to Giddens, consumption decisions are no longer a matter of “how to act”, but of “who to be” (1991, as cited in Soron, 2010). Thus, commodities have become the ultimate way of communicating one’s identity as a marker or symbol of status (Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Soron, 2010). Several studies indicate strong linkages between green, environmentally-friendly consumption behavior and a high social class status, roughly dividing society into a ‘green’ and ‘grey’ class (Tielbeke, 2017), in other words, those with ‘eco-habitus’ or ‘eco-powerlessness’ (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Thus, green consumption becomes a status symbol of people highly positioned on the continuum of social class. Consumers with a high eco-habitus, hence with high environmental consciousness, seem to use their high-cost consumption practices by means of distinction, and in doing so, claim and maintain an exclusionary, elite status. For this reason, these consumers are often criticized for being “elite, white and privileged” (Carfagna et al., 2014, p.159), and have the inclination to judging others based on their (lack of) engagement with environmental issues. While maintaining an image of ‘environmentally responsible actors’, in clear opposition to stereotyped, ‘irresponsible others’ (Boström & Klintman, 2017), simultaneously, a feeling of moral superiority is strengthened (Kennedy & Givens, 2019).

Interestingly, using Holt’s traditional typology of dispositions and practices, findings of a study by Carfagna et al. (2014) show that, in contrast to a traditional division of cultural repertoires between this green and grey class, nowadays new strategies are used by HCC consumers in order to maintain an elite status. That is, the cultural repertoires of low cultural capital consumers (LCC, traditional preference for the local, material and manual) are no longer limited to LCC consumers. Rather, high cultural capital consumers (HCC, traditionally preferring the global, ideal and mental) have creatively combined the dispositions of HCC with LCC, ‘twisting’ them in such a way that they can still be deployed as a means for distinction. For instance, an appreciation of the local—traditionally an unavoidable practice of LCC—is now transformed into ‘cosmopolitan local’, whereas the ‘manual’ is now considered luxury instead of being an essential LCC disposition (Carfagna et al., 2014).

Furthermore, research by Kennedy and Givens (2019) shows that based on the strength of one’s eco-habitus and sense of self-efficacy, different sub-divisions can be observed among HCC and LCC consumers. First, there is a group with a strong eco-habitus, strong fears about the environment, yet also a strong belief in one’s own contribution to change. Second, there is

a group with a moderate eco-habitus, either highly confident about addressing environmental challenges when having high economic capital, or feeling frustrated in failing to contributing to the environment when having low economic capital. Lastly, there is a group with a weak eco-habitus and a great sense of powerlessness in its own contribution and skepticism towards systems beyond their own power, accompanied with low economic capital (Kennedy & Givens, 2019).

Eco-consumption: a question of class?

Reasoning from these findings, one would expect only those with rather high cultural and economic capital to be assigned to the ‘green’ class. Following this idea, it requires both economic and cultural privileges if one actually aims to move beyond environmental concern and actively participate through personal consumption practices. However, such findings raise questions as to what extent those privileges are actually relevant, and whether one’s class position is a determining factor in people’s eco-consumption practices at all, or that other factors or processes might play a more significant role. That is, several studies deliberately disregarded social class and found for instance, that regardless of their background, people share the experience of confusion and complexity concerning their personal consumption practices. Instead of adhering this to a specific class, inconsistencies, contradictions and ambiguities in people’s practices were viewed as a commonly shared factor (Adams & Raisborough, 2010). Likewise, considering social interaction in the everyday life as a more important factor than class, Halkier (1999) found three ways of dealing with environmental consideration: either rejection, negotiation or integration of environmentally-friendly consumption practices. Particularly the rejection of environmentally-friendly consumption into one’s daily life is relevant, demonstrating that besides the alleged required presence of cultural and economic capital, a large role might also be reserved for one’s potential (lack of) interest in, and perception and knowledge of- environmental issues, together determining one’s willingness to participate in the first place (Halkier, 1999).

Thus, based on the discussions as elaborated in the previous paragraphs, several questions are raised as to what mechanisms are at play in the establishment of one’s green consumption practices: is one’s class position a formative factor or do other factors have a more significant role? How do people view their own consumption practices and how do they position themselves in relation towards others? Moreover, to what extent do people experience a sense of agency within this discourse of ‘green consumption’? Taken together, the analysis of

people's consumption practices as discussed in the in-depth interviews with a sample of 11 respondents, was guided by the following two sub questions:

Q1. With regard to green and eco-friendly consumption practices, how do people view their own and other people's consumption behaviors?

Q2. In light of a discourse of 'green consumption', in what way do people experience a sense of agency with regard to their own consumption practices?

