Meal for Two: A Typology of Co-performed Practices

Abstract

Drawing on practice theory, this ethnographic study investigates how meal practices are co-performed by 13 newly cohabiting couples. Findings reveal how practices previously performed by individual consumers become co-performed through a synergetic and chronologically multi-phased process. Disruption, the first phase, is characterised by misalignments of individually performed practices and their elements. The second phase, incorporation, is characterised by initial collective re-alignments of practices and their elements. The third phase, synergetic outcomes, shows three different ways in which alignments can shape a co-performed practice, namely blending, combining and domineering. Theoretically this paper offers two contributions to practice theory and domestic meal consumption. It reveals the synergetic process through which meal practices become co-performed over time and provides a typology of co-performed practices.

Keywords: practice theory, typology of co-performed practices, meal, dyadic consumption, cohabiting couples, ethnography

1. Introduction

Extending current debate on practice theory and household meal consumption (e.g. Cappellini et al., 2016; Warde, 2016; Halkier et al., 2017; Molander and Hartmann, 2018), this paper investigates how individually performed meal practices become co-performed over time. Practice theory is gaining strong momentum among consumer researchers as it allows a shift of focus from agentic consumers to examining the doings and materialities of everyday life (Halkier and Jensen, 2011; Phipps and Ozanne, 2017; Molander and Hartmann, 2018). Despite the relevance of understanding consumption development, prior works mainly focus on individual experiences of practices performed by a single consumer (Magaudda, 2011; Woermann and Rokka, 2015; Molander and Hartmann, 2018) and little is known about co-performed practices. This is at odds with current understandings of consumption as a highly social phenomenon in which collective experiences are common (Epp and Price, 2008; Chitakunye and Maclaran, 2014). More specifically, in the case of domestic food consumption, the context of our research, previous works highlight how people rarely consume in isolation (Bove and Sobal, 2006; Cappellini and Parsons, 2012) yet an understanding of collective consumption remains scarce (Epp and Price, 2018).

In adopting a collective perspective of understanding practices, this ethnographic research investigates how practices become co-performed by two practitioners. Using newly cohabiting couples' meal practices as a context, our study shows how meal practices previously performed by individual consumers become co-performed practices. We chose the meal as a unit of analysis since the meal is a site where relationships are formed and family members routinely enact and communicate meanings, values, knowledge and norms to one another (Warde, 2016; Marshall, 2005). Prior research have shown that sharing the meal is highly symbolic especially during the initial stage of cohabitation when habituated practices are not yet established (e.g. Marshall, 2005; Kemmer et al., 1998). In this study, the meal is approached as a set of practices involving shopping, planning, cooking, eating and disposal (Goody 1982; Marshall 2005; Cappellini et al., 2016). Findings show that individually performed meal practices become co-performed through a multi-phased process consisting of three synergetic chronologically ordered phases. Disruption, the first phase, is characterised by misalignments of individually performed practices and their elements. The second phase, incorporation, is characterised by initial collective re-alignments of practices and their elements. The third phase, synergetic outcomes, shows three different ways in which re-alignments can reshape a co-performed practice, namely blending, combining and domineering.

The paper's contributions to practice theory and domestic food consumption are two-fold. First, our research reveals the synergetic process through which practices become co-performed over time. Although previous studies highlight the importance of doing the meal together (Marshall, 2005; Bove and Sobal, 2006; Cappellini and Parsons, 2012; Chitakunye and Maclaran, 2014), the focus has been at the individual level. In adopting a practice theory approach, this paper shows that synergies in co-performance emerge through a multi-phased process requiring time and interplay of changing elements (materialities, competences and meanings) in a practice. Second, although previous consumption studies acknowledged that practices change through synergies (Woermann and Rokka, 2015; Phipps and Ozanne, 2017; Molander and Hartmann, 2018; Thomas and Epp, 2019), they fail to clarify how practice change over time and what synergies are. In exploring the development of co-performed consumption practices this research identifies a synergetic process in which three different outcomes emerge. In doing so, this study provides a typology of co-performed practices, which are not homogenous but consist

of three different types: blended practices, combined practices and domineered practices. Our findings have important implications for marketers and policy makers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical approaches to practices in consumer studies

Reckwitz (2002: 249) provides one of the most adopted definitions of practice:

"a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge."

Similarly, Schatzki (2001) affirms that practices are a set of "doings and sayings" (bodily activities) organized in coordination with "shared understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures (emotions, attitudes, goals)" of the human mind along with arrangements of the non-human entities that make up the practice (p.53). Following this theoretical perspective, consumer studies have adopted a flat ontology (Schatzki, 2016), as consumer agency is seen as important as material aspects and embodied competences for a practice to be performed and strive (Molander and Hartmann, 2018; Phipps and Ozanne, 2017). Drawing on practice theory, this study shifts the focus of analysis from consumers (diners) to a practice (the meal) and its elements (Halkier and Jensen, 2011).

Shove and colleagues (2012) break down a practice into three main elements: competence, symbolic meanings and materiality. *Competence* includes "skills, know-how and technique", *meanings* includes "symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations", whereas *materials* include "things, technologies, tangible entities and the stuff of which objects are made" (Shove et al., 2012: 14). Combining Schatzki's (2001) and Shove et al.'s (2012) definitions to analyze the meal of newly cohabited couples, we conceptualize a practice as an entity consisting of meanings, competences and material aspects. In the context of this study, meanings are values, beliefs, norms, emotions and attitudes that are exchanged and communicated during the couples' doing of the meal. By competences we mean bodily skills, techniques, knowledge and understandings of doing the meal and how they are conveyed, taught and learnt. Material aspects consist of brands, technologies, appliances, ingredients and other resources involved in the doing and sharing of the everyday meal.

A practice is established or 'habituated' (Thomas and Epp, 2019) via repeated performances where links between meanings, materials and competences become stable (Shove and Pantzar 2005; Shove et al. 2012). As Southerton (2013: 339) discusses, repeated performances reproduce practices as 'stable entities' often described as routinised practices. Routines are characteristics of practices, formed through internalizing competences and meanings of the practice within a given materiality through time (Warde, 2014). It can be performed without much conscious thought, giving order, security and a sense of stability to people's lives (Ehn and Löfgren, 2009; Phipps and Ozanne, 2017). Established practices can be disrupted, and this results in a misalignment of the three elements (Woermann and Rokka 2015). Examples of disruptions include changing in cultural and social meanings associated to a practice, technological advancements making some materiality redundant or new products reshaping consumers' competences (Phipps and Ozanne, 2017; Woermann and Rokka, 2015; Arsel and Bean, 2013; Magaudda, 2011; Truninger, 2016).

When disruptions occur, Thomas and Epp (2019: 566) note that it is important to bring "practice elements back into alignment with one another". For example, Epp et al. (2014) discuss how family separations can be re-aligned through introducing new materialities that consolidate family interactions and new motivations to create long-distance engagement. Similarly, Truninger (2016) discusses how introducing new kitchen gadgets in a family meal creates disruption, but the appropriation of such gadgets becomes possible through newly learnt skills and re-defining the meaning of 'proper' meals. More recently, Thomas and Epp (2019) discuss how new parenting practices require predicting and planning the possible misalignment and realignment of meanings, competences and materialities before the arrival of a baby. As other studies have confirmed, it is via a process of changing, adjusting, adding or removing elements that practices are reshaped and habituated again (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Phipps and Ozanne, 2017; Woermann and Rokka, 2015; Magaudda, 2011). While we know that practices change over time and that the elements of a practice play a crucial role in such a process of change, "little research examines the attunement of practices as they stabilize" (Phipps and Ozanne, 2017: 377). Considering this gap, researchers (e.g. Phipps and Ozanne 2017; Thomas and Epp 2019) have repeatedly called for more works on understanding how practices are modified over time.

In responding to this call, we take a different approach to previous works. The aforementioned studies focus on single practice in isolation, showing the alignment of elements *within a* practice. However, practices are not performed in isolation, but they are inserted in a network of many other practices, or integrative bundles (see Schatzki, 2001). In their study of urban cycling, Scheurenbrand and colleagues (2018) show how a practice is inserted in the bundle of urban moving. Meanings associated with moving within the city are shared amongst the practices of driving, cycling and parking, and understanding the meanings of cycling cannot be done without considering the bundle of urban moving. Inspired by this perspective of looking at practices within their bundles, we take the meal as the unit of analysis.

