



**SUSTAINABLE LEISURE: ESCALATIONS, CONSTRAINTS  
AND IMPLICATIONS**

by

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**RESOLVE Working Paper 12-11**



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Second Version

by

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## **Abstract**

Sustainable leisure has received little academic attention despite being the single largest area of household emissions when calculated from a consumption perspective. However, the role leisure could play in more sustainable ways of living has been more thoroughly debated, from new forms of the good life to changed qualities and quantities of leisure time. This paper begins to bring these two areas of study together to ask: how well do time-consuming hobbies and intrinsically meaningful leisure practices resist processes of commodification and distanciation in consumer societies dependent upon economic growth?; do these practices have a stable level of materiality and resource use or do new consumption needs arise from the performance of the practice?; and are these hobbyist and less materialistic leisure practices equally open to everyone in society, thereby offering a sustainable approach to leisure and time use more generally?

Focusing primarily on hobby practices this paper looks at how the types of time consuming, intrinsically meaningful practices believed to be possibilities for more sustainable forms of activity operate within contemporary middle earner lifestyles. It charts some of the factors leading to the escalation of environmental impacts from leisure practices and examines whether a series of potentially constraining influences is effective. The findings are based on interviews and time use data collated across a year when Britain faced rising fuel prices and a recession.

The paper finishes with a discussion about the implications of different policy approaches, debating both their possible impacts on the sustainability of leisure and for leisure in sustainable lifestyles. It concludes by suggesting that how sustainable leisure is viewed within policy arenas is not simply about the greening of lifestyles but an expression of how governments view the relationship between citizens, the environment and the economy.

**Key Words:** Sustainable leisure; social practices; sustainable lifestyles

N.B. This is the second version of this working paper, updated in response to comments received, correcting errors in the original draft.

## 1. Introduction

The concept of leisure is sometimes highlighted as being one that everyone comprehends and yet academics have struggled to define (Ropke and Godskesen, 2007; Zuzanek, 2006). Leisure has variously been defined as a time use category, forms of activity or experiential affect (Liikanen, 2005). It accounts for everything from television watching to playing football, from going to the pub with friends to volunteering as a scout leader. Traditionally leisure was viewed as being co-constructed with, and forming the antithesis to, work (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, Carrington, 2008), a conceptualisation which was challenged by feminist critiques of work as 'paid work' and the logical ascriptions of all non-economic time as being 'leisure' for full-time parents, the unemployed and retired (Haworth and Lewis, 2005). This has been productive of residual time categorisations, for example as non-obligated time after paid and non-paid work, bodily and reproductive duties had been accounted for (Bittman, 2002). These discretionary time definitions have themselves been critiqued for failing to recognise some activities which could be construed as being domestic work in one context, such as daily cooking, and leisure in another, for example when hosting a dinner party (Shove and Panzar, 2005; van der Poel, 2006). This shortfall is partly addressed by the use of experiential definitions of leisure, whereby anything can be defined as a leisure activity if it is viewed as being so by the practitioner (van der Poel, 2006; Stebbins, 2005). Finally, a range of forms of activity and their categorisations have been suggested, broadly covering activities around escape, relaxation, entertainment, socialising and self-improvement.

Sustainable leisure has attracted relatively little academic attention outside of tourism and nature based leisure practices (although see Ropke and Godskesen, 2007; Aall et al, forthcoming). Notwithstanding this lack of research, when looked at from a consumption based carbon accounting perspective, the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions allocated to high level functional uses for the average UK household in 2004 can be attributed to recreation and leisure (Druckman and Jackson, 2010). At 27% of household emissions, with 10% of the average household carbon footprint equivalent due to holidays and 17% due to non-holiday based leisure practices, this is a substantial omission. Furthermore, estimates reveal a 66% increase in UK household fossil resource requirements for leisure from 1968 – 2000 (Jackson and Papathanasopoulou, 2008). Much of this increase can be attributed to a rise in consumer electronics, leisure travel and spending on leisure goods (ibid).

The increase in impacts from leisure is in line with a series of cultural trends identified by leisure theorists. Here we see the commodification of leisure practices as part of the commercialisation of everyday life (Warde et al, 2005), a process essential to the development of the consumer economy (Goldman, 1984). A growth in available leisure spend has not been matched by a growth in free leisure time (Roberts, 2006), resulting in the potential for more resource intensive activity per unit of time. Moreover, whilst leisure time may be more restricted for higher income groups, the proportion of income attributed to recreation and entertainment is significantly higher in upper deciles than it is in lower deciles (Jackson and

Papathanasopoulou, 2008: 91). A rise in 'voracious cultural consumption' means that higher income individuals now engage in a range of leisure practices, many with their own specialised equipment needs (Warde, 2005; Katz-Gerro and Sullivan, 2010). Whilst leisure access has become democratised, higher educated, higher income groups are still more likely to engage in multiple forms of self-actualising leisure than lower educated, lower income groups (Southerton, 2006; Glorieux et al, 2010). Additionally, an absence of either cultural or financial resources results in more home-based and passive leisure, such as television consumption (Glorieux et al, 2010). This highlights the continuing inequalities prevalent in leisure, where those with more income have higher rates of participation in nearly all forms of leisure, with the notable exception of television (Roberts, 1999). According to Campbell (2005), it is increasingly the leisure practices of those with more free time and higher levels of income which dictate the commodity world.

Leisure time is viewed by some theorists as being less likely to be filled with relaxation and idle time, and more likely to be packed with meaningful activity (Ransome, 2005: 54). Individuals try to adopt a wider range of recreational activities with different activities representing or being represented within our fragmented selves. Multiple and multi-tasked activities, consumer orientated and often passive, increase the impacts and demands of leisure. *'Dedicated leisure activity is quite rare, which is why the compulsive hill walker, the serious amateur musician, or even the serious reader of fiction, stand out so starkly. Most of us are content to flit from activity to activity. We neither seek nor claim expertise in anything'* (Rojek, 1993: 316). At the same time those with young children have less access to pure leisure time (Hochschild, 1996), with women's leisure in particular characterised by fragmented periods of interrupted and contaminated leisure due to other demands (Bittman and Wajcman, 2000). However, other studies of time use, including the seminal study by Southerton (2003), suggest that there is little evidence of increased activities, fragmentation and hurriedness in everyday life. Instead time is allocated for leisure and socialising (cold spots) through more intense periods of multi-tasking and activity (hot spots). Moreover, Pantzar (2010) argues that for many in society time is in excess marked out by loneliness.

The debates about fragmentation and diversification of leisure practices have implications for the sustainability of leisure. At its most basic level, sustainable leisure has been defined by Ropke and Godskesen (2007: 158) as:

- Time consuming
- Requiring low levels of resource
- Close to home
- Utilising shared facilities
- Focusing on one thing at a time.

At the same time, as both Jalas (2002) and Ropke and Godskesen (2007) suggest, the material intensity of leisure practices needs to be understood as a function of material inputs over time. Thus equipment which is resource intensive but is used for five hours every week for several years may be good for the environment given

the time and financial rebound effects. Ropke and Godskesen (2007: 172) suggest one of the ways more sustainable leisure could be achieved is through a focus on time-consuming practices such as playing a musical instrument or rock climbing. Yet in fragmentary consumer lifestyles defined by cultural voraciousness, conditions for focusing on a committed hobby are challenging (Ropke and Godskesen, 2007).

Whilst the sustainability of leisure has tended to lack academic interest, the role of leisure in sustainable lifestyles has not. New ideas about the Good Life have highlighted an increased importance of the enjoyment of nature, creativity pursuits, continuous learning and play in everyday life (Milbraith, 1993). Those working on reduced or no-growth economics have tended to suggest a reallocation of work-time to provide a more equal distribution of employment and reduced focus on economic productivity as the central organising feature of lives (Jackson, 2009; NEF, 2010; de Graaf, 2010; Schor, 2005, 2010). These reallocations of time open up the opportunity for more communal and less materialistic leisure, build on contemporary forms of less materialistic lives including voluntary simplicity, and suggest well-being does not equate to well-having. As Jackson (2009: 149) states:

‘Against the surge of consumerism, there are already those who have resisted the exhortation to ‘go out shopping’, preferring instead to devote time to less materialistic pursuits (gardening, walking, enjoying music or reading for example) ...’

Of those arguing for changed qualities and quantities of time, one of the most interesting is Jalas (2006). Jalas is concerned with instilling new qualities of time, with a focus on intrinsically meaningful activities in which ‘content time’ is more important than busy time. Following Szerszynski (2002) the focus is on autotelic actions. These are activities where the focus is the acquisition of ‘capacities, skills or knowledge’, practices lack an external goal and have no defined end point (ibid: 183). Jalas (2006) is arguing against a rationalising approach to time which constructs everyday life as economic goal-directed, productive action. Instead his focus is on an appreciative view of time use, revolving around conceptualisations of an immediacy of affective action that is legitimate in itself rather than merely instrumental for external goals. Pushing away from a sustainable lifestyle based on austerity, frugality or efficiency, he suggests the humble occupation of pleasure seeking does not need to be in opposition to environmentalism. Instead he argues that policies for sustainable consumption and production should cultivate the intrinsic meanings of action to provide new tempos of life and to carve out abundance and contentment as possibilities for sustainable lifestyles.