3. Method

Research design and operationalization

The current study was guided by the question of which factors are considered relevant in explaining the differences between people's different views upon food practices (of themselves and others) with regard to sustainability and environmental issues. In order to obtain an answer to this question, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were held during the spring of 2019 in the Netherlands with 11 respondents having an average age of 34 years. The study was based on a constructivist worldview, hence besides looking for meanings of respondents, at the same time, it focused on creating an agenda for change (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). More specifically, results of the study might have relevant implications concerning policy focused at inequalities and consumption practices between different social groups in Dutch society.

As mentioned, theories of practice are relevant in order to move beyond an individualistic 'citizen-consumer' approach to consumption, assuming that individuals are 'carriers' of collective practices, representing collective assumptions and routines (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014; Halkier et al., 2011), and thus, representing consumption behaviors of different social classes. The execution of semi-structured, in-depth interviews was considered most appropriate in order to apply a practice-theoretical approach. Respondents' social practices were discussed and examined, using a consumption diary that was filled out by respondents during the week before the interview. Having listed their groceries granted the respondents with clearer insights into their own consumption patterns and therefore functioned as a suitable preparation for the interview. In addition, the diaries were insightful and helpful documents in fostering and eliciting discussion and conversation about their decision making processes during the interviews.

In order to gain more information about the broader context and mechanisms affecting or constraining the respondents' eco-consumption practices, respondents were asked questions

regarding the different practice elements and routines that altogether constitute their daily food consumption practices (Paddock, 2015). Subsequently, respondents were asked in more detail about their motivations behind - and views upon their own practices. In doing so, likewise they were asked to elaborate on their view towards people with different ways of consuming (see Appendix A for the topic list). The topic list guiding the interviews was grounded in practice-theoretical underpinnings considered most relevant in working towards answering the research question, therefore touching upon the themes ‘practices and routines’, ‘identity and self-image’, and more specifically, ‘consumption in relation to environmental issues’.

Data collection

As mentioned, only few studies have used a sample that is diverse in terms of class, but also of other social positions, with only the recent study by Kennedy and Givens (2019) including a more diverse sample in terms of race. Given these facts, aim of the current study was to create a sample as heterogeneous as possible and to find out whether the statement of green consumption belonging to white and elite people, is true. Respondents were selected using several recruitment techniques. Firstly, purposive sampling (Boeije, 2010) and subsequently snowball sampling were applied within the researcher’s own network, resulting in a total of six participants. Secondly, physical flyers were disseminated throughout the city of Rotterdam, at three libraries, several (eco and more traditional) supermarkets, and a social services organization. Three people were selected after responding on the flyers in a supermarket and the social services organization. Subsequently, applying snowball sampling in those people’s networks, led to the recruitment of two final respondents.

An overview of the final sample of respondents can be found in Table 1, with pseudonyms granted to each participant. The audio-recorded interviews, with a duration of approximately 45 minutes to one hour, took place inside the homes of the respondents. The aim of this approach was two-fold: on the one hand, it allowed for respondents feeling comfortable in discussing their personal opinions and experiences. At the same time, it enabled respondents to directly relate their discussions about grocery practices to the products as found inside their own kitchens, fostering the vivid- and richness of their discussions.

Data about the respondents’ age, sex, ethnicity, educational level, occupation and income were also collected, enabling to allocate respondents to a specific class (see Table 1). Based on one’s educational level and occupation, people were assigned to either low or high cultural capital (criteria for LCC: no diploma/primary school/high school diploma/MBO level; criteria for HCC: HBO/WO level). In addition, people were assigned to either high or low

economic capital based on their annual net income (criteria for LEC: income below 30.000 euros; criteria for HEC: income beyond 30.000 euros). In order to make reasonable allocations, the income of a respondent's (potential) partner was included as well. Respondents of the sample were assigned to HCC and LEC (five people), HCC and HEC (four people), LCC and HEC (1 person) and LCC and LEC (1 person). Seven respondents were living in cities (in the urban Randstad area or smaller provincial cities), two were living in small town in a rural area, and two people (respondents 2 and 3) divided their time between living in an urban and a rural area, alternated with travelling and living throughout Europe.

Data analysis

After creating transcriptions of the interviews, data analysis was done using coding software as offered by the qualitative data management program NVivo12. The analysis procedure involved an initial familiarization with the data, shifting between close reading, listening, reflecting on the transcripts, and open coding. Having developed a comprehensive overview of initial codes, a process of axial coding based on further reflection, reading, comparing, analyzing, writing, and relating codes to negative cases, helped working towards a more systematic overview of themes. Here, relationships between the themes and the theoretical framework were established. The final results as presented in this paper comprise the three most salient themes that altogether formed an answer to the research questions. An overview of the used coding tree during the process of open and axial coding can be found in appendix B.