2.2 Meal practices in the household

Drawing on anthropological works on the food provision process (Goody, 1982) and applications in marketing and sociology (Marshall, 1995; Warde, 2017; Cappellini et al., 2016), the meal is understood as a bundle of interconnected practices of acquisition, appropriation, appreciation and disposal. Exploring the meal as a set of practices enables analyzing how elements across the bundle intersect with one another (Shove et al., 2012; Scheurenbrand et al., 2018). Looking at the meal as a bundle implies, for example, analyzing how materialities, competences and meanings around food shopping (acquisition) impact on cooking (appreciation) and recycling (disposal).

Existing studies on domestic food consumption highlight how the meal is a site where relationships are formed and cultural and social reproduction of the family takes place (Warde, 2016; Marshall, 2005). From sharing thrift responsibilities in times of austerity (Cappellini et al., 2014) to enabling parents to negotiate their gendered roles (Del Bucchia and Penaloza, 2016; Molander 2019), the everyday meal is where family members routinely enact and communicate meanings, values, knowledge and norms to each other (Epp and Price, 2018; Chitakunye and Maclaran, 2014). Moreover, we know that household meals are increasingly interlinked with marketplace, brands and broader institutions (Cappellini et al., 2016). For example, branding has shown to provide ideals and conventions of meal propriety (Pirani et al., 2018), but also re-define expectations and aspirations (Truninger, 2016; Fuentes and Samsioe, 2020) of how to 'do' family via meals.

The aforementioned studies highlight the symbolic meanings of family meals. Creating a collective meal practice is meaningful as it allows individuals to reshape their identities and feel a sense of security in their family life (Moisio et al., 2004; Marshall, 2005; Cross and Gilly, 2014). Especially in transitional periods such as moving in to live together, existing literature highlights that the meal is a highly symbolic practice for newly cohabiting couples (Kemmer et al., 1998; Marshall and Anderson, 2002; Bove and Sobal, 2006). Couples attempt to converge their individual food habits to form a common routine within the household, as it aids their process of habituation and creation of a couple identity (Marshall and Anderson, 2002). This process of converging individual food consumption practices into a shared one is known to generate controversies and negotiations (Kemmer et al., 1998; Bove et al., 2003; Darmon and Warde, 2016). However, little is known about how such controversies and negotiations change over time and how a commonly shared meal practice emerges in newly cohabiting couples. As the aforementioned studies focused mainly on the symbolic meanings of a meal, the other elements of the practice such as competences and materiality remain neglected.

Adopting a practice theory perspective and a longitudinal research design, this study offers a novel perspective in looking at how meal practices are shaped when performed by more than one consumer. We show the process of how a meal emerge as a habituated practice when it is co-performed by two consumers over time. Newly cohabited couples are chosen as they represent the ideal context to study how a co-performed practice readapts and develops. Prior research on shared meal practices focus on the individual consumer at a given time (Marshall and Anderson, 2002; Kemmer et al., 1998; Truninger, 2016) and thus little is known about how co-performed practices emerge. A notable exception is Thomas and Epp's (2019) recent work on new parents showing how couples plan and predict possible changes of their old practices and the adoption of new ones. In looking at how couples accommodate their habituated practices before and after the arrival of a baby, Thomas and Epp (2019) highlight the importance of adopting a collective and longitudinal perspective in understanding life changing events, like the birth of a child. We apply this perspective to a mundane and taken-for-granted practice, the meal, which is a quintessential example of a habituated practices in many households.

3. Methods

This ethnographic study adopted a multi-method research design consisting of a 1-year participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews with 13 newly cohabited couples residing in London. After receiving ethical approval from her institution, the first author conducted the fieldwork. Each couple was visited once a month for 6 months in the one-year period to observe their mundane dinner practices. The first author accompanied the couples to routine grocery shopping trips, ate at their house to see how they planned, prepared, served, ate and disposed evening meals. Since the interest was to understand how practices become collectively shared, participant observation provided a useful method to analyze co-performances in action over time (O'Reilly, 2012). Individual and collective in-depth interviews supplemented the observational data to recognize the emic experiences underlying practice negotiations (Arnould, 1998).

Couples were recruited via a snowball sampling procedure (Handcock and Gile, 2011) using three criteria: i) couples should have cohabited for less than 6 months; ii) both individuals in the couple defined themselves as involved and interested in the domestic meal; and iii) were living in London area. The 6-month cutoff followed previous research guidelines indicating how most transitions occur within the first year of cohabitation (Schramm et al., 2005). London as a metropolitan city was chosen because it allows homogeneity in understanding the structural

conditions shaping consumers' lives, while at the same time reveal the diversity of collective routine applicable to majority of new couples. All the couples were middle-class, aged 25-36, with higher degree education, and at least one partner was in full-time employment (see table 1 for profile of participants).

[Insert Table 1 Here]

As summarized in Table 1, fieldwork consists of a set of joint and individual interviews with observations of shopping trips and dinners, all occurring during weekdays. Each couple were interviewed 3 times (together then separate) and were each observed at least 4 times (apart from one couple that had 2 observations). The meal observations were divided into sets of practices, for example planning, shopping and storing was usually done in one visit, and cooking, eating and disposal were observed together in another visit. Breaking the observations into sets of practices aid to build relationship over time (O'Reilly, 2012) but also allow to see changes occurring in these interrelated practices. The interviews were mainly conducted at the couples' homes, which enabled the researcher to 'hang around' and further observe their mundane weekday interactions (Evans, 2012: 44). With participants consent, observations and interviews were audio recorded and pictures were taken (Arnould, 1998). The first author kept fieldnotes and reflexive notes to record non-verbal behavior during observations, which, through time, revealed back-stage performances (Goffman, 1959) including observed conflicts. Fieldwork took place over a 1-year period, and ended when theoretical saturation was met as there were no novel theoretical insights emerging from the observations and interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Data consisted of speech-in-action recordings during co-performances, in-depth interview recordings, fieldnotes and pictures, resulting in over 130 hours of data, 960 pages of transcriptions and 2000 photographs. Speech-in-action and all the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis to find common themes (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014). Pictures were used to complement the thematic analysis of the fieldnotes, and are not included as they are outside the scope of this paper. Inspired by previous ethnographic works on consumption practices (e.g. Scheurenbrand et al., 2018; Thomas and Epp, 2019), data were initially analyzed following a hybrid inductive approach (Woermann, 2017) and categorized using basic triadic distinction between competence, materiality and meanings and their evolution over time. From this initial categorization of the data, we identified a synergetic process through which practices change over time resulting in three distinct outcomes: blending, combining and domineering. To illustrate how practices become co-performed through an in-depth chronological process, we selected three couples whose practices epitomize the characteristics of the three outcomes. As a common practice in qualitative research (e.g. Epp and Price, 2009; Molander and Hartmann, 2018), examples are selected as they provide a concise representation of elements and trends which have been found in the entire sample.

4. Findings

The longitudinal analysis of symbolic meanings, materialities and competences across the practices of the meal reveals a multi-phased process in which links between elements of different practices and within elements themselves change and evolve over time. The process is here represented in three distinct phases, although we acknowledge that phases often overlap and a distinction between stages is not always clear. We refer to this as a synergetic process, since it shows alignment and misalignment of elements and within elements and as such it captures the complexities of looking at the meal as it is performed by two consumers. A more

comprehensive discussion and definition of synergetic process and its visual representation (figure 1) is offered in the next section. Findings are organized following the three main distinctive synergetic outcomes: blending, combining and domineering. Each outcome has been illustrated as it emerges over time through the three different phases of the synergetic process. Phase 1 is a stage of disruption where elements such as meanings, competences and materials in practices encounter one another during initial attempts at co-performance. Phase 2 is a stage of incorporation of new elements such as new materialities and competences in co-performance in order to create new links between old sets of elements in the practice. Phase 3 is the formation of synergetic outcomes (blending, combining or domineering), linking old and new sets of elements at the dual level. The last column in Table 1 shows resulting synergetic outcome of each couple. Although initially couples may experience different outcomes in the bundle of practices (such as blending for cooking and domineering for disposing), these eventually converged into one dominant form of outcome for each household over time. As will be shown, outcomes are a complex emerging process, and changing elements in one practice have repercussions for the whole bundle of meal practice.