Both Jalas and Jackson are writing about leisure as part of sustainably transitioned economies and structures of time allocation. Some questions remain though. How well do intrinsically meaningful, time-consuming leisure practices resist processes of commodification and distanciation in consumer societies dependent upon economic growth? Do these practices have a stable level of materiality and resource use or can new consumption needs arise from the performance of the practice? Finally, are these less materialistic leisure practices equally open to everyone in society, thereby

offering a sustainable approach to leisure and time use more generally? The rest of this paper will use the empirical findings from a small empirical study of leisure to examine how leisure practices, including hobbies around forms of craft consumption (Campbell, 2005) such as gardening and cooking, can be escalated and constrained to be more or less sustainable. Where helpful we shall touch upon broader explanations of leisure within lifestyles to highlight the cultural, economic and spatial contexts within which everyday leisure is enacted and understood.

## **Methodology**

The empirical data is derived from a series of interviews with 18 participants conducted across a year. All the interviews employed a semi-structured interview methodology (McCracken, 1988; Burgess, 1992), covering themes rather than a series of fixed questions. Additionally a simple time-use diary (Gershuny and Sullivan, 1998; Bittman and Rice, 2002) was used to record all activities for a week, in half hour slots, with room for participants to comment about their routines and practices. The first interview covered the participants' routines, lifestyles, aspirations and details about their location. The second interview discussed leisure practices in more depth, how they were adopted, what equipment they utilised and where they were performed. The final interview covered issues around the impact of rising fuel prices and recession on everyday life and leisure, and broader aspects of sustainable work-leisure futures. The diary was utilised between the first and second interviews, and inserted an element of reflexivity into discussions about leisure practices and lifestyles. Indeed, many of the participants expressed surprise at the make-up of a typical week and the balance of activities within it. Crucially, the diaries facilitated meaningful conversations about how time was spent, with previous discussions having shown that individuals were often reluctant to acknowledge the time spent engaged in certain activities, watching television in particular.

The sample was selected on the basis of the highest household earner being in the 'middle earner' category. For the purposes of this report we have classified this as being between £17k and £27k, roughly in line with 40<sup>th</sup> to 60<sup>th</sup> percentile earnings from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2009)<sup>1</sup>. However, due to the recessionary nature of the economy across 2009-2010, many of the interviewees suffered a reduction in working hours and related earnings. Indeed, several lost jobs. Two of the three sample areas were particularly exposed to the economic downturn, one being a rural area of Wales and the other a post-industrial northern town which has failed to capitalise on the increasingly buoyant economy of the nearby city. The final sample area, a town in South London, was less affected by the economic conditions, although one participant did become unemployed across the study period. The sample had been specifically chosen to enable us to understand the impact of constrained income on leisure futures. Therefore, it is necessary to note here that we are discussing intrinsically meaningful and time consuming leisure, for a range of different life-stages, with people who have their ability to engage in commodified leisure practices constrained by income.

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<sup>1</sup> 40th percentile: £17, 984; 60<sup>th</sup> percentile: £25, 198 (ONS, 2009)

The sample differs from being fully representative of a typical leisure lifestyle in a couple of ways, in addition to their income constraints. In line with the nature of the type of work undertaken at this income level, the sample included a lot of self-employed people and shift workers. This meant that individuals were less likely to be capable of synchronising their leisure practices with others, or indeed to engage in classes or group activities, than the population as a whole. Moreover, most of the participants were recruited using recruitment companies and were aware that they would be participating in a leisure study. Therefore, it is likely that those with more interesting leisure lives would agree to take part in a study with so many points of contact across a year.

We have coded and analysed the interviews in line with a range of social theories, including social practice theory. At its simplest, a social practice is an x-ing (running, skiing, golfing) (Reckwitz, 2002b: 211). Following Schatzki, it is both the doings and sayings involved in an activity, and a move away from purely discursive understandings of social action (ibid). For Reckwitz (2002: 250) a social practice is 'a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood'. The individual acts as the 'carrier' of the practice and 'consists in the unique crossing of different mental and bodily routines in one mind/body and in the interpretative treatment of this constellation of crossing' (ibid: 257). For theorists of social practice then the practice, as an embodied routine which unfolds within space and time, is the smallest possible unit of analysis rather than the individual. However, it is notable that we have struggled throughout this study to understand how to ensure anonymity for individuals, because their constellations of leisure practices can at times be so unique as to make them instantly recognisable to friends or family. Moreover, whilst certain leisure practices are inherently more unsustainable than others, the combination of different leisure practices an individual chooses to engage in also has implications for the sustainability of their lifestyles. Thus, whilst we have employed qualitative interviews and time use diaries to understand the allocation of leisure practices within everyday life rather than an in depth study of the specific practices, we here utilise elements of social practice theory to understand the escalation and commodification of leisure practices more generally. At the same, we have tried to understand those leisure practices within the broader everyday considerations which are the reality of those who consciously have to negotiate the allocations of time and financial resources which constrain everyday life and consumer lifestyles.

## **2. Leisure as social practice**

This section introduces sport and hobbies as social practices. It brings together some of the key points from the literature and illustrates them with examples and quotes from the study findings. Social practices are comprised of meanings, skills, know-how and materials. They include norms, standards and conventions about where, how and when they should be performed (Shove, 2003; Reckwitz, 2002). Practices establish goals and approve ways of achieving them. The performance of practices

grants rewards and provides meaning and affect (Reckwitz, 2002; Jalas, 2005). For example, golf is a social game normally played on a golf course, during the day. It requires golf clubs and the objective is to get round the course in as few shots as possible. Artefacts, such as equipment and tools, are central to the performance of most practices, and competence is shared between practitioners and their tools (Watson and Shove, 2008); thus a pair of football boots with studs will allow the footballer to play better than a pair of ordinary trainers. This focus on the materiality of practices reveals consumption, both as material resources and energy, is part of the performance of practice rather than lying separate to it (Warde, 2005). Furthermore, new consumption needs are emergent from practice (Jalas, 2006), as illustrated by the quote below from an interviewee's description of the evolution of her craft consumption:

Jenny: I always make all my Christmas cards. If it's people – I haven't done it – I've got it all packed away since Christmas, so what I need to get – I'll need to get a little craft table, drawers on wheels or something, because it's...at the moment, because I packed it all away after Christmas, it's a pain to get it out and it takes an hour just to get it all out. So that is another thing I'm going to try and do over the coming weeks is sort that out, a little craft area. Yeah, so that's a leisure thing, but again that's something I would do more if I prepared for it or had the tools for it. So that might be something I do, go and buy a little craft table or something like that.

Practices are not fixed; they evolve through the variety of ways in which they are reproduced and can be open to socially useful innovation and technological change (Warde, 2005). Thus leisure practices are open to increased commodification and commercialization, through business innovation as well as practitioner driven demand (Yoder, 1997; Pantzar and Shove, 2005):

Jenny: It's got a lot easier to probably do, because I used to actually buy the card, cut it, you know, make my own actual cards. Now you can just buy them already done and stick stuff on.

Clearly not all leisure practices have equal levels of energy and resource consumption, and related environmental impacts. Moreover, some practices can be local and low impact or can be distant and high impact depending on how they are practiced. Golf is a fairly circumscribed practice. The individual, (presuming other structuring conditions such as class, cultural capital, habitus, and the exclusionary practices of particular golf clubs have not constrained their access to golf as a leisure practice), can choose which golf club to play at. However, the golf club, and indeed the understanding of what a golf club should offer, dictates how the golf course is kept, when golfers can play, how they should play, what equipment is used and to some extent what needs to be worn. It requires a complex set of skills, knowledge of etiquette and golfing know-how to be able to act competently and appropriately on a golf course; even if the player has little tolerance of the strictness of golf conventions:

David: I mean, to a degree, it's like a uniform. You know, you...if you wear a t-shirt, you've got to have a collar on your t-shirt. You can't wear jeans. You know, you've got to wear trousers. If you wear shorts, they've got to be tailored shorts. Everything is etiquette, if you like, golf etiquette, and eh...so it's not as em.... I mean, even to the fact that, when you go into a golf club, you can't wear jeans. You know, there's certain times when...you can't go in a certain room without a collar and tie on or a jacket and... It's quite eh...there's some parts of the golf club quite pompous, to be quite honest, sometimes, you know, and em...it is totally different.

Yet not all leisure practices are structured such that the individual or group is without agency over how they are performed. Indeed, some can be performed in so many ways only aspects of the integrative practice can be considered to be limited by cultural rather than local specificity. Gardening is one such practice, and may in fact constitute a project as explained by Watson and Shove (2008; 81), which is "made' by human actors who weave multiple practices together...'. Whilst participants did suggest they gained ideas from television programmes and magazines placing parts of the practice in line with contemporary trends, such as decking, the variety of ways in which the participants gardened revealed the interplay between individual tastes and preferences and the general practice or project of gardening. Thus one person had a bamboo garden, another had all their plants in pots, one had decked his garden and regularly visited garden centres to change his border plants, whilst another had a rule that they could only swap plants with friends and neighbours not buy them.