Respondent	Current class	Educational level	Occupation	Ethnicity	Age	Sex	Place of residency
Merel	HCC; LEC	HBO	Social worker	Dutch	28	Female	Urban (large town)
Matthijs	HCC; LEC	HBO	Visual artist	Dutch	36	Male	Urban (large town) and rural
Anouk	HCC; LEC	HBO	Fashion designer	Dutch	33	Female	Urban (large town) and rural
Henry	HCC; HEC	HBO	IT project manager	Dutch	34	Male	Rural (small provincial town)
Lieke	HCC; HEC	HBO	Administration assistant	Dutch	32	Female	Rural (small provincial town)
John	HCC; HEC	HBO	Unemployed (currently setting up his own company)	Dutch/Antillean	33	Male	Urban (large town)
Sharon	HCC; HEC	HBO	Endoscopist	Dutch/Surinam	32	Female	Urban (large town)
Wendy	HCC; LEC	HBO	Communications officer	Dutch	28	Female	Urban (small town)
Sabine	HCC; LEC	HBO	Student visual arts	Dutch	23	Female	Urban (small town)
Suzanne	LCC; LEC	High school	Maternity nurse	Dutch/Antillean	61	Female	Urban (large town)
Katinka	LCC; HEC	Primary school	Unemployed; housewife	Dutch	55	Female	Urban (provincial town)

Table 1. Participant demographics

4. Results

Practice-theoretical approach

The discussion of the respondents' consumption diaries and grocery shopping practices was a helpful tool for both respondents and researcher to gain better insights in their shopping routines, demonstrating the appropriateness of a practice-theoretical approach that reasons from the idea that individual consumers represent larger collective practices. Overall, there seemed a high awareness and satisfaction of their purchases when reflecting upon them. Strikingly, one participant (LCC, LEC) indicated the consumption diary being an eye-opener that motivated her continuation of keeping a consumption diary after the interview. Her comparison of grocery shopping to an experience often encountered during her visitation of different people's houses, illustrates well the idea of being a 'carrier' of practices:

The way they organize their kitchen cupboards...virtually everyone puts the glasses on either the left or right side above...always on the same place! Yet the different people don't know each other! Why does he or she have the exact same organization of his or her kitchen as this other person? So if I want to grab a glass, I don't have to think: it's always either left or right, and then I have found it...And it's the same in a supermarket: if you visit a supermarket, then you turn on your autopilot. And then this autopilot takes over and grabs the products *for* you (Suzanne, 61)

This quote exemplifies the automatic basis of practices, driven by routine and requiring little attention or rational thinking. Moreover, it indicates how people of certain (social) groups and backgrounds apparently share similar practices, dispositions and cultural repertoires. With the question in mind of whether the (eco-)consumption practices of different people can be attributed to their social class position and what mechanisms and other factors are underlying, in the following paragraphs, the three main themes of 'consumption of organic products', 'food waste and recycling practices', and 'sense of agency' are presented. These findings demonstrate that besides the existence of prominent differences between various social groups, similarities and mutual influences can likewise be observed between groups, while simultaneously revealing the presence of internal inconsistencies within groups. Altogether, these findings shed new lights on the way in which the relationship between eco-consumption and class could be approached.

4.1 Consumption of organic products

High cultural capital, high economic capital

Within the group of HCC and HEC, there was a limited amount of concern and a minimal occupation with informing oneself about the consumption of organic food. External (social or media) pressures were no present factors in their daily lives and there seems an overall respectful, yet somewhat indifferent attitude with regard to people more actively and consciously consuming organic or vegetarian products. For instance, one couple indicated purchasing organic meat when good friends with a preference for organic products would come over for dinner. This respectful attitude is comparable to the way they would treat religious people, as one respondent explains:

Actually it's just like religion, as long as you don't impose your ideas upon others, I'm fine with it...but you shouldn't expect me to join them. To each his own, is what I think (Sharon, 32)

Hence, despite the awareness of the existence of organic food, the choice for organic food consumption would at best be a coincidental rather than a deliberate decision. Hereby, characteristics such as quality, tastefulness, freshness and healthiness of a product seemed to gain priority over the potential organic features of a product. These preferences are clearly explained by one respondent, Henry, explaining that:

Every now and then we visit that organic butcher. But we don't go there because of the butcher selling organic meat, but we go there because one, they sell very tasteful meat, and two, because he's located just around the corner...But we don't go there because of the organic label or something, no, not at all (Henry, 34)

Interestingly, in discussing organic consumption, respondents seemed to have stronger associations with products linked to health-related issues, again indicating such features are of bigger concern than a product's alleged organic status. Several respondents referred to the importance of consuming products with relatively low sugar levels, and here, media influences do seem to have a more prominent role in informing oneself:

When you look at certain products, for instance sugar, and you hear on the news that it's not good, well then that is something you start paying attention to as well...and reading the back of the packaging, such TV programs make you more aware of what kind of things to look at, for instance sugar in soda...making you more aware that they [the industry] are trying to add unnecessary stuff (John, 33)