[Insert Figure 1 Here]

4.1 Blending

4.1.1 Phase 1: Disruption

The first synergetic process is illustrated via the case of Bernard and Milena and summarized in table 2. Milena and Bernard are a professional couple living and working in Central London. At the start of cohabitation, there were mis-alignments in meanings, competences and materialities due to differing attitudes to health, which manifested in their shopping and cooking practices. Bernard, being more particular about consuming organic and health products, would visit many grocery stores to shop for his specificities. Milena, on the other hand, was more concerned about convenience and practicality. Unlike Bernard, she doesn't care about organic products and would simply visit one supermarket near her workplace or home to get everything she needs. Such mis-alignments in meanings (attitudes) and competences (knowledge) in shopping caused a disruption in their routines as they encounter the contradictory habits of the other. A mis-alignment in one practice (shopping) also had repercussions for an inter-related practice. As revealed in the 1st month, Bernard is taking up the responsibility of the cooking due to his higher attitude and knowledge in the practice: "I think you wear the pants when it comes to the kitchen" (Milena) [..] "Yeah I like to be in control of every step [of the meal]" (Bernard). In the initial observations, the researcher also witnesses Bernard handling all their shopping and cooking tasks as he communicates his health rhetoric. However, over time, they were able to blend their meanings and competences through learning and teaching each other and through the aid of new market resources.

[Insert Table 2 Here]

4.1.2 Phase 2: Incorporating New Materialities

In their 3rd month of cohabitation, Milena explains how she has been trying to learn the attitudes and skills of doing healthy shopping and cooking to match her partner. Bernard initially took control of the whole meal practice (see Phase 1). But technologies and market resources are helping Milena develop new skills to advance her cooking:

Bernard: These days you cook more than me
Milena: Yeah, because work has been better this week, so I wanted to take care of him [..] in the past he has been taking care of me… you cooked a lot [tells him]. So now I'm more active in finding new ingredients and menus. I look a lot at superfood recipes [..] And I'll just google recipes based on keywords. There was one menu we both really liked using crispy kale [..] I think he trusts me a lot in the kitchen now

Although Milena attributes her interest in doing the meal to a desire to take care of Bernard, it might relate to a feeling of duty towards others, a notion associated with women (Devault, 1991). However, in her desire to take care of him, Milena needed to match up to his standards of doing healthy food. She had to learn the necessary skills in the kitchen and develop an attitude to healthy food. One way Milena learns to match up to Bernard is through adding new competence and materialities in her existing practice. For example, she uses Google to find superfood recipes and new ingredients in the supermarket. In one of the cooking observations, Milena places digital devices, her phone and online recipe, on the kitchen counter as a necessary competence tool to aid her practice performance (Denegri-Knott and Jenkins, 2016). At times, she asks Bernard to taste the food allowing him to validate her new skill, ultimately aiding to shape their shared competence over time.

Similarly, Bernard had to develop new attitudes and incorporate new materialities in his shopping and cooking so they could enjoy the meal together. For example, in the 4th month of cohabitation, Bernard reveals: "I used to be very difficult on myself, but these days I'm starting to let go. I don't want to be a health freak. I don't have to go the organic shop anymore. I still go Waitrose but lately she introduced me to co-op, which is considerably good". Additionally, during cooking Bernard changes the spices or omit certain spices to accommodate both their tastes, as he reveals "When we cook for each other, we will already be compromising what we would be making. So if I was going to something entirely based on my own taste, I would do something totally different". Here we see how new meanings of care, compromise and open-mindedness are being incorporated to change his existing habits. New brands (e.g. Co-op) and ingredients were being appropriated for the collective. Adding new materialities, meanings and competences to their existing practices therefore allowed both partners to change, teach and learn from each other.

4.1.3 Phase 3: One Common Competence Over Time

Over time, as Milena gained the skills to do healthy cooking, she was able to change Bernard's attitudes towards organic consumption. For example, she would challenge him on his perception of the 'Waitrose' brand and free-range products. In the 5th month of cohabitation, the first author witnessed one of their discussions on free-range fish during the dinner observation:

[As we finished eating, they started discussing how much they liked the fish. Milena was in charge of the meal that day:]
Bernard: I don't believe it's a Tesco one [fish]
Milena: It's from Tesco. As I was leaving [work] I just bought it. We never actually buy anything from Tesco. Only today [tells me].
Bernard: Yeah, I normally only buy from Waitrose. So this is like Wow.
Milena: But honestly you have to see the price of cod in Tesco, it will change your mind. Because there is no free range cod. Cod is the same [everywhere]. Unless they do the line fishing, or industrial farming, then ok, I get it. But otherwise cod is cod, they catch it the

same way.
Bernard: Oh yeah, you think so?
Milena: Yeah.. There is usually [limited] an option of how they catch the fish, the one that is line cod [caught by line] or the one that is grown to be killed [industrial fishing].
Bernard: Ah so they write it?

Such discourse about what is free range and how is it labelled, allowed them to challenge each other's existing attitudes and skills in shopping for organic produce. As Milena says "cod is cod, they catch it the same way". In contention, her existing attitudes of shopping for practicality and convenience were brought to the forefront to challenge Bernard. Meanings that one rarely think about in the supermarket were brought to the limelight and debated upon, as she contends the integrity and labelling of fishing practices. In challenging perceived quality and price of the fish, Milena disrupts Bernard's existing brand perception, a key aspect in brand loyalty and repurchase motivations (Foroudi et al., 2018). The couple influence each other's attitudes, drawing on what they know and their own beliefs. Through these discussions, they created a common competence in doing the meal together, and in the 7th month, they reveal how she too has influenced him to be more practical in shopping: "Nowadays, it doesn't have to be organic [..] Milena changed this in me. She made me realize that maybe it was too silly always trying to be organic, it's good to let go. And sometimes you don't even know if the organic stuff you buy, is actually organic or not" (Bernard).

Over time, this couple co-perform their meal tasks through blending their existing attitudes together. Both their attitudes of health and practicality influenced each other and were in a way, transferred to each other through teaching and learning during co-performance. Existing meanings and competences were re-evaluated and adjusted to create a common shared approach. The blending stems from their discussions and debates to challenge each other's existing meanings and competences. In the process, we saw how addition of new meanings and new materialities, such as those from recipe websites, mobile phones and new ingredients from the supermarket can be integrated to help blend these different set of elements. Other couples have blended their shopping, cooking, eating and disposal practices through the incorporation of new market resources, brands and technologies (see Table 3). For example, Barbara and Roberto blended their individual meanings about having leftovers versus food waste by investing in a bigger freezer, sharing food plan apps and buying pre-prepared vegetables from the supermarket. In blending, couples were able to create a synergy in co-performing their meal practices through creating one common shared approach.

[Insert Table 3 Here]

4.2 Combining

4.2.1 Phase 1: Disruption

Vanna and Simon established a synergy through combining their different norms and techniques in consumption (see table 3). At the start of cohabitation, they encountered mis-alignments in preferences and norms about buying, storing and eating meat. Simon was an avid gym goer; meat was an integral part of his protein heavy diet. He preferred to buy a bulk of meat to freeze and use on a daily basis. However, meat is not part of Vanna's daily diet, nor does she prefer the idea of freezing meat. She often buys fresh meat from the butcher shop and challenges Simon's freezing practices. For Vanna, freezing is associated with convenience meals. Thus, their mis-alignment of meanings (preferences and norms) in freezing caused a

disruption in their individual meat consumption practices. The couple had repeated conflicts while doing the shopping and storing of meat. Meanings about freezing that is rarely reflected upon comes to the forefront of awareness to be discussed and disputed as Vanna argues: "Frozen meat is not the same as fresh meat". However, through new techniques in using the fridge and freezer space, they were able to sustain individual norms, creating a synergy in co-performing their meal practices.