These differences in both impact and flexibility of the practice have implications for how necessary it is to target the practice for intervention and what the appropriate site for intervention could be considered to be. It is pointless to suggest to a golfer that they should reduce their impact from golf in any way other than through their choice of a local golf course. All other aspects would require the involvement of a range of actors involved in the provision of golf courses and equipment, including those who determine the social conventions and rules which surround the sport. Even for gardening, where individuals have more latitude in deciding how to garden, magazines and television programmes influence how gardening is undertaken by many, with garden centres and equipment suppliers playing a role in what is available for use and where it is sourced. What emerges is a complex set of actors and factors involved in escalating and constraining how different leisure practices can be performed. We will examine some of these below.

### **3. Escalating standards**

From the empirical findings of the study we have identified a range of ways in which the materiality and mobility of predominantly time consuming leisure practices may be escalated. Here we focus on a few of these areas whereby the logic of the practice interacts with cultural trends and changing social standards to predicate the trajectory of the practice or the career of the practitioner. At the same time, the interactions between the material, skill and meaning elements of a practice are

highlighted, for example as products which improve competence in line with the goals of the practice are adopted and laborious elements of what should be pleasurable practices are avoided.

#### ***4.1 Competence***

Competence, both through embodied skill and know-how about correct performance, lies at the heart of serious leisure and practices more generally. The range of potential opportunities for being a competent practitioner at some form of sport, hobby or craft enables individuals to find something they are good at, and may be the reason why many people are happy regardless of their income or social status (Warde, 2005: 148). Proficient performance provides intrinsic rewards, through satisfaction, self-esteem and the experience of flow<sup>2</sup> (Jalas, 2005; Warde, 2005; Ropke and Godsken, 2007). Additionally they could provide extrinsic rewards through demonstrating abilities and social success in an activity which is not strictly about being part of a consumer based status race (Ropke, 2009; Warde, 2005).

At an environmental level, some leisure practices which require vast amounts of time to gain proficiency can be viewed as positive and desirable, especially those requiring little equipment or travel, such as playing music in an amateur band:

***Q: Is it nice being part of something like [a brass band]?***

Jane: Yes, yeah, I love it! My boyfriend doesn't understand, because he's never done it, but I really enjoy it. I like being part of it and...I miss it when I don't play. Actually, at the moment, I'm thinking of leaving my current band because they don't do enough, and I never feel like I'm... We have a term which is called "get your lip in", which is basically get your lip into the mouthpiece, put crudely, get your lip into the mouthpiece and then you'll be in practice. So my lips are not in – I never feel like my lip's in at this band because I'm never in practice, because we only do once a week, and then over the summer, we've had 2.5 months off, of no band at all.

However, competence does not reside purely within the individual, but is shared between people and their tools or leisure equipment (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Reckwitz, 2002; Watson and Shove, 2008). The hybridized nature of competence necessitates a certain minimum level of equipment for most committed leisure practices and explains the increased level of specialised equipment owned by those with more committed leisure careers (Yoder, 1997; Hvenegard, 2002). This leaves even low impact leisure practices open to commodification through the provision of useful competence-providing product innovations.

The clearest example of a leisure practice which has escalated from the local and low impact to be a high impact, distanced practice is represented by Peter's account of birdwatching. Peter became an avid birdwatcher in his youth and talked about how he and his friend used to take their bikes to look for birds. However, when he

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<sup>2</sup> Flow is the experience of a loss of self in high challenge, high skills scenarios (Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre, 1989)

became old enough to have a car, he became involved in 'twitching' a form of birdwatching based on collecting as many unique birds from a location (in this case the UK) as possible. It is, he says, a competitive rather than purely appreciative activity. Moreover, it is a leisure practice which has adopted ever more expensive equipment both to increase the proficiency of the individual to spot birds and to collate them through the kin of this practice, photography:

Peter: You know, it used to be a very cheap hobby, you know, where you went out with a £15 pair of Dixons' binoculars and a coat and off you went. Now, people are turning up sort of £1,000-£1,500 pair of bins around their neck, a £2,000 scope over their shoulder, a digital camera, a pager, every waterproof piece of clothing that's ever existed and everything else. You know, you can have £3,000-£4,000 worth of stuff on people now.

*Q: Is that...is that because the sort of people doing it have changed or just that...?*

Peter: The money's there. People want the equipment. They want the... I mean, the photography side, they want the better photographs.

It could be argued from an environmental perspective, especially when considering aspects of energy accounting such as the rebound effect, that a £1,500 pair of binoculars is much better than a £15 pair since similar levels of material resources will be utilised for a much higher price, reducing the materiality intensity per unit cost. However, the escalation of twitching is much more of a concern in relation to the increase of competence enabled through the adoption of new communication technologies:

Peter: About the beginning of sort of... '84 – up until about 1980, bird-watching was diabolical – the information was diabolical, the books were crap. [...] In them days, the information came through the grapevine, which was a phone call, or if you saw someone, and it could take three weeks before I'd even get the information. I mean the bird could have died three weeks ago before I even knew that it even existed. [...] Pagers were put in sort of the beginning of the '90s because businessmen were using it for that, and someone had thought, well, if businessmen can use it, so can we, to this present day where...mayhem is generally done. Now, [a rare bird] is bleeped out on text messages to mobiles, to phone calls, to anything, and people will spend...any amount of money to get to see it.

Whilst Peter is limited in his ability to afford the pager system, he tells stories of other twitchers chartering planes to get to see a rare bird in time. Moreover, the system means hundreds of birdwatchers can congregate in one spot very quickly, often in urban areas, at times shifting birdwatching away from being a nature-based and low impact leisure practice. Twitching and related photography are not the only practices to be re-spatialised and organised in conjunction with the potential know-how and competence available through the adoption of new information and communication technologies. Indeed as ICT has become embedded into everyday life, it has been integrated into almost every practice (Ropke et al, 2010) extending,

modifying and facilitating leisure practices (Mokhtarian et al, 2006). However, this is not to suggest that new technologies will always increase resource use: the need to travel may also be reduced, for example by finding virtual communities with which to share leisure interests. Moreover, the technology itself does not determine the new format for the practice; rather new socio-technological systems evolve as practices are re-produced in different ways as useful technologies are utilised in their performance.

At the same time, Peter's story illustrates the dynamic tensions between competence and competition which appeared frequently in the narratives of the participants. Here the commitment to the activity derived through the intrinsic rewards of competence is strengthened by participating in competitive activities. Similarly, Jane's time consuming involvement in her local brass band is strengthened through competition with other bands, which provides an additional unifying goal for the band. It also necessitates that the band travels to competitions. Yet without this competitive goal driven travel, the band lacks purpose. Thus we see tensions within a range of competitive leisure practices, in that competitive motivations provide the goal of the practice and a sense of purpose and meaning, but they can also necessitate more travel and competence-providing specialised equipment.

#### *4.2 Chore*

As suggested in the introduction, definitions of leisure have been fraught with problems. To minimise the confusion about what does constitute leisure, some theorists have suggested anything can be perceived to be a leisure activity, and therefore what is a leisure practice should be defined by the individual (van der Poel, 2006; Broadhurst, 2001). Pantzar and Shove (2005: 3) take this position further to include those involved in the manufacture of leisure in the definition, defining leisure as referring to 'a set of practices that have in common the fact that they are defined as such by those who do them and/or by those who provide the materials'. However, we have found little evidence to suggest people think of or define their everyday practices as 'leisure' at all. Across the first series of interviews, a word search reveals leisure was mentioned only when describing a named structural provision, such as 'leisure centre' or 'leisure pass'. Indeed one Welsh participant suggested people did not think in terms of 'leisure' and he did not believe there was a Welsh word one would commonly use to refer to leisure. Instead people talked about relaxing, going out, chilling out, playing sports among other things.

This is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it would suggest, despite the attempts to find a meaningful and socially inclusive method of defining leisure, it exists primarily as a category for those who provide the resources for, manage, analyze or quantify leisure. This in turn raises questions about the purpose of inviting the respondent to express a subjective opinion about a concept they do not recognise within their everyday constructs and discourses. Secondly, it suggests the categorisation is not utilized in public understandings of spare time activities despite a recognition of its widespread use by academics, government, business and statisticians. Given the myriad ways in which participants did refer to the categorisation and structuring of their 'leisure activities', it is likely the concept has

not translated into everyday life precisely because it does not accurately represent how those practices are manifested, performed and given meaning within lifestyles.

In light of these concerns, we began by asking respondents to classify their diarised activities as 'chore', 'work', 'leisure' or 'other' but followed this up by asking the participants whether they had found the categories meaningful and easy to use and how they had decided what was leisure. Their explanations about how they had decided something was leisure were largely in line with experiential definitions of leisure (Roberts, 2006; Lewis, 2003); choice, freedom from obligation and pleasure being the recognisable features of leisure experience. Most of the participants suggested the leisure categorisation made some sense. However thinking about practices within these new definitions had had a transformative effect on some. Indeed, one interviewee was surprised to find how little of her life was her own; another said it had made him completely reassess his life and had prompted him to have more leisure and less chore in the quotidian.

Yet whilst leisure was not a consciously utilised categorisation of practice, the relationship between pleasure and chore became obvious from the diaries and interviews. Moreover it was clear that the introduction of chore-like qualities to leisure practices interfered with the logic of the practice as pleasurable. At this point solutions which reduced or distracted from those chore-like qualities became potential sites of escalation of the practice particularly for craft consumption type forms of leisure such as gardening.