High cultural capital, low economic capital

With respect to seeking information, striking differences can be observed when focusing on the group of HCC and LEC. Several efforts are undertaken to actively inform oneself: reading books, watching documentaries, or keeping track of online lists of what (not) to consume based on scientific sources. Interestingly, despite this active information-seeking attitude, two somewhat divergent approaches towards organic consumption can be found among respondents. First, those highly convinced that organic consumption is the best option for health-related and environmental reasons, therefore somewhat uncritically accepting what is offered in store. For instance, Wendy's preference for eco-labelled products reveals a slightly naive belief in the often merely opportunistic and misleading tendency of producers symbolically differentiating their products through eco-labelling (Boström & Klintman, 2017):

It feels like that's more sustainable, but actually I don't really know whether that is true. It's more of an idea or something, that it says on the product that it is bio, that it has some sort of a label telling me that its 'good' and organic. (Wendy, 28, vegetarian)

This leads to the second approach towards organic food, dominated by a more skeptical attitude, deeming organic consumption a 'yuppie thing', stating people can also live sustainably and buy organic without following the set labels by the industry:

I think it's very stupid that there are these labels put on everything: organic, sustainable... and people don't think for themselves. If you really think about it, you can be sustainable without having to spend more money! (Anouk, 33)

This quote indicates the relevance of money: there is a great awareness of the range of organic products offered, and likewise a strong experience of the urgency and pressure to purchasing such products. However, financial constraints are burdening most respondents with daily dilemma's. For instance, the decision between organic and non-organic beetroots with a 20 cents price difference is sufficient in illustrating the daily struggles people are facing. This desire to consume 'green' while facing the challenge of spending money wisely, is reminiscent of what Kennedy and Givens (2019) described as 'savvy consumption', wanting to get the most value for a euro.

Descriptions of their own consumption practices demonstrated the high concerns about environmental issues this group was dealing with. Interestingly, considering their own practices as being part of a larger contemporary trend, most respondents explicitly noted not wanting to be identified with people 'just following trends'. More radical consumption styles as compared

to the respondents' perceived personal consumption style (e.g., even more vegan or 'zero-waste' lifestyles), were considered desirable, whereas those alleged 'trend-followers' were deemed as lacking 'real' feelings of concern and merely following what was propagated and exploited by large businesses and marketers. As Wendy, Anouk and Matthijs (36) described it:

I notice nowadays it's also a little bit trendy, being vegan. But that's often the case with those annoying people, who say 'oh I want to be hip and therefore I'm vegan', not even because they have any ideals behind doing it...a bit of a 'hipster-ish' movement or something. But I do not identify at all with them. (Wendy, 28, vegetarian)

Well that's all just fancy marketing, immediately twenty euros more expensive, very 'fancy-pancy'. Like Marqt, with a q³...But that's all just fake marketing, too expensive, nonsense, that's what I would call 'yuppie-sustainable'...They are quite hardcore in a sense, they are vegan and sustainable in a politically correct way. (Anouk, 33)

Matthijs, complementing Anouk's sentence:

Yeah, they're really looking down on people not consuming in that way...they are really positioning themselves above you, not explicitly, but more 'under the skin'. (Matthijs, 36)

Remarkably, discussions such as these point towards a conflict about authenticity and accurateness of green consumption, altogether revolving around the question of the real definition a green consumer: who counts as in- or outsider? Ironically, in distancing themselves from trend-following consumers that —according to these respondents— claim to know best how to live green, although not wanting to be granted with a certain label, these respondents simultaneously seem to establish a certain (higher) position with regard to those 'others'.

Low cultural capital

With regard to organic consumption, the attitude of the respondents with LCC is best defined by openness, curiosity and a relatively strong desire to the incorporation of organic products into daily consumption practices, influenced by social connections and media messages. However, there are differences in the feasibility and the perception of eco-friendly consumption, due to differences in economic capital (high and low) and also to social factors.

³ Marqt is a Dutch supermarket known for selling organic products at relatively high prices, its name being a wordplay of the word 'markt' (Dutch for 'market'), using the letter 'q' to seemingly indicate its more luxury status as compared to a regular farmer's market.

These differences become visible in one's positioning towards media messages, for instance, Suzanne (LCC, LEC) says:

The media are talking more about the pesticides on products... and when you hear that from a TV program, then you also start looking around in the supermarket like: what are other people buying?...so all the information about that is being injected into you, little by little, from TV and radio shows, and then you learn more about it. (Suzanne, 61)

In contrast to Suzanne's receptive approach to media messages, the respondent with LCC and HEC has taken a more active, critical stance, explicitly stating that people should not just follow the herd. Not only her husband's profession in the food industry, but also her own upbringing with an emphasis on being critical, seem to have influenced this approach. For instance, discussing her preference for organic over regular cinnamon, she says:

It's really a different product, and in fact you're actually just eating rubbish. And with all those instant sachets nowadays, what it tells you on the packaging is not what might be inside of it...and I think that is actually nothing more than pure deception! So that is why I always pay a lot of attention to what is really inside. (Katinka, 55)

Interestingly, her critical approach towards eco-labels bears semblance to the 'savvy consumers' of the HCC, LEC group. At the same time, the preference for quality shows some similarities with the HCC, HEC group, although for the latter group a product's organic features are subordinate to quality features, whereas for this respondent, organic always seems to gain priority over other characteristics.