[Insert Table 4 Here]

4.2.2 Phase 2: Incorporating New Techniques

Firstly, Vanna's techniques of efficiently buying and storing different types of meat were incorporated into their shared practice. For example, in their 4th month of cohabitation, it was observed how the couple strategically negotiated buying various types of meat in the supermarket. At their home, the first author witnesses how the reduced price chicken from the fresh butcher counter go in the fridge; the chicken thighs are frozen; the pork is divided into two parts, some for the fridge and some for freezing; and the lamb goes in the freezer. In incorporating such techniques, Vanna maintains her norm of consuming 'at least a few meals of fresh meat': "Usually we buy chicken that has to be eaten the same day or the next. And the pork which has a little bit longer shelf life can stay fresh in the fridge [..] and the remaining meat [lamb] will be frozen. So at least we have three meals of fresh meat".

Here we see how new techniques of using temporalities of the food and it's decay timeframe can aid the couple to negotiate, plan and co-share their meal (Evans, 2012). Using basic knowledge of science and the expiry date label from the supermarket, Vanna understands that certain meat can last longer in the fridge. In doing so, they do not have to freeze everything, but only a portion of the meat. The fridge and freezer allow them to optimise the flow of the meat more efficiently. As in their 8th month of cohabitation, Vanna reveal how they both "win" because of such techniques of managing the meat. She had introduced another strategy to store chicken without having to freeze it.

> Simon: Recently she suggested we marinade the chicken and leave it [in the fridge], and then roast it. And since we marinade, it can stay longer
> Vanna: It's really easy. As soon as we come back from Sainsbury's, we take out the chicken from the packet, lay the whole tray with chicken, put hoisin sauce, ginger, garlic, then next day, oven. This is where I'm eating fresh meat.

Although the idea of prolonging the meat shelf life in the fridge was incorporated in the shared practice through Vanna, Simon was not keen to adopt such technique. According to him, the meat becomes "too dry" (Simon). He would still revert back to his old practice of freezing all the meat bought if he could. But, "she is not ok with the idea of freezing anything" (Simon). Therefore, such an approach is not transferred nor does it influence his meat consumption practice, but they are still adopted for the collective practice. Their individual norms are still sustained.

4.2.3 Phase 3: Managing Both Norms Over Time

Over time, Vanna and Simon were able to systematically manage their individual norms in relation to meat consumption, creating a synergy in their overall practice. As Vanna introduced strategies such as marinating and buying different types of meat to have fresh meat in the fridge,

Simon too was able to incorporate his own technique of labelling meat to further manage their difference. As he prefers to freeze in bulk, he assumed the responsibility of managing the flow of frozen meat to reduce any blunders. For example, in the after-shopping observation, the first author witnesses Simon organizing and labelling the meat before freezing. He strips the meat of its supermarket packaging for it to become part of the household habit of storing (Coupland, 2005). He then divides his preferred amount in freezer bags, making his own batches to freeze. Simon also labels the type of meat, the date purchased, date being frozen and the actual expiry date of the meat. As he reveals while doing the task: "I started doing this so I know... what date I put in [the freezer], which is the oldest. Before I used to freeze without taking out but … Once she defrosted the pork rather than the chicken. So, we ended up having to have that" (Simon).

The technique helps resolve their conflicts as the couple developed knowledge about how long the meat stays in the freezer and what type of meat is frozen. The fridge and freezer thus acted as tools to co-ordinate their competences and resolve their conflicts about meat consumption. In Hand and Shove's (2007) study, they analysed the evolution of the freezer's role in society and argued that the importance of the freezer changes as new ideas, meanings and skills becomes associated with it. The fridge and freezer assumed very different meanings in Vanna and Simon's individual practices at the start of cohabitation. However, we show that through appropriating new competences from both practitioners in using the appliances, the role of the appliance became integral in solving their conflict. The couple was able to combine and sustain their individual norms and preferences in storing and eating meat. We use combining to represent elements that "come together in order to work or act together" (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). As can be seen, they don't necessarily agree on each other's techniques, but still adopt them for creating a synergy in co-performing the meal practices. Thus, this synergetic process is called combining since existing meanings and competences are kept and sustained side-by-side through time, allowing the couple to co-perform their collective practice. There was no removal of old elements, nor does it influence each other. However, new elements, such as new marketplace resources and new competences can be added to aid in the combination process. In this case, we saw how buying different types of meat, marinades and labelling strategies, as well as efficiently using the fridge and freezer allowed existing norms to combine with each other through time. Other couples (see table 5) have combined eating, planning and disposing practices, adding new competences such as variations to the shared meal and/or developing strategies to tackle leftovers and reduce waste in the household. For example, Paul and Jenny (see table 5) combined their meanings and competences in the disposal practice which affected their planning, cooking and eating practices. In combining, couples created a synergy in co-performing their meal practices through management of both approaches.

[Insert Table 5 Here]

4.3 Domineering

4.3.1 Phase 1: Disruption

The case of Olivia (a vegan) and Alex (a meat-lover) has been selected to illustrate the synergetic outcome of domineering (see table 4). At the start of cohabitation, Olivia and Alex faced numerous challenges due to mis-alignments in meanings about health. Olivia's main motive for veganism was in relation to concerns about health and well-being (Fox and Ward, 2008). As she reveals: "I just want to improve my well-being, and I found that by removing meat and fish I was feeling so much better, just a lot healthier" (Olivia). Whereas Alex had a distaste for vegetables, as he contends: "I did not grow up eating vegetables. My mother did

not make me eat them [..] I look at something and if it's only vegetables, I'm like I don't like this" (Alex). Such mis-alignments in meanings about health caused a disruption in their whole eating practice. The couple experienced repeated conflicts about what to eat and how to share their meals. The first author observed arguments during their planning of the meal. Over the period of the study however, Olivia's stronger values of health and self-care took over for the collective dinner practice. Using the aid of new material resources and new competences in consumption, she trained Alex in various ways to adopt her values and lifestyle.

[Insert Table 6 Here]

4.3.2 Phase 2: Incorporating New Technologies and Market Resources

In their 4th month of cohabitation, Olivia and Alex had just bought a new kitchen appliance called Acti-fry. The Acti-fry dehydrates and cooks vegetables similar to an oven. As the couple reveal, they simply add chopped vegetables into the machine with a spoon of olive oil, and it will produce tasty "crisps of vegetables":

> Alex: It basically fries whatever you put in there with only one spoon of olive oil
> Olivia: It cooks like an oven does
> Alex: It's a mix of an oven and a deep fryer [..] because the things that come out are crispy
> Olivia: So we just dump any vegetable that we got in there and it makes really lovely crisps
> Alex: Chips of vegetables

Here, a new technological appliance is slowly being integrated and appropriated into the couple's shared practice in order to resolve differences in meanings (consuming healthy vs tasty food). Alex is slowing developing his taste for vegetables, as the new materiality is aiding to change his meanings and competences about vegetable consumption. Truninger (2016) demonstrates how an appliance, Bimby, can be used to interact meanings and competences in family meals. Using analysis of online discussion forums of Bimby users, Truninger (2016) discusses how the appliance can help families create new sets of meanings and expectations about what is a proper family meal and how should it be prepared. In our study, the adoption of a new technological appliance aided the couple to develop new skills of cooking, allowing them to resolve their conflicts about taste versus health in a meal. The functionality of the Acti-fry enabled the cooking of food in ways both Olivia and Alex can accept and enjoy. In appropriating the new materiality in their everyday lives, the couple was able to develop new meanings about sharing and eating together, which further facilitates its integration into their shared practice. The first author further observes Alex negotiating the eating of courgettes as long as it's Acti-fried. According to Olivia, the Acti-fry therefore is a safe option that works for both of them.