Gardening, as an integrative practice or project which has a range of other practices involved in its performance, was the most frequently dual classified leisure activity:

Paula: So, gardening, I've learned, is too generic a term, because some parts of it are really pleasurable, and some parts of it, it's just work. Weeding – urgh! And then clearing areas is chore-like. [...] But then look at the snowdrops – where I've cleared the brambles [...] So look at the reward.

*Q: Your gardening – I noticed you've variously classified it as for work, chore or leisure.*

Jack: Em, if I'm having to dig things, that's a chore. If I'm having to cut the grass, that's a chore. If I'm actually planting and designing, that's a pleasure. So that's the...you know, I'm not very good at maintenance. You know, I want to leave that to somebody else to sort out, but it hasn't worked out like that...

It is not surprising that the aspects of gardening described as being work or a chore were the ones for which there are the technologies which offer convenience providing solutions, such as weed-killer and lawn mowers. Indeed, even with these solutions some interviewees talked about wanting or needing to engage the services of a gardener to take the burden and physical labour out of the practice. However, as is clear from the quotes above, some escalation of practice can be reduced through

the intrinsic rewards to be gained from the eventual enjoyment of the aesthetics of the garden.

Another form of escalation of the impacts of practices is through multi-tasking (Ropke and Godskesen, 2007). From the interviews it is clear that gardening could be 'contaminated' (Pantzar, 2010) with other practices, such as listening to the radio, to provide distractions and frame shift from chore to leisure. This 'frame shifting' through the use of television and radio was evident throughout the diaries as a strategy to reduce chore. Participants watched television whilst cooking, cleaning and exercising. It also facilitated the ability to undertake other craft based hobbies, such as knitting and sewing, which would become boring if not part of multitasking. One interviewee in particular spent many hours per week engaged in making soft furnishings and stressed she would not do so without the television to provide background sound and entertainment. This suggests a level of ambiguity around the implications of multitasking in relation to some time-consuming hobbies or forms of craft consumption; on the one hand it introduces additional elements of energy use, yet on the other it facilitates time-consuming, low impact activities.

#### **4.3 Comfort**

A second embodied escalation of standards in leisure practices, which has implications for commodification in line with the meaning of pleasure in leisure, is around comfort. The achievement of comfort is implicated in the changing and standardising socio-technological systems of a range of practices (Shove, 2003; Hinton, 2010). Moreover, comfort is a key aspect of leisure, tourism and outdoor pursuits primarily in relation to climate and weather conditions (Becken, 2010; Tucker and Gilliland, 2007). Recent research has highlighted the outdoorisation of indoor standards of warmth (Hitchings, 2007) and a growth in all-year round and indoor options for forms of leisure which increase comfort (van Bottenburg and Salome, 2010; Eden and Barratt, 2010).

Weather-proof clothing and equipment are central features of certain outdoor leisure practices, allowing for continuing engagement despite the changeable weather conditions and seasons of the UK.

David: You know, like, straightaway, if you're playing golf, you've got £200, £500, £1,000 quid worth of golf stuff to actually go and play golf. It's not only the clubs you've got to get, it's the golf shoes, it's the waterproofs situation, and so, I mean, golf is quite expensive.

Zavi: Em, all I need is my boots and my rucksack, so I don't need to... You know, I've got a compass and things. Most things, we've got at the club, so I can always lend... I wouldn't need to buy anything. I do buy, but I don't need to buy. We've had to equip my daughter of course because she didn't have things like boots and waterproofs, etc. so we had to buy my daughter stuff.

Understanding the embodied nature of comfort in leisure practices problematises the notion of de-materialised leisure activities, such as those suggested by Jackson (2009) above. Whilst casual engagement in outdoor activities, like walking, can be and are organised around the weather (Palutikof et al, 2004), longer walking holidays and a higher degree of commitment to a leisure practice bring with them a greater need for commodification. Once again, a recognition that consumption and travel are part of everyday practices, and emergent from the performance of the practice, facilitates an understanding of the co-evolution of consumer demand and producer provision.

At the same time, the material intensity of an activity, which is the resources used in equipment divided by time it is used for remains a relevant concern (Jalas, 2003). Whilst Zavi's desire to own rather than borrow his equipment from his local club highlights a larger concern about the nature of contemporary consumer society, long term and regular use would reduce the intensity of the resource use. Perhaps of rather more concern is Jack's chosen form of fishing. For Jack fishing is a relaxing, time consuming and appreciative activity, much as Jalas (2006) proposes:

Jack: Well, you're always thinking about, you know...midday, you're not going to catch anything – it's too clear and the fish aren't going to bother and they'll see the reflection of the line on the water, so I'll go to sleep in the sun, you know, if it's sunny. If it's rainy, it doesn't matter. Weather doesn't perplex me very much.

*Q: Right, so that's a very calm thing. But that seems like a lot of time to me. I guess you must have to do all these other things, all these other things, but it's quite relaxing, is it?*

Jack: That's the interesting thing about it. If you don't relax, you're not going to catch anything, because you'll be tense – you'll be thinking, oh god, you know, have I got to do this by tomorrow and...and you've lost the chance, you've missed it. You really do have to focus, and you have to be aware of what's going on, and you're thinking about it all...thinking about it all the time. Then, the argument is, you argue with yourself, saying, well look, you've driven this way, you're sitting here in the boat, you're here to catch trout, and you're thinking about something else, which means you're not going to be as effective. So you need to focus and think about this, and then that tends to shunt other things out of the way.

However, Jack's desire for comfort impacts upon his chosen form of fishing and escalates the practice from being local and low impact to being more challenging to sustainable leisure:

Jack: And then, you know, I can put the gear on board and I can go out all day then, because it's got a cabin on it, so I can sit there in some comfort. Yeah.

*Q: So is that motorised or a sailing boat?*

Jack: No, motorised because having a sailing boat is like standing in a cold shower tearing up money, you know. I've done that. Don't want to do that anymore! Wet and cold!

Jack, a retiree has considerable concerns about sustainable living, and is one of the few participants to have actively engaged in methods to ameliorate the impacts of his lifestyle. However, the changing logic of his leisure practices in line with his embodied needs as he ages means that he looks for more comfortable and less laborious ways to engage with his interests. Whereas younger sea and lake fishers might be more concerned with the pursuit of excitement and adventure, perhaps causing their own escalations in practices through the need for safety equipment and the increased travel this enables (Klepp, 2011), here the achievement of comfort becomes central to the pleasurable enjoyment of discretionary activities despite opposing personal values.

#### *4.4 Hyper-mobility, cosmopolitanism and meaningful lives*

Schor (1998) argues foreign travel is part of a new set of leisure norms which underpin a culture of overwork. Shaw and Thomas (2006) similarly highlight the challenge to sustainable lifestyles through the new norm of long distance travel which has made air travel into both an expectation and a right in affluent countries. A culture of cosmopolitanism (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006), facilitated through both corporeal and virtual mobilities and interests in other places, situates the individual and their leisure aspirations within global possibilities. As part of a general trend towards mobile selves and a de-differentiation of leisure and tourism, local and low impact leisure practices can become distanced through a desire for participation in international spectator sports and the experience of leisure in more interesting places and cultures. Hence, even for this financially restricted group, participation in leisure was not restricted to the local or the virtual, with interviewees taking golfing holidays and attending sporting events abroad:

Simon: Like I say, we're mad on Formula 1 and we love it, and just this season, we've not really watched any of it. We watched a couple of matches...a couple of races, sorry, but we've not really been involved in it this season, which is a bit of a shame really, but I'm hopefully going to be going to Belgium next year with my cousin.

For all of the interviewees in our sample, engagement in leisure practices abroad was part of a wider set of social activities, enabling them to spend time with family and friends. The growth of leisure and tourism as forms of mobile social lives and obligations to meaningful others (Larsen et al, 2007) fits neatly with voracious cultural appetites keen to have new experiences and adventures as part of the process of self-actualisation as a modern pursuit. Certainly the desire for travel outweighed considerations of sustainable lifestyles, with most participants stressing their lack of concern around air travel and tourism or leisure activities.

Because of the social nature of much of the long distance travel undertaken by the participants, the leisure practice can be of secondary importance to the decision to

pursue it at a distance. Moreover, Larsen et al (2007) suggest free accommodation further mobilises those on constrained incomes, allowing for foreign travel based around social networks. Thus the story of Paula's local quiz-team illustrates how a combination of hyper-mobility and a desire for sociability and community can escalate the impacts arising from participation in a very local and non-materialistic leisure practice beyond the practice itself. In this, the relationship between practices and lifestyles can be seen as being enacted in complex networks of sociality and meaning which pushes the site of intervention for sustainable living beyond a focus on individual practices.

**Q: *Mm, your hedonistic quiz team, you're all off for a hedonistic, what, week [abroad]?***

Paula: Holiday. Oh! That's em, one of them has got an apartment [...] And it was sort of mentioned, "Oh, not taking [the family] next year – we're just going on our own," and then, "Why don't you come?" and then "Why don't you all go?" and...we're all going – 5th April. Flights are booked.