For the LCC, LEC respondent, organic purchases were seldom done due to the high prices. Whereas those with HCC creatively bypass financial obstacles in order to consume 'green', this respondent instead took a creative approach to justify her consumption practices. In doing so, at least a feeling or illusion of consuming consciously seemed to be reached. This justification was done retrospectively rather than intentionally. Her choice for buying halal meat exemplifies this and simultaneously shows her personal association of organic to animal suffering rather than the environment:

I think it is important that a chicken, that the chicken has led a happy life. And that's why I don't... I prefer buying meat in a store where they, how do you call it when they first make a prayer?

Interviewer: you mean halal meat?

Yes, that's the word...I heard on the radio that normally they are killing chickens by beating them up with a stick...and that is so sad, so even though I am not a Muslim, I do not want to eat any chicken that was beaten to death for me. (Suzanne, 61)

4.2 Food waste and recycling practices

High cultural capital, high economic capital

Among those with HCC and HEC, there is an awareness of waste being a consequence of personal food consumption, but likewise, a general disinterest in the potential environmental impact. Strategies that were implemented in order to prevent food waste from occurring, demonstrate a somewhat 'selfish' underlying approach directed by the assumption that food waste is a waste of money. As one respondent says:

If we are engaged in such behavior, then that's more for the sake of my own wallet than for an environmentally conscious... I have a hybrid car but not due to environmental reasons, rather because it is very fuel efficient. (Henry, 34)

Moreover, respondents were willing to intentionally change their practices, for instance, one couple preferring fresh fruit, modified its food practices after throwing away fruit that gets spoiled rapidly, now replacing it with canned fruit. Another couple adapted its consumption routines, after buying products in stock would only lead to throwing the majority away. Instead of 'bargain hunting' they now only buy products to be consumed on the short term:

I used to be very much into hoarding, filling up the pantry, but lately that has become less of an activity. I just go to the supermarket, buy what I need, hardly any extra things... because everything used to be filled to the brim with groceries. Then you risk throwing stuff away because it expired or you didn't eat it. (Lieke, 32)

Yet this focus on personal motivations tends to neglect the impact of consumption practices on the environment. This issue seems to only have relevance for John, actively informing himself about plastic consumption. In discussing this with his wife, they conclude that John's practices are due to his upbringing within a lower social class, in which financial incentives underlying recycling practices have naturalized his conscious recycling behavior. His slightly deviant practices regarding other respondents demonstrates the usefulness of practice theory: apparently it is easier to grant routines to new and different goals, than changing the routines themselves.

High cultural capital, low economic capital

Food waste and recycling practices were relevant activities in everyday consumption practices of HCC, LEC respondents. The motivation for these eco-friendly behaviors seems twofold: because of environmental and ideological considerations, as well as of financial reasons. The high dedication towards reducing food waste, is for instance seen in the involvement with ‘dumpster diving’:

Well I’m not actively searching like ‘oh are there any containers I can dive into?’, but once I pass a container and I see there’s something in it...I look inside and if there’s a pack of yogurt then I will surely get it. (Matthijs, 36)

Regarding the reduction of plastic consumption, respondents underscored the topic’s high position on their agendas. At the same time, the complexity of accomplishing such an activity was acknowledged. The realization of a desired ‘zero-waste’ lifestyle demonstrated to have its limits, for instance visible in attempts of respondents bringing their own cotton tote bags to store vegetables, while being confronted with supermarkets wrapping everything in plastic and thus, making those efforts to a certain degree impossible. In the activity of separating waste, several barriers were encountered as well, primarily due to the infrastructural organizations constraining the execution of this activity (Paddock, 2015). For instance, garbage bins as offered by the municipality were often too small or only collected twice a month, leading to inconveniences such as mold. Such practical constraints show how people remain ‘locked’ into routines that do not support the desired lifestyle (Paddock, 2015) and demonstrates how different elements of a practice (material and infrastructural) impede making rational choices.

Hence, these examples reflect the struggle of respondents of finding a balance between financial, practical and mobility factors, while at the same time uncovering the challenges in remaining motivated rather than burdened by doing these environmentally-friendly practices, while also avoiding falling back into older, less ‘green’ routines. For instance, Wendy (28) explains how the implementation of a new green practice often ends soon, due to the tendency of falling back into old routines:

It’s also laziness I guess. Because for instance, we have these Nespresso-cups, but I once also tried the reusable ones. But I just don’t feel like grinding coffee, putting it into this tiny cup and then cleaning it again... that’s just too much of a hassle. (Wendy, 28, vegetarian)