4.3.3 Phase 3: Dominating One Meaning Over Time

Over time however, Olivia's values of health and variety starts to take over and dominate more in the collective. As in their 6th month of cohabitation, Olivia introduces various market tools to advance Alex's taste repertoire. For example, through nudging him to try previously disliked vegetables in other formats. As Alex reveals in the individual interview: "Olivia really likes aubergines, and so she has been trying to feed me aubergine in every kind" (Alex). For example, she ordered some fried ones in Wagamama's, and then mashed ones in a Middle-Eastern

Ganoush form. She also initiated delivery of weekly veggie boxes for them to receive new and "exciting vegetables" (Olivia). The couple reveal they subscribed to Riverford, an organic farmers deliveries in London. The delivery service sends seasonal organic vegetables from local farmers around the city. However, because it's seasonal, it is not possible to choose the vegetables that come in the box. The couple receives new random vegetables, and have to plan their meals accordingly as Olivia highlights: "We have started a veggie box delivery that comes in every Tuesday. So, we know we're going to get some exciting vegetables [mumbles] That's debatable from Alex's perspective. But we've got some exciting options to choose from and make meals from. So you know, thinking about what's in the box, we'll come up with recipes that can use those ingredients" (Olivia).

Here, we see how Olivia is committed to changing Alex's consumption and find new techniques to change his eating practices. Such care to influence her partner's healthy eating and nurturance could also be seen as gendered work (Devault, 1991). But in her attempts to control the food project of the collective, Olivia has to learn new techniques and adopt new materialities. New techniques of how to make healthy food tasty, and new marketplace resources such as the organic deliveries aid to change her partner's previous practices and dominate hers in the collective. New elements added in their practice therefore contributed in her domineering of existing meanings of health, self-care and variety in consumption. The new materialities become instruments where one meaning can be transferred to the other person in co-performance. Aligning with Fuentes and Samsioe (2020), meal box schemes enable the couple to create new symbolic meanings in this case of healthy eating and variety, allowing Olivia's vegetarian aspirations to be pursued. As in their 7th month of cohabitation, Olivia reveals how proud she is to have influenced her partner's healthy eating: "I'm actually quite proud of how far he has come. He used to have meat pretty much every single meal. Like meat and rice, that's what he used to have. So zero veggies. Imagine that." Over the study period, Olivia's meanings were taught, transferred and dominated in the collective practice. On the other hand, Alex developed new competences and meanings of cooking and eating healthy food. As shown in table 7 in other couples we noticed the dominance of a set of meanings and competences in cooking over another and such dominance penetrates planning and shopping practices, adoption of technologies and convenience food. Thus, in this synergetic process meanings, competences or materialities from one practitioner will dominate causing the other set of elements carried by another to be given up or dissolved.

[Insert Table 7 Here]

5. Discussions and Implications

In this paper, we show how individually carried meal practices become co-performed practices over time. Adopting a practice theory approach and an ethnographic method, findings show a multi-phased synergetic process through which dual performances of the meal emerge. In doing so, the study reveals the process of meal consumption co-performances and propose a typology of co-performed practices. As such, the study offers two major contributions to domestic food consumption literature and practice theory.

5.1 Meals as co-performances

Existing literature highlights that meal practices such as eating together holds important meanings and values for the household (Moisio et al., 2004; Marshall, 2005; Cappellini and Parsons, 2012; Chitakunye and Maclaran, 2014; Epp and Price, 2018). However, the

understanding of how this co-performance emerged was, until now, unclear especially from a longitudinal perspective. Our findings expand this knowledge, showing *how* co-performed meals emerge via a complex synergetic process in which practitioners' competences, meanings and materialities play a pivotal role. While previous works emphasize the symbolic aspect of the meal (see for example Chitakunye and Maclaran, 2014) or the material ones (Truninger, 2016), our findings show that all elements of the practice are crucial in the synergetic and multi-phased process. It is in this multi-phased process that individually carried practices merge into co-performed practices through a complex interrelation between changing elements and changing relationships between elements.

By looking at a dual performance, findings reveal that the synergetic process of doing a meal consists of linking elements (materials, meanings and competences) of the practice, but also, and crucially, of alignment and misalignment *of each element.* Prior studies adopting practice theory have explored how consumption evolve when it gets disrupted by showing that realigning existing elements can re-establish a practice (Phipps and Ozanne, 2017; Woermann and Rokka, 2015; Magaudda, 2011; Molander and Hartmann, 2018; Truninger, 2016). However the main focus remained on elements already formed, uncontested and performed by single consumers. Extending prior works in this field, our findings show that co-performed practices unfold via a more complex process than a simple misalignments and re-alignments of existing elements. Our findings support Scheurenbrand and colleagues (2018) conclusions that elements are dynamic entities shared across multiple practices and are thus changing over time. By examining two sets of competences, materiality and meanings, initially carried out by each consumer, this study advances existing theorisation of consumption development and shows that elements are dynamic entities, requiring modification with time. For example, each consumer approach the practice with her/his own materiality; only through a lengthy multi-phased process of incorporating and changing materialities in the 'bundle of practice' (Cappellini et al., 2016) does he/she merge into a unique set of materiality. Since the evolution of each element does not happen in a vacuum, it affects the relationships between the elements and the formation of a newly established collective practice.

The findings highlight three phases through which co-performed meal practices emerge at the dual level over time: 1) disruption 2) incorporation and 3) formation of synergetic outcomes (see Figure 1). All attempts at co-performing starts with the first disruption phase. Existing elements carried and embodied within each consumer encounter and interact with one another. At the start of cohabitation, couples carry pre-existing sets of symbolic meanings, competences and materialities in doing the meal, which often mis-aligned with each other. Misalignments in and of elements cause a disruption in doing the practice together (Phipps and Ozanne, 2017). We found that disruptions mostly manifest in the form of conflicts in co-performance. In this phase, two sets of elements come together and clashes since meanings and competences around the meal are often different as well as the materialities that they adopt.

The second phase involves a progressive reshaping of elements which gradually become aligned. During the incorporation phase, we observe an *urgency* of learning and incorporating new elements to resolve the conflicts and form a synergy in doing the meals together. Aligning with previous studies on cohabitating couples, forming a dual practice together is meaningful for the couple and aids in normalizing their new entity (Marshall and Anderson, 2002; Kemmer et al., 1998; Bove et al., 2003; Darmon and Warde, 2016). However, although in co-performing the practice there is a level of planning and anticipating (Thomas and Epp 2019), our findings show that new materialities and competences, acquired via the marketplace, played a key role in aiding the co-performed meal synergy. In phase two, new links were being created between

old and newly merged elements in order to align the consumption at the dual level. As shown in the findings, all the couples adopt new brands, services and products as well as acquire new skills from the marketplace.

The last phase is the formation of synergetic outcomes, which we see as a dynamic frame describing the relationship between the elements carried by two consumers. As such, these outcomes can be seen almost as a process within a process, since they provide a direction of travel more than a destination. Such outcomes occur over time and require constant co-performing to be materialised. As illustrated, there are three outcomes formed when two people attempt to do a consumption practice together, labelled as: blending, combining and domineering elements. Blending is a process where the different set of elements mix and transform each other over time; combining is a process where the different set of elements unite and sustain each other through time; and domineering is a process where one element will take over and eventually remove the other over time. Findings show that these outcomes occur concurrently across the different bundle of practices. Each household converged into one dominant outcome over time. This is because as the evolution of elements occur within and between practices (Scheurenbrand et al., 2018), they have consequences for the co-performance outcome of the whole meal practice. For example, changing meanings associated with health in shopping affect the shared meanings in cooking and eating, and as such influences the formation of the meal co-performance outcome over time.

5.2 A typology of co-performed practices

Through these three processes, co-performed and stable practices emerged, since relationships between moulded elements are repeated and consolidated. Practice theorists highlight that repeated performances of stable elemental alignments over time can lead to establishment of routinised practices (Southerton, 2013; Shove et al., 2012). In addition, once practices become "stable entities" (Southerton, 2013: 339), they provide a sense of order, security and stability in life (Ehn and Löfgren, 2009; Phipps and Ozanne, 2017). However, these studies have not offered an analysis of the stabilized practices, as if these were all homogenous in their internal relationships between elements. Stabilized co-performed practices have very different internal structures which derived from their synergetic process. In our study, the couples were newly attempting to do the practice together. They did not have the blueprint, understanding or norms of the conflicts that would arise. Nor did the couples have the expectation of how they would merge their individual practices, and create a synergy before the co-performance. Some couples discussed their meal preferences prior to cohabitation, but it was only in doing the meal practices together that their mis-alignments and synergies were able to materialize. As highlighted, three outcomes are formed through linking old and new elements of practice at the dual level. Such linkages resulted in new ways of doing that did not exist before the co-performance, but were outcomes of the elements blended, combined or taken over. It resulted in habituation of new practices that could be co-performed by dual practitioners, which had its own sets of elements. Such new practices are not homogenous, but rather presents different characterises, which can be summarised in a typology of co-performed practices: blended practices ('our way'), combined practices ('my way| your way') and domineered practices ('only my way').