Yet hyper-mobility and cosmopolitanism are also part of a broader set of cultural trends in which leisure plays a role in providing and demonstrating both a meaningful and interesting lifestyle. We had not predicted the level of discomfort people felt when discussing their leisure lifestyles. Indeed several participants suggested their lifestyles and leisure practices marked them out as 'dull', 'boring' or 'sad'.

Warren: We enjoy taking the dog to the beach...sad little things like that.

**Q: *Nice little things...! Why do you think they're sad?***

Warren: Well, it's not really very manic and exciting, is it? It's just a dreary life, isn't it?

**Q: *Right. How would you describe your lifestyle to somebody else?***

Gina: Not particularly exciting [...] You know, it's work, come home, doing whatever it is you do on your own time, and get back to work.

June: And I mean, because I work nights, when I'm off, I'd rather be at home, you know [laughing]. Yeah, we do go to the cinema once in a while or out for a meal once in a while, but not often! Bit boring really, in't we [laughing]?!

Here there is an obvious disjuncture between what people found meaningful and even enjoyable in their everyday lives and what they felt it said about their lives to other people. Several factors are likely to be in operation here. The first, as discussed by Sennett (2003) is to do with the distance between the life of the person being studied and the expectations they feel from those conducting the study. So for some of the interviewees, and Warren in particular, his life was about providing security and love for his family. Whilst he does have hobbies and interests, his primary aim is to be a good father and partner, to gain respect for his decency. Yet the research into

leisure lifestyles challenged his sense of self-worth through his own belief in what is culturally expected from leisure in a good life – that it should be exciting, spontaneous, active. Indeed, most of the interviewees under-emphasised their television watching in the first interview in comparison to their diary entries, again suggesting a divide between what they are happy doing in their everyday lives and what they feel they should be doing.

At play too then is a cultural expectation that simply enjoying time with friends, family and neighbours, walking the dog or watching television is not an adequate use of one's free time. As Godsken and Ropke (2007) highlight, an interesting leisure life is in part essential for social identity and status, and within those leisure social groups new places and forms of practice ensure a continuous subject for conversation in leisure groups as more mundane practices soon leave people with little to say. This is similarly true of foreign holidays, which McCabe and Stokoe (2010) argue have become a necessary part of sociability and everyday conversation. This does indeed place some of the interviewees under a sense of obligation to engage in practices they are happy to avoid:

**Q: You're saying you feel like you should do more holidays – I mean, is that a kind of personal feel or do you feel like that would be more normal [laughing]?**

Alan: Yeah, I think that's what it is, yeah, being more normal, but...but actually, I completely enjoy my life. I mean there's nothing... I don't feel... To be honest, it's not anything missing. It's just that I think...sometimes I think maybe I should have more holidays. You know, a lot of people do go, and they talk about their holidays, you know, what am I going to do for... It's a lot of – it's a social thing, isn't it? You talk about your holiday. It's more I guess you... If you're in an office, you say, "Oh, what are you doing on holiday?". You've got impress – you know that you've got to impress. I mean, it's some form of impressing other people, isn't it?

However, this need for exciting conversation around leisure and holidays is itself a manifestation of contemporary society and cosmopolitan culture. Simmel and Hughes' (1949) prescription for non-personal conversation as pure sociability is now facilitated by stories of adventure and excitement, which share personal experience but avoid overly personal discourse.

Finally, the ability to engage in the purely sociable was called into question in a variety of ways, particularly by the male interviewees. To some extent this is to do with the problems of mapping out time to spend with friends in the face of competing demands, particularly around the 'time squeeze' associated with parenthood (Zuzanek, 1998). Suggesting the need to engage in socially acceptable health and fitness activities becomes one way to negotiate time out from the home:

Tom: Well, for the last few years, but it's hard now because we've got...my girlfriend is pregnant again, so...

**Q: Oh congratulations!**

Tom: Yes, another four weeks, so she's trying to stop me from going to the gym!

**Q: I mean is being sporty kind of really quite important to you as a person?**

Tom: I just like to, you know, keep quite healthy and, you know, just...because, you know, when you're working in the building trade, it's quite a physical job, and just...you know, just being healthy is quite important I think, you know, when you're running around and lifting things and carrying things. If you're unfit, it makes things harder. So I think it's quite important.

Similarly, Zavi talks about how without the structure of a football match his group of friends would not be able to sustain spending time together every weekend:

Zavi: When we were in danger of going into liquidation a couple of years ago, at football, we said, "What will we do?" and you know...we wouldn't have done anything. We would have all promised to...we'll still get out and have a beer every few weeks, and we would all say that, I know we would, but I know we wouldn't do it, because people don't do it, whereas, the football and the season ticket glues you all together because you're all there every other Saturday.

'Doing something' then becomes a way to instil a routine, to allocate the space and time to be with friends against the demands of other practices and to feel that time has been spent productively, with something to tell friends and family. Yet, by nature of requiring a central activity through which to organise time spent socialising, purer forms of sociality become more difficult to justify. Interviewees talked about 'doing nothing' or wasting time unless they had something to show from their activity. Thus, television watching and time spent with friends and family became viewed as being less meaningful than other forms of leisure:

Warren: I mean, this week for instance, there's been a couple of days where I've had no work booked in, which hasn't really worried me because the next couple of weeks are crazy, but I haven't really done anything – visited friends and sat around with friends all day and things like this. You know, it's...time tends to pass you by and you haven't really done anything.

In short, doing something is viewed as more culturally acceptable and desirable, even if the individual is happy with their own local practices of television viewing and socialising with friends. Voracious cultural consumption and a lingering sense of a protestant work ethic, which requires a productive use of time, can challenge some of the more sustainable uses of leisure time. Indeed, the self-improving and self-actualising nature of some forms of serious leisure could be part of this productive culture, rather than challenging the rationale of it. Moreover, this is a cultural belief which Kleiber (2000) suggests is reflected in academic interest in flow-like activities and active leisure practices. He argues that a lack of research into other forms of leisure, such as relaxing, is the result of a culture which valorises youth and achievement. This is an important point. Several theorists working on issues of well-being and new forms of the good life have highlighted the positive role of active forms of leisure (Milbraith, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; Iso-Ahola and Mannell,

2004). Much of this positive affect is in relation to improved social interaction and community. However, when looking to promote the positive qualities of some forms of serious or time consuming leisure we should be wary of not enforcing cultural beliefs around achievement, health, fitness and the optimality of flow experiences to the detriment of relaxation and pure sociability; not least because, as Smith Maguire (2008) argues, self-work for example through fitness activities can be understood as one of the obligations of a consumer culture concerned with productive values.

#### **4. Leisure constraints**

Whereas the first half of this paper has focused on some aspects which open up intrinsically meaningful and committed leisure practices to escalation and market exploitation, the second half is more concerned with how leisure, particularly serious leisure, is constrained. Once again, rather than a full analysis of all aspects of constraint, here we choose to examine those which have already gained a level of relevance within the environmental policy debates. Despite the wealth of evidence which suggests leisure is constrained in multiple and pervasive ways, our only interest is in those constraints which limit sustainability in relation to how serious and meaningful leisure practices would normally be performed. We begin by looking at the role of personal environmental values. We then briefly consider the impacts of time constraints, before our primary focus: financial constraint.

##### ***5.1 Environmental values***

Rojek (1997) suggests notions of care for self and others are central to contemporary leisure. He includes in this a concern for the environment in line with risk society evidenced, for example, by a lack of littering and fouling of waterways. However, unlike the identification of escalations of practice, our reliance on discursive methodologies has made it difficult to identify the small environmentally friendly conventions which have been developed and are unconsciously re-produced within leisure practices. Instead, the focus here is on the role of personal and social environmental values and their implications for leisure constraints.

The first three stages of the empirical research were conducted without reference to the environment or sustainability more generally. Instead the interviews asked about routines, aspirations and values, and covered how leisure activities were practised, thereby gaining a sense of how important environmental concerns were to people and their practices. Two of the interviewees could be classified as having strong environmental values which influence a range of their behaviours; another four had introduced narratives of environmental and ethical concerns into their personal biographies and lifestyle values; most of the other participants talked about valuing nature and green space, as well as slower tempos of life and community, which suggests they could be viewed as valuing aspects of sustainable living.

However, across the interviews about leisure practices environmental issues were rarely mentioned. Whilst nature and community values may influence and have been influenced by the leisure practices undertaken by the participants, only one interviewee's environmental values constrained the materiality of their leisure

practices such that he contravened the standards and conventions of a range of practices:

*Q: You sound like somebody who doesn't really do lots of sort of, you know, leisure equipment and things...you don't really have much...*

Trevor: No. I'm suspicious of needing equipment. I think that's making kind of an industry out of it, in some way, you know. [...] There are people who believe they can't get on a bicycle unless they've got helmets, etc. etc. and they can't go for a walk, you know, other than the road, unless you've got, again, waterproofs and so on, in case it might rain. I suppose probably I believe that most leisure things you can do with the minimum of change to your normal clothes normally.