Unsurprisingly, for some respondents such ‘green’ attempts also led to a certain degree of cynicism, particularly when recognizing being only one of the few people actively attempting to make a difference, resulting in a feeling of powerlessness. Merel (28), discussing the activity of making handcrafted cleaning detergents, says:

A friend of mine already made his own shampoo about six years ago, but at a certain point he quit. He thought: ‘well, what does it matter, because everything ends up in the same sewage system, where everyone throws away the same kind of chlorine products, so yeah, what does it matter?’...And every now and then I can also feel this way. (Merel, 28)

Low cultural capital

Respondents with LCC differed in their awareness and daily experiences of food waste and recycling practices. Interestingly, practices and views of these respondents show similarities with the practices of other groups. For instance, the HCC, LEC group’s tendency of buying products in bulk packaging, also applies to the LCC, LEC respondent. However, underlying motivations differ: whereas the former group primarily focused on reducing plastic, the latter respondent seemed predominantly driven by the relatively lower pricing. Viewed in this light, engaging with food waste is motivated by an underlying financial incentive that is resembling of the HCC, HEC group’s approach.

With regard to recycling practices, having a high commitment towards participating in such activities, the LCC, HEC respondent experienced constraining barriers similar to those as expressed by the HCC, LEC respondents, such as problems concerning the size of a bin, particularly in her situation of living in a city apartment where garbage bins can only be placed on the balcony. Thus, particularly infrastructural and material barriers were encountered (Paddock, 2015). However, whereas those with HCC, LEC were inclined to undertaking several actions before giving up, the current LCC, HEC respondent has taken a more radical approach leading to her current total disengagement with any recycling practice:

You see, I would really love to do all of those things, separating my waste, no problem at all. But then the services need to work optimally first...as long as they haven’t fixed their problems, I won’t do it either...unless they would make it obligatory. But then I would do it under protest, definitely. (Katinka, 55)

Remarkably, this approach is reminiscent of a group that Kennedy and Givens (2019) described with a weak eco-habitus, a high feeling of powerlessness, and low economic capital. Rather than feeling personally responsible, people were inclined to hold the large, powerful

systems accountable. Moreover, it also bears semblance with the rejecting mode as described by Halkier (1999), in a similar fashion stating that environmental problems belong to actors with more power. However, the difference with such approaches as compared to the current respondent, lie in her willingness to undertake personal action once the conditions by the larger systems are met, as opposed to the other groups referred to.

4.3 Sense of agency

So far, the findings provided some insights in the way different groups deal with a sense of power within a discourse of ‘green consumption’ (Wanner, 2015). For instance, the above analysis of the LCC, HEC respondent —besides showing how a rejecting position towards environmental issues seems to spread itself beyond the borders of LEC consumers— demonstrates that the allocation of responsibility to larger actors and systems does not necessarily imply being equivalent to a sense of powerlessness. Rather, deciding not to participate in environmental consumption practices, in some occasions demands a certain degree of power as well. In line with these discussions, the following paragraphs are guided by the question of how people experience a sense of agency regarding their own consumption practices.

High cultural capital, high economic capital

Among most HCC, HEC respondents, a general abstract conceptualization of a rather distant ‘environment’ seems influential in this group’s overall disengagement with environmentally-friendly consumption practices, indicating the absence of experiencing a causal relationship between one’s personal consumption practices and the subsequent potential impact on the environment. If there is any conscious eco-consumption involved, it is through external policies and framed in terms of ‘a drop in the ocean’, thus feeling like one individual will not make the change. As Henry (34) explains:

On a personal level I don’t think much will change. Maybe if the entire world would start eating less meat, that it would resolve the problem, ... maybe it’s very hypocritical of me to think like ‘well on my own I won’t have any impact so that’s why I don’t have to change a thing myself’. But to be honest, I’m not concerned with that at all. (Henry, 34)

Again, an exception is found with John’s practices, highly concerned about his personal impact on the environment. Interestingly, his experiencing little power simultaneously seemed to encourage raising awareness with others and in doing so, still resulted in a sense of agency:

If I would use less plastic bags, the difference I would make in the world would be very small, but still it would be a difference. And if talking to other people about it could motivate another person to act likewise...(John, 33)

High cultural capital, low economic capital

By contrast, a high sense of responsibility was found with the HCC, LEC group, attempting to act as much as possible within their power limits. However, powerful feelings were only attained after accepting the inability of entirely accomplishing the desired lifestyle and letting go of the idea of becoming world-changing actors. In order to at least retain feelings of satisfaction concerning their personal consumption practices, respondents developed different kinds of coping mechanisms, for instance Merel (28) having to force herself to eliminate worrisome thoughts, described by Kennedy and Givens (2019) as a ‘sense of anomie’:

I can’t delve into this topic too much because then my head will explode I think. I can’t handle that, if I have to think both about the climate *and* the animals, and then there’s also human suffering, then, I can’t handle that. So that’s why right now I’m just focusing on one thing. (Merel, 28)