Blended practices are co-performed practices in which different set of elements mix and transform each other over time, creating a synergy in co-performing the whole practice. The old existing meanings, materiality and competences of doing the meal carried by each other

gets re-evaluated and altered as they interact with one another. New elements such as new materialities and competencies can be added to aid the blending process.

Combined practices are co-performed practices in which two set of elements unite and cooperate with each other over time, creating a synergy in co-performing the whole practice. The elements do not influence each other, but remain separate and sustain themselves in co-performance. Here, the old existing meanings and competences are kept and sustained. While new elements such as new techniques and market resources can be added to aid in the combination process.

Domineered practices are co-performed practices in which one meaning, competence or materiality from one actor will dominate causing the other set of elements carried by another actor to be given up or dissolved. It results from one actor's stronger meaning such as higher values in consumption, or a more professional competence in consumption. A key step in this process is through addition of new market objects, competences and meanings in the shared practice to aid in the domineering process.

5.3 Implications for businesses and policy makers

Findings have important implications for marketers. As identified, the market played an important role in resolving couples' conflicts with the introductions of new brands, technological devises and products. New materialities and competences from the marketplace create synergies, leading to the formation of new dual practices. From a practical point of view, marketers can communicate the value of their offerings of younger couples and new families. Brands can emphasise how their products and services can anticipate conflicts in a new household, and how they can offer solutions to these predictable disruptions. In the case of Olivia and Alex, the kitchen gadget (Acti-fryer) offered new ways of cooking a meal, accepted and enjoyed by both partners. Similarly, fridge and freezer companies could emphasise the variety of storage options for resolving potential conflicts about storing fresh foods, marinated foods and freezer meals as we saw in the case of Vanna and Simon. Our findings also have implications for companies to offer meal box schemes and portioned deliveries to cater for varying food preferences and food waste in households. Promotional initiatives should target young couples, communicating disruptions and providing solutions to anticipated misalignments in domestic meals. Marketers can demonstrate how their products/services are sources of new meanings but also new competences in the household. The ability to predict and anticipate mis-alignments can lead to new product development ideas to solve emerging disruptions in households.

Our findings also have important policy implications as our study informs how new meal routines are shaped and established in a household. Considering the growing concerns about sustainability, understanding how people's consumption practices change over time and how new domestic practices emerge can be crucial for implementing sustainable consumption in society. Based on our findings, policy makers in collaboration with major conglomerates can devise interventions such as introducing new products, digital technologies and services to develop eco-friendly collective practices in the household. Our results show how new competences and market products such as shared meal plan apps, pre-prepared vegetables from the supermarket and meal box schemes can be integrated to negotiate food waste in the household. Policy makers can partner with companies to create initiatives and technologies that can enable managing meal plans and encourage synchronization of domestic schedules more efficiently to reduce food waste.

6. Conclusions and limitations

This study contributes to the current literature on practice theory and meal consumption, revealing the synergetic process through which co-performed consumption practices emerge over time. The paper also reveals the different formation and structure of co-performed practices. Although limited to domestic meals performed by young and middle-class newly cohabiting couples living in London, contributions can be extended and applied to other consumption contexts. Considering that people rarely consume alone, understanding how co-performances are formed and evolve over time can be fundamental in predicting other collective and mundane practices such as sports or watching TV. While providing useful insights, we highlight some limitations. First, all the couples recruited were similar in terms of socio-demographics profile. We acknowledge that in studying other groups, for example working class couples and older consumers, the various elements of practices might play a different role in the synergetic process. Future research could extend our study and sample households from different age groups and social class. Second, although gender, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of practitioners were implicitly acknowledged in our findings, these aspects were not part of our study. While we recognise their importance, which has been studied by others (see for example Cross and Gilly, 2014), our approach prioritises the practice as unit of analysis rather than the reflexive accounts that individuals can provide on their own identities. Third, our research opened a new way of looking at meals as co-performed practices in a specific household, thus further studies are required to investigate the synergetic process of larger households. Fourth, findings are limited to meal practices, thus other domestic co-performed practices could be investigated. Fifth, in-depth research on negotiating disposal practices would be fruitful for policy interventions. Finally, as a pioneering attempt to identify the emergence of co-performed practices, further investigations are needed on how co-performed practices emerge in other contexts.

Table 1: Profile of Participants

#	Names	Nationality	Age	Occupation	Cohabitation at time of 1st visit	Location	No. and duration of Shopping Observation	No. and duration of Dinner Observation	No. of Interviews (couple + individual interviews)	Synergetic outcome
1.	Hannah & James	German & English	31 & 36	Credit Controller + University Teacher	1st month	North London	2 1 h 35 min	3 2 h 37 min	3 2 h 43 min	Combine
2.	Joanne & Tom	Both English	26 & 27	Restaurant Manager + PhD Student	6th month	South-West London	2 3 h 36 min	2 3 h 54 min	3 3 h 45 min	Combine
3.	Ted & Elias	Both Israelis	32 & 29	Drama PhD Student + Journalist	5th month	South London	3 + 1 online shop 3 h 52 min	2 6 h 43 min	3 5 h 40 min	Domineer
4.	Milena & Bernard	Thai & French	29 & 31	Project Manager + Statistician in a Bank	1st month	Central London	2 2 h 24 min	2 4 h 32 min	3 4 h 04 min	Blend
5.	Olivia & Alex	Italian & Portuguese	26 & 28	Project Manager + IT Security Consultant	2nd month	North London	2 2 h 31 min	4 3 h 54 min	3 3 h 46 min	Domineer
6.	Julia & William	Canadian & English	33 & 36	PhD Student + IT Sales	6th month	South-West London	1 1 h 30 min	1 2 h 4 min	3 4 h 43 min	Domineer
7.	Max & Pia	Italian & English	28 & 30	Finance Banker + Psychologist	3rd month	Central London	2 2 h 13 min	2 2 h 35 min	3 5 h 10 min	Domineer
8.	Vanna & Simon	Indian & Italian	27 & 29	Post-doc + PhD Student in IT	4th month	South-West London	2 2 h 15 min	2 3 h 35 min	3 4 h 27 min	Combine
9.	Sara & Nick	Chinese & English	30 & 27	Media PhD Student + IT Engineer	5th month	South London	2 2 h 55 min	2 3 h 35 min	3 5 h 10 min	Domineer
10	Barbara & Roberto	Both Italian	27 & 28	Data analyst +IT Security Consultant	2nd month	North London	2 2 h 45 min	2 3 h 25 min	3 3 h 27 min	Blend
11	Jenny & Paul	Indian & English	31 & 35	Teacher + Project Manager	3rd month	South London	2 1 h 47 min	2 3 h 2 min	3 3 h 10 min	Combine
12	Annie & Chris	Serbian & Portuguese	31 & 33	Accountant + Web Developer	5th month	North London	3 1 h 44 min	3 4 h 40 min	3 3 h 11 min	Blend
13	Harry & Emily	Both English	30 & 28	Physicist + Researcher in Biology	3rd month	South London	2 2 h 23 min	2 3 h 21 min	3 2 h 50 min	Blend

Table 2: Blending Elements

	Phase 1 **Disruption**	**Phase 2** **Incorporation of new materialities**	**Phase 3** **Blending**
Symbolic Meanings	Mis-alignments in attitude about health in shopping and cooking.	New meanings of care and doing healthy food together.	Common attitudes formed about health-organic produce.
Competences	Different skills and knowledge in the practice. For example, Bernard's shop hunt for organic produce; knowledge in cooking.	New skills and knowledge added, exchanged, taught and learnt.	Shared knowledge and understanding of a practice formed through learning and teaching and validating each competence.
Materials	Organic vs. Convenience products.	Incorporation of new ingredients and meal plans from the market. Mobiles and websites incorporated in the co-performance.	Products, ingredients and websites are shared.