Similarly, only Trevor and Jack suggested they constrained their travel in line with their environmental values. One further participant had taken part in a church environmental scheme which meant she had not travelled abroad the previous year, but said she found the thought of giving up flying 'upsetting' and would not repeat it. Indeed, when questioned directly most people who holidayed abroad said they would be unlikely to give up flying for the sake of the environment, even those staycationing for financial reasons.

Most participants were unable to suggest anything they should be doing for the environment in relation to leisure; indeed many did not understand how it could be an issue and were surprised to be asked the question:

Gina: I can't think of anything [laughing]! I don't think so.

George: Well, I'm aware of the things that I do do that don't cause any environmental problems. Like I can't see going for a game of golf and hitting a ball around the hills is an issue, or running about on a football pitch or watching football in the fresh air.

In short, the participants were mainly lacking awareness of the impacts of leisure practices, and the practices themselves were lacking any cultural coding which would mark them as sites for intentional pro-environmental behaviour in relation to carbon emissions. Somewhat to our surprise, the Welsh sample were more likely to provide examples of environment and leisure issues than those from other sample areas, mostly in relation to natural environment and biodiversity issues – for example in terms of river pollution and fishing or biodiversity issues in gardening. However, given most of the sample had talked about valuing nature and green space, and that many leisure practices were performed in that context, perhaps this is not so surprising. Moreover, it lends credence to those theorists who suggest values and practices are co-created (e.g. Hards, 2011) or highlight the potential for new values to be created through the performance of practices which enable new social niches and ways of being (Jalas, 2006).

In contrast to the lack of environmental discourses surrounding leisure, community and health were frequently mentioned in relation to leisure practices and often formed part of the explanation as to how participants were recruited to specific practices. Indeed, whilst we at no time raised the issue of health, every single participant spontaneously talked about the need to use leisure practices to become fit and healthy. This was often in combination with concerns about being over-weight and a sense of obligation towards the aesthetization and management of the body. Participation in sports and other forms of exercise was discussed and undertaken with varying degrees of commitment and success.

Paula: I'd like to have more time so that I could go to the gym and I could exercise more, and that would be the stock answer that I'd give you, and I say the same thing on the 1st of January every year. If I really wanted to do that, I'd find the time, is the brutal honesty of it.

As Smith Maguire (2008) suggests, the history of self-improvement through leisure, in line with a protestant work ethic and the rational recreation principles which established sports as part of the national heritage (Critchler and Clark, 1985), have been strengthened through the consumer culture of 'self-work' and the body beautiful. This provides a social and historical context for the cultural coding of leisure as 'care for the self' within which new discourses and health campaigns are given meaning and become accepted. Although, as suggested by Paula's quote above, whilst exercising is part of contemporary culture it is not necessarily part of everyone's lifestyle and positive attitudes towards it do not always translate into action. What it demonstrates, however, is the paucity of environmental values and attitudes which could transform leisure practices through the collective action of individuals. Moreover, the value-action gap in operation for the more hegemonic health discourses raises questions about the possibility of personal environmental values challenging the logic of the practice within which the escalation of consumption occurs.

### ***5.2 Time constraints***

Time constraint is a complex issue for serious leisure. On the one hand, less time to engage in leisure may reduce the ability to travel long distances and, therefore, leisure impacts. On the other hand, following the logic of Jalas (2006) and Ropke and Godeskesen (2007), having more [uninterrupted] time available for serious leisure could reduce rather than increase the intensity of environmental impacts. This is particularly true for those who swap having more money for having more time. In a small qualitative study such as this the complex calculations of the carbon flows of all leisure practices undertaken, taking into account the individuals' combinations of temporal and financial constraints, cannot be meaningfully completed. However, we wish here to draw attention to some of the ways in which leisure and temporalities interacted in our participants' lifestyles.

Serious leisure practices, team games and personal hobbies, with their need for commitment and often time consuming requirements for competence, have to compete with other forms of careers in people's lives. The most obvious are work,

home ownership and families. This makes these leisure practices more difficult to engage with at certain life-stages, especially when the focus is on career advancement or bringing up a young family; parents, particularly mothers, have to negotiate time for their leisure careers (Raisborough, 2006; Stalp, 2006). Other forms of non-materialistic, time consuming leisure are similarly difficult to pursue at certain lifestages. Within the sample several different strategies were in evidence in relation to the competition for time allocation. The first is a displacement of team leisure and committed hobbyist activities. Jack, a retiree who now has time for several leisure activities, including running local clubs and giving time to voluntary work, talks about how his commitment to his professional career displaced leisure from his life for many years:

Jack: My only regret is that I didn't maintain more of those interests during my working life. I found that my working life took up a huge amount of time, and although I enjoyed it, other things went by the by which I'm beginning to think, ah, what a pity, I should have done a bit more of that and taken the opportunities when they presented themselves.

This focus on his professional career was matched by a materialism which meant expensive goods and travel were central to Jack's life. Now Jack is consciously more focused on less materialist pursuits, matching an interest in more spiritual and appreciative forms of leisure with an attempt to reduce his environmental impacts.

For two of the working mothers with young children, personal leisure activities have to be negotiated with commitments to their family. Here both interviewees have managed participation in committed craft consumption and hobby activities through the adaption of everyday chores to be more pleasurable, especially through an enjoyable sense of proficiency. Lisa, who works and has a disabled son, spends much of her weekend cooking the main meal of the week. Cheryl, a single mother, viewed her car-boot activities in a similar way to a serious leisure practice, arguing that it has taken years of experience to understand how to find bargains. For Cheryl, her competence and willingness to commit time to working through the goods on offer transform a necessity to a leisure practice.

Cheryl: I love going round car boots. I try to get [to] car-boots every week when the weather is nice like this.

**Q: *And have you always done that then?***

Cheryl: Yeah. I've always done it. I don't know...it's probably...probably because I've had kids, and it's just... I've always sort of got their clothes and stuff from charity shops, from them being little, rather than pay – don't get me wrong, they do have like new things from shops, but a lot of the stuff comes from charity shops, and the eldest one, she loves going to charity shops, but she likes all vintage clothing and stuff. But yeah, just car boots and stuff, where you could pick something up for 50p or £1 and....

Yet, whilst these craft consumption and committed hobby practices facilitated a sense of self-expression or self-actualisation from what could be everyday mundane

activities, many of the women in the sample talked about the need for leisure as relaxation and escape. In particular, the need for 'me-time', liminal moments between different social roles and responsibilities (Scott, 2009), were discussed as the essential forms of escape which the women found to be the practices which were most important to them.

Lisa: My leisure activities...mm... I would have to say maybe my walks, yeah. I think I wouldn't want to give that up because em...it seems to be the times when I can really go off on my own, without feeling like I need to be responsible for something or someone. It's like everybody understands that – that's what I like to do, and so it's okay to do it. So I would prefer really to keep that, yeah, and I'd like to em...probably...yeah, definitely, I think my walking would be of great importance to me.

Hence, negotiating time for hobbies is not simply a question of time away from work and caring responsibilities, it also needs to be allocated in addition to forms of escape through 'me-time'; although 'me-time' was often achieved through the fairly mundane practice of having a bath. As an aside, this highlights the complexity of agreeing sustainable behaviours and practices. Bathing, as a hygiene activity, has been campaigned against in favour of short showers to reduce water use and heating. However, for these women it is a practice where they are quite literally stripped bare of all consumer trappings and social roles. This once again highlights how unsustainable levels of consumption can be created within everyday practices without being driven by concerns about status and conspicuous consumption.

For the empty-nesters and retired members of the sample time was once again in abundance, often opening up opportunities for volunteering or getting involved with community based leisure practices: practices which could be viewed as sustainable both as low impact and communal, non-materialistic pursuits. Several interviewees mentioned taking up new hobbies or returning to those in which they gained competence at an early life-stage. For those returning to the practice, skills their family introduced them to as children provided them with a meaningful leisure legacy which they could dip in and out of throughout their life. Indeed, across the sample as a whole, this sense of leisure as something which had been shared with or provided by their family had a similar sense of life-long importance as that which an heirloom would endow.

Lorna: I've always... I mean, I was taught – my mother's a knitter, so was my grandmother. I suppose we were taught to knit as children, maybe because we didn't always have – some of the places we lived, you didn't have television, and especially like you have now. It was the radio, so sometimes you...you learnt...you were taught to crochet, knit.

Jane: I'm playing cornet at the moment, which is like a small trumpet, em...which is a bit of a transition. I got into it when I was 9 and my Mum took me to a youth band, just locally. [...] I started off in the training band,

and took to it like a duck to water, and moved onto...onto the main band within a fortnight, which was pretty amazing.

However, not all leisure practices which take time and commitment to gain proficiency, were started when young. A culture of self-actualisation meant that many of the interviewees were actively seeking or engaged in new learning and self-improvement practices, many of which were local and time consuming and could therefore be considered to be fairly sustainable. Moreover, there was a pattern of 'replacement leisure practices' in evidence, especially around those who had been involved in sports at a team or club level where physically demanding sports like rugby and football were swapped for less demanding activities such as golf. The need to once again work to gain a satisfying level of competence was both time consuming and frustrating:

Paul: I've taken up golf this last couple of years, I'd like to play more golf, on a more regular basis, to get better, because I want to get better. Do I enjoy it as much? I don't know, because I get a bit grumpy playing golf, because I want to be better, but I'm not better because I don't play often enough, because golf is one of those you need to – I think you need to be playing two or three times a week to improve.