Furthermore, in order to maintain a sense of control, some respondents found ways in which they could keep up the illusion for themselves that their efforts are worthy of doing, discursively dealt with in terms of a ‘safe space’ or ‘getting a grip on the situation’:

For myself, I think it’s nice to create a sort of ‘mini-world’ in which you get the feeling that, well... that at least it *feels* like you’re contributing to something. (Wendy, 28)

Another way of attaining a sense of control was found in the involvement in the production process of food, for instance, Merel (28) telling about her recent start of a vegetable garden:

Well I’ve always wanted to do this, to see how things grow, to really fix it by myself, without being dependent on a supermarket or something...and soon, when everything works and when I’m able to grow my own pumpkins ... I’ll have a little bit of my own control over it. (Merel, 28)

Low cultural capital

Focusing on the perception of personal agency with respect to the LCC respondents, again shows differences. Yet, here the differences are largely due to different economic capital. Katinka (LCC, HEC)'s highly critical worldview is again clearly expressed in her discussion of matters related to power issues. Nevertheless, there are some contradictions when focusing on her approach towards structure and agency. More specifically, her tendency of pointing to the responsibility of large systems as a prerequisite for adapting her personal consumption practices, conflicts with her emphasis on being independent, informing herself, and making her own decisions. In that respect, the latter approach could be considered useless.

Furthermore, for a final notion, we must get back to the quote this chapter started with (p. 18) by Suzanne (LCC, LEC), about the organization of one's kitchen. As stated, not only did this quote illustrate well a practice-theoretical approach. Analyzing the sense of agency of different groups, Suzanne's expressions were most striking and seemed to best explain how particularly people with LEC and LCC are actually 'carrying' practices. Moreover, they showed how only external influences bringing it to the attention, would make her more aware of being able to modify certain routines, and thus, of having a certain sense of agency. For instance, this is visible in her adaptation of food practices that were altered through the implementation of external policy:

So right now we're eating more healthily because the grandchildren...their school gives them fruit for free, three times a week...and I adopted that behavior...therefore we now applied this at home...and at a certain moment it had become normalized. (Suzanne, 61)

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The current political landscape is increasingly being characterized by growing tensions in a context of a polarizing society with regards to environmental issues, and thus, where a hardened debate or even a ‘war’ seems to be going on between pro- and opponents, and where the environmental crisis is hanging in the air as the sword of Damocles. Paradoxically, with these developments in the background, a tendency has begun evolving, leaving individuals with the impression that they are the designated ones to save the environment.

In other words, with the influence of developments such as individualization as articulated through a neoliberal discourse of ‘green consumption’ (Wanner, 2015), more and more is the engagement of citizens in solving climate change disguised as a personal, yet politicized consumption activity. Thus, individuals ought to ‘make a difference’ through their consumption practices, which raises questions as to the feasibility of solving this environmental problem while simultaneously being forced to acknowledge a growing divide between a ‘grey’ and a ‘green’ class, with only the latter in a position of power.

Goal of the study was to gain more insights into the specific mechanisms underlying such a development and to examine the impediments constraining a more widely supported and inclusive green consumption system that could result in more effective outcomes. Using a practice-theoretical approach, the study explored what factors are held relevant in explaining the difference in people’s views regarding their own, and other people’s consumption practices. Based on semi-structured interviews with 11 Dutch respondents with various backgrounds, the analysis leads to several conclusions.

First of all, comparing the different groups as constructed based on their cultural and economic capital, demonstrates the existence of striking differences *between* the groups. That is, results clearly show that regarding eco-friendly consumption practices, the HCC, HEC group is characterized by an overall neglecting, indifferent and more selfish attitude that is often motivated by financial incentives. By contrast, the HCC, LEC group can be described with a high concern and awareness of the environment, accompanied by a great desire to incorporate a ‘green’ and ‘good’ lifestyle. To some extent, a tendency of a critical attitude towards for instance, eco-labels was observed, be it that such a characteristic seems slightly dependent on one’s income level determining whether one is more critical or slightly more naive (expected is that the former has a lower income than the latter). This finding points to future research implementing more different subdivisions within groups, as has been done in a similar fashion

by Kennedy and Givens (2019) dividing a similar group of HCC, LEC into two different ones. Furthermore, this group's financial struggles seemed to simultaneously foster their sense of agency in pursuing a green lifestyle. Lastly, developing a clear-cut conclusion about the LCC group is somewhat more complicated due to their different levels of economic capital, and in drawing comparisons, it is argued the many differences can be explained both by their economic differences, but also by their social contexts as influential factors.

Yet, a limitation of this latter conclusion is that despite the two different LCC respondents yielding interesting comparisons, more valid and perhaps somewhat different conclusions might have been drawn if more respondents were included in this class. At the same time, the recruitment and inclusion of LCC, LEC respondents in research is a more widely recognized problem. Nevertheless, future research should adopt more and better developed strategies and gather more information when recruiting LCC/LECs.