Table 3: Examples of blending

Synergetic outcome	Blending examples	
	Shopping and Cooking practice (Couple: Annie and Chris)	Planning, Shopping and Disposal practice (Couple: Roberto and Barbara)
Phase 1 - Disruption	**Difference in competences in regard to being precise vs experimental in the kitchen:** [Couple interview; 5th month of cohabitation] Annie: '*Chris is very specific. If he has a recipe, he follows it completely, exactly by the amount and the time it's supposed to be. He doesn't change anything. Whereas I'm more flexible'*.	**Difference in meanings and competences about leftovers:** [Couple interview; 2nd month of cohabitation] Roberto: '*My Mom was a huge food waster. She bought too much most of the time. So I made it a point not to be like her. I am very attentive when things are expiring and how much* [food] *we are buying.*' Whereas for Barbara, buying extra portions are sensible as leftovers are convenient and used for lunchboxes. Barbara: '*I usually prepare lunchboxes for myself to take to work. Because* [her workplace meals] *are expensive and also not good quality. And I don't want to pay £6 every day for lunch. When I was living with my parents, it was very common to freeze things, like meat, vegetables to prepared food. So we always have the freezer full of things, it's very convenient* [..] *So when we moved in, I told Roberto, 'why don't you freeze things? So we don't need to eat it all in one go.'*
Phase 2 - Incorporation of new materialities, meanings and competences	**Integration of old and new brands and competences to blend individual practices:** [Shopping trip; 6th month of cohabitation] Annie: '*There is this brand he uses to make chilli con carne, called Dolmio'* [They explain Chris has been using this tomato puree brand since pre-cohabitation] Chris: '*I tried the normal* [supermarket] *brand once but it's not the same. Tastes completely different'* Annie: '*So we make it with that'* [Yet she introduces new brands and ways of cooking the dish. For example, in the cooking observation (7th month), she reveals they will be trying with chicken this time, as it's a lighter meat. Being in charge of the shopping, Annie bought kidney beans in a spicy sauce needed for the dish but '*this can be from a normal* [supermarket] *brand'* (Annie)].	**Integration of new materialities to synchronise competences in relation to time, money and food waste:** **[**Further in the couple interview] Barbara: '*We just bought a bigger freezer. Before we had a really small one*.' Roberto: '*Yeah we had to play tetris in it to fit everything. We couldn't buy much as we didn't want to throw away stuff so had to plan according to what our plans for the week are. But nowadays we freeze a lot.'* [In the shopping observation, 3rd month of cohabitation, they reveal integrating shopping lists to keep track of meals. Roberto introduced the list as he often did quick shops alone after work, but they would discuss it together before]. Roberto: '*We use Google Keep, which is a note-taking app that you can share. I like this because I can also use it on my laptop [it syncs on all devices]. We do the list over a couple of days, like whenever things run out or we notice something is missing'*. Moreover, he highlights their preference for pre-cut vegetables as it aids to reduce waste: '*I like to buy the stir-fry [pre-cut] vegetables, so there will be no leftover vegetables in the fridge. And we don't have to worry about wasting it or having the same*

		things the next day. If we buy separate vegetables, there will be too much quantity for one time and we would throw it away'.
Phase 3 - Outcome over time	**Blending meanings, competences and materialities in cooking over time:** Over time they both changed the dish. They blend their old and new brands, existing and new ways of making the dish, creating a completely new dish they can both accept and enjoy together. [Last shopping observation; 9th month] Chris: '*We are thinking to make Stroganoff. So we have to buy mushrooms and turkey, because Annie prefers turkey to beef..and some crème. I used to cook this before* [pre-cohabitation]. Annie: '*Another one of his specialities*'. [As they were buying the crème, Chris reveals they would go for the 'light' option now. Before this, he didn't care much and used to buy.. "*Full fat!*" Annie answers]. [Individual interview] Annie: *Everyone has a different approach to how they do things* [..] *so we need to adapt to each other.*	**Blending meanings, competences and materialities for the shared practice:** Over time, the couple blended their meanings and competences in food waste which manifested across all the practices of the meal from planning, cooking, eating to disposing. They bought a new freezer, incorporated food plans and pre-cut ingredients from the supermarket in order to blend values about saving money and throwing away food. In doing so, discussions about waste became normalised and part of everyday life. [As they highlight during the last dinner observation, 7th month of cohabitation]: Roberto: *'Nowadays we normally talk [about dinner] during breakfast. Like what should we eat tonight, what's left [in the fridge], do we need to have anything that's going bad, do we need to defrost anything, these kind of things.'* Barbara: *'Yeah we try to be a bit more organised because when we are at the supermarket we don't plan day by day. We don't say 'on Monday we'll eat this, on Tuesday we'll eat that'. So every day we need to plan.'*

Table 4: Combining Elements

	Phase 1 **Disruption**	**Phase 2** **Incorporation of new techniques**	**Phase 3** **Combining**
Symbolic Meanings	Mis-alignments in preferences and norms in buying, storing and eating meat.	New meanings of sharing food and infrastructures of the home.	Managing both preferences and norms over time.
Competences	Different know-hows. For example, Vanna's and Simon's different knowledge in shopping for and in cooking meat.	New techniques of storing different types of meat using the fridge and freezer space. New strategies of storing such as labelling and marinating.	Co-ordinating the various techniques to work together.
Materials	Meat from butcher vs packaged meat from supermarket.	Adding variety of meat types in the shared meal.	The meal and infrastructures within the home are shared.

Table 5: Examples of combining

Synergetic outcome	Combining examples	
	Planning and Eating practice (Couple: Tom and Joanne)	Disposing practice (Couple: Paul and Jenny)
Phase 1 - Disruption	**Difference in eating-diet preferences:** [Couple interview; 6th month of cohabitation] Tom: '*I would say we both have extreme diets in opposite ways. I have a very functional relation to food*.' As he trains 3 times a week in the gym and focuses on proteins, whereas Joanne either skips dinner or have fruits/salads and prefer vegan options.	**Difference in attitudes towards leftovers:** [Couple interview; 3rd month of cohabitation] Paul: '*We are different in terms of the quantities we aim for. Jenny likes to cook bigger quantities thinking we can have leftovers, she's more comfortable with throwing away stuff. When I was living on my own, I would be the opposite. I'd only buy things for the day, make it and eat it. And I like to have lesser things stored or in the fridge. I like it really fresh.'*
Phase 2 - Incorporation of new materialities, meanings and competences	**Incorporating new competences such as food plans and new techniques of combining the meal:** [Shopping observation; 7th month of cohabitation] Joanne: '*We started planning to find a middle ground where we can eat what we both are comfortable with. Also so we don't waste. On Sundays, we would spare time to talk through our calendars and see what's going on this week, when are we going to be in, what will we cook* [...] *I watch YouTube videos and stuff to find vegan meals. And then I'll add chicken, which sounds really weird, but I'll add chicken to his portion, because obviously Tom prefers the taste of meat*.' Tom: '*We suggest things to each other* [...] *For example, when I make daal, we make a vegan base then would add meat on top for my portion*'.	**Introducing new market schemes and developing new meanings:** [Shopping observation; 4th month of cohabitation] Paul: '*Two weeks ago, we started ordering veggie boxes'* Jenny: '*It's like an organic farm. Even though we don't really care for the organic.. and it's actually more expensive than the supermarket. But it makes us eat more vegetables and eat 'in' every day. And because now when we order and pay £60 a week on vegetables, I feel bad throwing anything away'.* Paul: '*Yeah, so I think that* [the delivery box] *is having a lot of influence on what we decide to eat and what we cook'*.
Phase 3 - Outcome over time	**Combining competences and meanings of respect over time through materialities:** Over time, this couple combined their diet preferences through creating meals that can be easily assembled. For example making vegan and adding meat on top, or making dairy and non-dairy alternatives. At times, cooking different meals for themselves. [Individual interview; 9th month of cohabitation] Tom: '*I would never prepare a meal that I knew Joanne wasn't comfortable eating, and then try and convince her to eat it. And she wouldn't do the same for me* [..] *I don't think it's a food thing. I think it's just a good relationship*	**Combining meanings, competences and materialities for the cooking of leftovers:** Over time, this couple combined their individual approach. On one hand, Jenny takes up the main project of the meal using up ingredients from the boxes. On the other hand, Paul devises strategies to cook from the leftover ingredients on his days to cook. [Shopping observation; 7th month of cohabitation] Jenny made a shopping list of all the ingredients they need from the supermarket. As she adds things in the basket, Paul ticks it from the list. Jenny reveals: '*I see what kind of vegetable we have* [in the box] *and then think what to do with it. I like to*