Leisure legacy and replacement leisure practices offer an insight into sustainable leisure over and above the implications of time constraints. Leisure legacies suggest skills taught in youth can be valuable throughout life, even if they are abandoned for more exciting teenage forms of sociability or lose out in the allocation of time to other careers. Enabling a child's engagement with low impact, high skill activities which require limited amounts of materials could be one way of gifting meaningful leisure practices for sustainable living, especially if they have an element of identification with family or community which extends their meaning beyond the self. Replacement leisure practices demonstrate that people are willing to swap one leisure practice for a similar sort of practice where necessary. This suggests both the opportunity for targeting the most damaging leisure practices and the problem of ensuring replacement practices do not require too many new skills which undermine hard won competencies and feelings of self-worth.

One final point about time constraints which we wish to highlight here is that many of the sample were shift workers or self-employed people who worked long hours when the work was available. This meant the main temporal constraint was the inability to synchronise leisure practices with other people. In particular, for those such as nurses and care workers whose shifts changed regularly regular classes or attendance at clubs or sports was difficult to achieve. In an era of working hours flexibilisation, opportunities for low impact, communal forms of leisure could provide a much needed sense of synchronicity for people whose other commitments leave them temporally segregated from society.

### 5.3. Financial constraints

Unlike other constraints, the impact of financial constraints is quite straightforward to analyse from the empirical findings. Indeed, two forms of financial constraint can be identified as affecting the impacts of leisure: constant constraints within which practices are adopted and performed; and constraints due to recessionary pressures and rising fuel prices which necessitate rapid adaptation of resource allocation across everyday practices.

The primary point to make here is that this is not a set of people who have the most carbon intensive lifestyles. Some of the sample did not holiday abroad regularly (in line with Defra's 2007 statistics showing flights by income levels) and outside of day trips and visits to families to fulfil social obligations, travel for leisure was often limited. The exception was for those with a committed leisure practice such as birding which necessitates travel for its competent performance. Whilst the majority of the participants had several different forms of regular leisure practices, predominantly casual leisure, for the most part these were fairly local and low impact. Television did dominate leisure time use for probably half the sample, particularly in conjunction with ICT use, yet with only two exceptions the sample's leisure lives could not be described as fitting a work-television-shop pattern described by Hochschild (Wilson, 2005). There were differences in the sample areas, with many in the London sample carless, whilst the Northern town and Wales samples talked about the need to drive to access commercial or publicly provided leisure facilities. The small size of flats available to most of the London sample on their limited income meant that certain forms of home-based leisure were unavailable. Since many were without gardens and unable to access allotments due to long waiting lists, gardening was not possible although green space was accessible due to the proximity of local commons. Some of those with children talked about how they actively tried to find cheap or free leisure attractions. In short, this is a group for whom there are constant leisure constraints, which means that they are not the group whose leisure is the primary problem in the UK.

Within these constant constraints participants talked about having to make choices over their committed hobby practices. For Warren, who had become involved in rallying at an early age as a leisure activity he shared with his father, this meant he could not afford to continue with his favoured sport:

Warren: I did go through a bit of a stage where I was rallying myself, but it just got a bit too expensive, you know, as everything does, and just couldn't really sustain the £400 per event and things like this.

**Q:** *Oh, gosh, is that what it takes?*

Warren: Yeah, it's crazy, and then you had to maintain the car and insurances and things like this, so it wasn't really viable to do it.

Perhaps if he had shown more promise at the sport he would have continued, but instead he swapped rallying for another leisure activity revolving around his car tastes: VW clubs. These clubs facilitated his interest in being involved with cars and enabled him to gain competence in improving and personalising his own VW. They

provided an on line and sometimes corporeal community. Finally, crucially they enabled him to make money out of buying and selling cars and parts and thereby continue in his hobby.

For Gina, living in a small London flat, financial constraints were materialised through a lack of space which meant she did not have the room to paint, despite her degree and talent in art. Like Warren, Gina had replaced her preferred practice with one which fulfilled her preferences for self-expression in line with her skills. She now spends tens of hours every week engaged in a different creative activity which requires less space and can be conducted without having to be in a different room to her partner and friends. Again, for Gina, her serious hobby is something which she intends to make money from and highlights the difficulties of separating intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful activities, especially for those on a limited budget who make money out of their hobby because of a wish to continue with their serious leisure practice (Yoder, 1997). Moreover, both Gina and Warren talked about their desire for productive lifestyles, almost working their hobby as a second job and thereby positioning themselves in opposition to autotelic actions as forms of non-productive based activity; although Jalas (2006) argues that activities designed to fund the continuation of the practice does not necessarily make the activity less autotelic. Other theorists view this relationship between leisure and productive activity, particularly that in the informal economy, as being potentially beneficial. Indeed, time spent engaged in the informal economy is viewed as holding the potential for more sustainable and community-embedded forms of production (Schor, 2010; Seyfang, 2004).

Across the life of the research project the participants were subject to inflationary fuel prices and a recessionary employment environment. Many in the sample lost jobs, hours of work or income; their vulnerability was increased through the high number who were self-employed. The final interview in the series was often a challenging experience, with many participants admitting to being scared or depressed about the implications of recessionary forces and rising fuel prices. Zavi explains *'basically I have not had a pay rise for three years, but petrol and fuel and gas and electricity have gone up an awful lot, and it just makes a massive difference on your income and expenditure'*. The disruption to meaningful lifestyles and a sense of security underlined the extent of negative consequences from unplanned de-growth.

According to the Resolution Foundation (2011) this income group was the primary group affected by the recession, as those on benefits and higher salaries were largely protected. Additionally those outside the London sample were most subject to recessionary forces, particularly the Oldham sample where the flexible, post-industrial economy meant types of employment flowed in and out of the area. As hours were lost from the formal economy or income failed to keep parity with rising fuel prices, ways of making money informally were explored by several of the participants, such as selling on e-bay, trading shares, gardening and selling produce. It is worth noting here that an element of sample bias cannot be ruled out. We did recruit most of our sample using a recruitment company and, therefore, this is already a set of people who are willing to sacrifice free time for more money. Across

the interviews, the interviewees also demonstrated a strong belief in independence and productivity, which meant they viewed benefit dependency as anathema. However, this still raises questions about the re-allocation of time and intrinsic motivations of leisure in unplanned de-growth which has unequal impacts on groups in society.

The unequal impacts of the unstable economy and high fuel prices were reflected across the sample, with some people more exposed than others. However, for those feeling the squeeze the re-allocation of resources within lifestyles was fairly predictable at an aggregate level. Flexible costs in discretionary spending were targeted, particularly big ticket items such as holidays and investing in new cars. Many in the sample had decided not to holiday abroad, including Simon who did not travel to Belgium to see the formula 1 after all. Calls to utilities and ICT providers were undertaken as people tried to break contracts and seek cheaper options; insurance and health policies were reconsidered. At a leisure level people suggested they were going out less often and travelling less far: with constraints enacted through a mixture of expediency and preference. Zavi's experience was fairly representative:

*Q: Yeah. So the holiday then, you're being more conservative about...*

Zavi: Yeah.

*Q: And...and you're not going out quite so much, between that and the health thing...*

Zavi: Yes, yeah.

*Q: Are there other things that you kind of –*

Zavi: Yeah! Just this week, I've cancelled my Sky subscription, from the full package, which was costing...just about to go up to £48.50 a month. I've got it down to the £19 a month basic package. I can't justify £48 a month to watch television.

Within this economic climate some desirable impacts on the environmental sustainability of leisure practices could be discerned. Thus financial constraints can reduce the resource use of some high impact practices:

Peter: I have been known to go long distances out in search of birds, so it all depends, but most of the time, I only stay generally locally now because of the cost of petrol and the physical climate.

However, whilst Peter did reduce his travel commitments from his hobby, he is clear that he would protect his involvement in birdwatching as his central meaningful activity and part of his self-identity. It would, he states, be the last thing to go. Other participants similarly protected their leisure activities which provided meaning and belonging in their life. Thus whilst Zavi had re-allocated resources away from a range of goods and services, both leisure and essential, as a committed fan of his local football club he was still planning on flying to an away game with his fellow group of supporters.

Zavi: When we're doing well, we do more away games; when we're not doing so well, we won't do many away games, but we'll always have a trip, and this year will be Bournemouth. So we'll always find a trip somewhere that's a bit further away, that we need to go overnight.

So responses to financial constraint include a reduction in practice, a replacement of practices, commercialisation of the practice and protection of the practice. The final response we identified around constraints and committed leisure practices was a re-allocation of time for financial reasons. Jane played in a brass band. As a low impact, time consuming leisure practice with community links and opportunities for self-actualisation and self-expression, playing in a band could be seen as a particularly desirable intrinsically meaningful activity. However, Jane had previously quit the band as a teenager when other forms of social life were more appealing and later sold her instrument to financial more basic needs:

Jane: I had to sell my horn to get a car, and that's what I did.

Having re-bought her musical instrument in her 20s and once again found a love for being in a band, she was now thinking about giving up being part of the band again. Having been made redundant, her new job did not provide her with the same level of income and she felt the necessity to re-train:

Jane: It's an access course, and they run that at Manchester College, so that's in the evenings [...] so I was actually thinking, you know, if it's on any of my band nights, then I'll quit band, you know, I'll do that to do it.