Thus, the first conclusion holds that to a certain extent, the distinct consumption practices and views, and thus, the differences *between* groups, can be roughly attributed to one's social class position. Interestingly, the second conclusion holds that at the same time, also several differences *within* the distinct groups could be observed, thus reflecting internal inconsistencies. These can be explained either through gradual differences as based on one's cultural or economic capital, again indicating that future studies should compose more different groups. Another explanation to internal differences simultaneously points towards the appropriateness of using practice theory: namely, many internal deviations within class led back to a personal history in a different social class, therefore having naturalized different accompanying practices and routines.

Lastly, in response to Carfagna et al. (2014)'s findings of the creative usage of LCC dispositions by HCC consumers, this study's third conclusion is that in the *similarities* that were found between different groups, a certain kind of creativity could be found in the adoption of practices of other groups. 'Savvy consumers' of HCC, LEC creatively transformed mediocre practices into a 'green' framework, 'borrowing' practices from the LCC, LEC group, whereas on the other hand, the LCC, LEC respondent took a creative approach to frame her practices as more 'green' and conscious than they might be in reality.

Finally, there is one last point requiring some emphasis. Despite a slightly decreasing attention towards practice-theoretical approaches due to a growing body of research suggesting that political activism is more effective in tackling the environmental crisis, the current study

has demonstrated that practice-theory is effective, particularly in fostering the awareness of LCC, LEC people in their daily consumption practices. Therefore, a practice-theoretical approach is recommended not only in but also beyond academic research, for instance as part of policy measurements aimed at tackling inequalities between different classes in society.

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Appendix A: measuring instrument – topic list

1. Practices/routines in (daily) grocery shopping

- Doing groceries as a practice
 - You wrote down your grocery purchases in the consumption diary the past week. How was it / how did you experience this?
 - How does the grocery shopping work? (making a shopping list/ other kinds of preparation) (Warde, 2017)
 - Routine or impulse shopping?
 - Were last week's groceries representative or deviant from normally? (Warde, 2017)
 - Has your way of consumption been the same? Or has this changed over time? What kind of factors are influential? (or even life events)? (Paddock, 2015)
 - The supermarkets: why these? What choices underlying?
(mobility/availability/location/distance/price/quality/image/means of production etc.)
(wider consumption settings: Barr & Prillwitz, 2014; Warde, 2017).
 - What does your ideal way of consuming look like? (if so) what are obstacles/barriers to reach this ideal? (Paddock, 2015; Barr & Prillwitz, 2014)
- Consumption diary discussion
 - What choices did you make in buying these products? How does doing groceries go into operation?
 - Which purchases are most relevant for you? Why?
 - Were there any purchases you highly doubted about / actually disagree about having bought? What kind of considerations do you make? (financial/ethical (organic/animal suffering)/sustainability/climate (packaging/means of production) / health)
 - Are there any products (or your consumption behavior in general) you are actually disagreeing with? (Grauel, 2016) (boycotting/buycotting, Carfagna et al., 2014)
 - In buying products, what things do you pay attention to? (eco-labels/advertising) and do you believe/trust what is said/warranted? (Boström & Klintman, 2017)

2. Identity / image

- Self-identity (Soron, 2010) ; eco-habitus (Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Carfagna et al., 2014); communication paradigm (Soron, 2010)

- How would you describe your own consumption behavior/pattern? What kind of factors are influential hereby? (friends/family/partner; media). What does your way of consuming tell about you / your identity?
- Would you identify as a conscious/'green'/environmentally friendly consumer? (Carfagna et al., 2014) / is it part of your identity or image?
- Is it important for you to communicate this identity to the outside world? (Boström & Klintman, 2017)
- Do you identify with other people with similar ideas/patterns?
- Others
 - What do you think of people consuming (more) "radically"? (vegetarians/vegans etc.). Opinion about trend?
 - What do you think of people consuming in a different way than you do? ("irresponsible others", Boström & Klintman, 2017). So less or more ethically/consciously than you? Do you feel you/one could change this and how?

3. Vision on environmental issues+ own consumption pattern/behavior

- What was the last time you thought about your own impact on the climate?
- Again: is your current way of consuming as you wish/ ideal? If not, how could this be changed so you would feel more satisfied / so that this would (more) positively impact the climate? (Paddock, 2015)
- Do you feel like you are able to change your own way of consuming? (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014)
- Could others (government/state) facilitate in changing (your) way of consuming? (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014)
- Do you feel like having (any) influence on the climate problems / climate change? (Barr & Prillwitz, 2014)
- To what extent do you feel like your way of consuming/purchasing could make a difference in the environmental crisis/climate change issues? (Boström & Klintman, 2017; Warde, 2017)
- Dissemination consumption behavior to other areas: Is your consumption behavior/pattern applicable to other areas in your life besides groceries? (clothing/vehicles/water/energy usage / CO2 etc.) (Boström & Klintman, 2017)