	thing you know'. [Last shopping observation, 10th month] Joanne: '*For the past week, I've been keeping a paleo diet and Tom is keeping a ketogenic diet* [..] *just because we are really busy these weeks and wanted to give ourselves a break*'. Tom: '*We will cook occasional meals together but I imagine we will mostly take care of ourselves*.' They each take a shopping basket for themselves and pick the foods they want while explaining about their paleo vs keto diet.	*follow recipes, especially because I can get a variety of ingredients here* [..] *I love making big dishes so we can have it for lunch the next day'.* [Whereas in the individual interview] Paul: '*I've learnt how to take something, which is not so nice or that we had it yesterday, and upgrading it. So for example, making rice omelette or soup out of the* [leftover] *vegetables'.*

Table 6: Domineering Elements

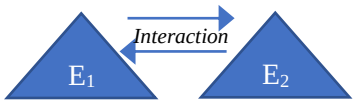
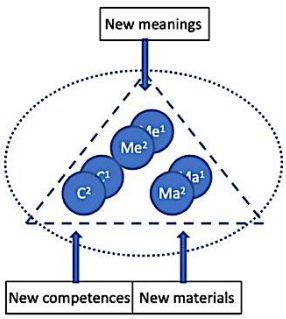
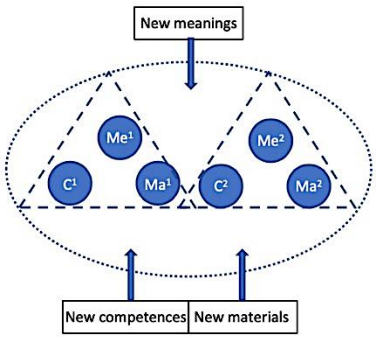
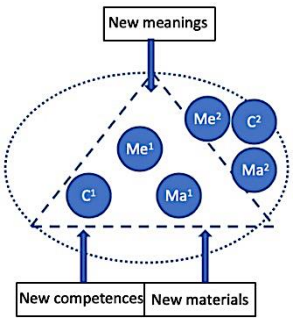
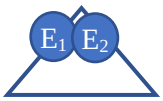
	Phase 1 **Disruption**	**Phase 2** **Incorporation of new market resources**	**Phase 3** **Domineering**
Symbolic Meanings	Mis-alignment in meanings about health and well-being. For example, Olivia and Alex's vegan versus unhealthy consumption.	New meanings of sharing and eating together.	Stronger meanings about health takes over and dominate. Meanings of unhealthy pleasures is removed.
Competences	Mis-alignments in knowledge in the practice. For example, how to cook healthy and tasty food, how to shop.	New techniques of making healthy food tasty is quickly learnt.	More professional competence of how to cook healthy and tasty food dominates.
Materials	Vegetables vs "dirty burgers" (as Olivia describes Alex's old meals).	New technological appliance (e.g. Acti-fry) to resolve conflicts about health and taste. New market resources (e.g. vegetable delivery boxes) to increase healthy repertoire.	The meal and kitchen appliances are shared.

Table 7: Examples of domineering

Synergetic outcome	Domineering examples	
	Planning and Shopping practice (Couple: Pia and Max)	Cooking practice (Couple: Sara and Nick)
Phase 1 - Disruption	**Difference in attitudes towards shopping. One person prefers to shop in bulk, the other prefers to shop small quantities frequently:** [Couple interview; 3rd month of cohabitation] Pia: '*It's always been normal for me to buy in big quantities. Like do a bulk shop, whereas Max has never done that. Actually I remember when we did the first couple of shops, you are like 'this is so much food* [..] *In my family, the things we eat regularly never run out. Like we always had fresh milk in the fridge, and for emergency, there will always be long-life milk in the pantry. So there would never be a time where we want tea or coffee, and there wouldn't be milk* [..] *And it happened many times where you* [turns to Max] *is just like it ran out.*'	**Gendered attitudes and values towards division of cooking tasks:** [Couple interview; 5th month of cohabitation] Sara: '*We barely cook together because actually housework at our place is quite gendered. I do most of the cooking'*. Nick: '*This might sound a bit nasty, but she has more time than me'*. Sara: '*But I don't like cooking. Because I am so busy with my life and I personally don't like housework being gendered. I studied feminism and I categorize myself as a feminist, but he doesn't give a shit about it. I try not to go into this kind of discussion with him, because each time it would just end up being a quarrel'*.
Phase 2 - Incorporation of new materialities, meanings and competences	**Integrating new digital technologies in their shared practice to resolve the difference:** [Shopping observation; 4th month of cohabitation] They have started using an app called 'Wunder List' to share grocery shopping list. Wunderlist is a cloud-based app, that allows users to share to-do tasks and updates on cloud instantaneously. Max: '*Now we have a list. I never used to have any list before'*. Pia: '*Yeah, I'm very organised. Having a list is handy because we can just get everything we need'*. Max: '*So she is always like 'put that on the list', 'delete it from the list if you buy it'. Before I just had a mental list, like what I need today I will just go and buy it'*.	**Integrating new materials such as ready-made meals to resolve the tension in who will cook:** [Cooking observation; 7th month of cohabitation] Sara: '*What we're doing at the moment is going to Tesco and buying a lot of ready meals. And I just heat them up* [...] *To be fair for the last two weeks, I barely cooked because we bought ready meals, so we just buy a lot of ready meals, you know £6 for 3 meals and then I just put them in the freezer'*.
Phase 3 - Outcome over time	**One meaning-attitude (in this case it's the woman's) dominate over time. His old habits need to be let go of:** By the 7th month of cohabitation, Pia's attitude took over and Max need to let go of his existing habits to create a synergy in their planning and shopping. [2nd cooking observation while talking about the week's shopping] Max: '*I have to make a bit more effort of thinking about the list, I*	**One meaning-attitude (in this case it's the man's) dominate in the household over time. Feminist values need to be let go of:** Over time, Nick's attitudes took over and Sara let go of her existing values to create a synergy in their eating and other meal practices. She became the sole preparer of food but often used convenience strategies to aid the tension. [Individual interview; 9th month of

	tend to forget about it. It's not natural for me [...] *I still sneak out! Like before coming home, I'm like 'I'm just going to Tesco to buy 2-3 things*'. Pia: *And I say this to you on the weekend when we are shopping to buy one more and you are like 'no, I have it* […] *This is something I want him to get into*'.	cohabitation] Sara: '*The thing is even though we buy ready meals and eat it, there is still effort in it. For example, it's me who put the ready meal into the oven or microwave, and walk all the way to the lounge to give it to him, like he wouldn't really want to make any effort* […] *I think it's a habit he formed since childhood, I don't see him changing'*.

Figure 1: Synergetic process

Disruption (**Phase 1**):	 E = Meanings + Competences + Materiality		Disruption of Individual Routines
Incorporation (**Phase 2**):	Addition of new elements to aid in the synergetic process 		
Synergetic outcomes (**Phase 3**):	 **Blending**	 **Combining**	 **Domineering**
Co-performed practice:	Blended practice: Elements mix and transform each other over time	Combined practice: Elements unite and cooperate with each other over time	Domineered practice: One element takes over and dissolve the other over time
Old elements in existing practice gets:	*Re-evaluated* and *altered* as the set of elements change one another	*Kept* and *sustained* as the set of elements do not change one another	*Dominated* or *removed* as one set of element takes over the other
Characteristics	‘Our Way’ One common approach	‘My way|Your way’ Management of both approaches	‘Only my way’ Domination of one approach

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