Financial constraints, especially rapid financial constraints due to escalating fuel prices or unplanned de-growth, have unpredictable impacts on leisure in middle earner lifestyles which may be difficult to ascertain from larger time use studies. Whilst the reduction of travel and resources involved in leisure is an environmental good, some constraints result in a loss of meaningful leisure practices or its commercialisation which is not necessarily desirable and could have major implications for well-being and equality. Moreover, the instability and inequality inherent in the current economic system meant some of our participants had clearly been affected in a way which was damaging to both their prosperity and their flourishing. In an era of rising fuel prices, the implications for access to meaningful leisure and secure lifestyles more generally must be part of the sustainability debate.

## **5. Discussion: implications**

This paper has examined a limited number of factors which can escalate and constrain the impacts from time-consuming leisure practices. Whilst we in no way claim these factors represent the central features of leisure practices, we have aimed to highlight leisure differentially as practices complete with social conventions and systems of provision, many competing activities which take place in time and space, and rewarding practices which require both environmental and financial resources. Here we wish to continue the discussion started by academics such as Jalas (2006),

Ropke and Godskesen (2007), Jackson (2009) and Schor (2010) about the form and role of leisure in sustainable lifestyles. In doing so we are not aiming to provide a silver bullet solution or be prescriptive about the future of leisure in lifestyles. Instead the aim is to discuss the complexity inherent in transitions to sustainable living when competing discourses are examined together.

Cultural values for leisure currently emphasise experience, self-actualisation and mobility. Leisure practices are part of enjoying and demonstrating a meaningful life, one which is to some extent facilitated through reflexive choice in consumerist lifestyles. Growth in the leisure market is an important element of economic growth more generally, with a steady increase in energy use requirements for leisure goods and travel (Jackson and Papathanasopoulou, 2008). At the same time there is substantial concern about the high numbers of hours spent in inactive and individual leisure practices, particularly television viewing, which are seen as contributing to a loss of community and well-being and creating a work-consume cycle (Putnam, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). Inequalities already apparent in access to and uptake of leisure activities are likely to further constrain and restrict lower income leisure and travel as prices rise, including through environmental measures such as carbon taxation (Haworth and Roberts, 2008). Sustainable leisure must be considered within these contexts.

Whilst leisure lifestyles exist within the values of specific cultural contexts, practice theory draws our attention to the notion of values co-evolving with the practice itself and shared by the community of practice. Here then we see two ways in which personal environmental values (or related values such as those of community, appreciation of nature and non-materiality) can be supported by or in tension with social and cultural values. Thus, even for those with strong environmental values and attitudes, the logic of the practice and consumer lifestyles may outweigh personal considerations. What is clear from our sample is how little impact personal environmental values have on leisure practices; indeed how little people are even aware of environmental issues around their leisure practices.

For Ropke and Godskesen (2007) one possible solution is to promote committed hobbies and serious leisure practices as time consuming practices with self-actualising potential in line with cultural values. For Jalas (2006) a focus on spending time engaged in activities which we enjoy and leave us content could enable new values: those which are more appreciative and facilitate slower, less productive temporalities. Yet both of these solutions require a shift in the way policy makers view and value time; they are a radical challenge to economic goal orientated time use and a current political system which sees a requirement for the public to work harder, longer, more productively to ensure economic growth. Moreover, as we have seen from the section on leisure escalations, time-consuming, intrinsically meaningful leisure practices could still be subject to market innovations and solutions in line with the values and goals of the practice. The only way to prevent this escalation would be to situate non-materialistic and local values at the heart of leisure practices.

Perhaps then our task is to assess which leisure practices could be considered to have the highest levels of impact, the greatest potential for non-materialistic pursuits or the strongest influence for well-being. This latter has been the most pursued (see the work on access to nature and green space for example); surprisingly little work has been conducted to understand the comparative impacts of a range of leisure practices in the UK. Two policy pathways then present themselves. The first is to work with the communities of practice and consumption to address ways to change high impact leisure practices into more sustainable forms. Following Shove et al's (2011) understanding of practices the conventions, meanings, materialities or skills central to the practice could be changed. As well as those involved in performing and providing the facilities and equipment for the practice, it would require engagement with clubs, specialist magazines, suppliers and tour operators to re-think the materiality and cosmopolitanism of leisure practices which could as easily be conducted locally, albeit with less adventure and experience. It may facilitate a shift towards collaborative consumption or change the rules of a particular practice to reduce the worst environmental impacts, for example banning the counting of birds twitched using pager messages from inclusion in official tallies. Yet as Pantzar et al (2005) suggest, practices are constantly re-produced and modified by practitioners. Under these circumstances, where both the providers and the practitioners of a leisure practice can be implicated in its transition, how could the sustainability of the practice be assured? Moreover, the logic of some leisure practices may be undermined by a search for a sustainable format. If necessary the promotion of replacement practices could be considered for those practices which are resistant to a reduction in impact.

The second pathway is to protect those pursuits with lower levels of impact and materialism from escalation. Policy makers themselves may be poor advocates for sustainable leisure, but the potential for those engaged in the practice to make its sustainability both a virtue and part of the meaning of its performance may be higher. These practices recommend themselves as part of a leisure legacy we might wish to introduce to younger generations as satisfying, challenging and empowering forms of competence and play. They would focus on the sort of skills which take many hours to learn when young, but can be returned to with little additional cost later on in life, and continue to be rewarding regardless of changing technologies and the availability of consumer solutions e.g. playing music. DCMS have stated a commitment to ensuring every child can learn sports and a musical instrument. However, given the differences in competence, preferences and ways of socialising which may affect the retention of the practice, a range of different practices would need to be offered each with their own goals and social niches.

Yet once again the realities of market economics and politics cannot be ignored. Whilst the provision of facilities for low impact and local leisure practices is not too challenging, the creeping marketisation of all civic and personal life means it would place the state in a new relationship to the market - which once again challenges economic growth. Moreover, even if new practice values, qualities of time and promotion of low impact leisure practices could be achieved across a wide range of available leisure practices, how could they be protected from new innovations which

provide greater levels of proficiency, comfort and adventure in an economic system dependent upon growth and novelty?

Perhaps then we must consider the greening of leisure practices in line with a reliance on ecological modernisation processes such as de-coupling, resource efficiency, closed loop systems, sustainable energy systems and transport modal shifts. Yet, as Jackson (2009) has pointed out, this would require innovations and changes to socio-technological systems in an order of magnitude never previously seen in the history of humanity. Technology-driven ecological modernisation will improve the sustainability of leisure, but probably not fast enough to ensure the sustainability of lifestyles. In this, it is sensible to consider ecological modernisation processes alongside other ways to increase the sustainability of leisure.

One of the mechanisms for increasing the pace of change in socio-technological systems is increasing the cost of unsustainable energy resources through carbon pricing and green taxation, such as the fuel price escalator. Indeed, even without government intervention we are seeing an era of rapid increases in fossil fuel prices which have begun to impact on the lives of those with financial constraints. Without doubt these increased prices will have a positive impact on the environmental sustainability of leisure. Yet, as we have shown, these impacts are neither equal nor necessarily desirable for social sustainability. Rising inequalities in access to meaningful leisure and the potential commercialisation of some leisure time to withstand price shocks may be acceptable within neoliberal capitalism, but raises serious questions about whether these are just and good for society more generally. Under some conditions the commercialisation of leisure could be viewed as raising the potential for new ways of living the good life. For example, Schor (2010) argues for a changed pattern of work in which people swap some time working in the formal economy for time working less formally, running small businesses which allow the space for self-expression and creativity of the type shown within forms of serious leisure. However, rising inequality of access to leisure under conditions of economic growth necessitates the provision of new spaces and opportunities for meaningful and competence giving practices for those lacking in material resources. Moreover, this is made more not less necessary by increasing private sector involvement in leisure provision.

In short, sustainable leisure can be understood and actualised in a series of ways. However, policy needs to engage with both sustainable leisure practices and leisure in sustainable lifestyles to fully understand the relationships between values, practices, temporalities and the economy in constraining and escalating environmental impacts.

## **6. A brief word of conclusion**

We have not here tried to suggest a definitive solution to the problems of escalating impacts from leisure and inequalities apparent in its constraints. Instead we have focused on a discussion of the potential policy solutions for sustainable leisure. However, we do have one conclusion from this paper we would like to share.

Leisure as recreation, the relaxation and recuperation essential for the workforce to return to its labour, can be addressed through policies targeted at resource management and provision of some well-being giving leisure activities. Leisure as purpose, intrinsically meaningful activity or competence-giving careers argues for a deeper exploration of how we are to live. It requires an understanding of time as a resource for prosperity over and above economic productivity. It necessitates an examination of what is of value to humans and how those values evolve within society and practices. Most importantly it places consumption as both a facilitator of those values and practices and as a function of a wider economic context which left unchecked will find new means of escalating leisure practices. How sustainable leisure is viewed within policy arenas is, therefore, not simply about the greening of lifestyles but an expression of how governments view the relationship between citizens, the environment and the economy.

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