Community-oriented consumption and opportunities for change in shopping centre/mall design

Abstract:
Shopping centres are the bastions of the consumer age, promoting in their design the desire to continue to consume at an unsustainable rate. However there is growing evidence that new paradigms of consumption are emerging in developed countries, led by evolving technologies and online shopping, that are shifting consumer values and behaviours - and the environments in which we shop will need to adapt. Community-oriented consumption paradigms relate to behavioural changes that link people more closely, socially and/or culturally, with each other, providing a sense of community. These can be virtual or face-to-face. Collaborative consumption, the ‘Me vs We’ economies, service economies, the slow movement and prosumption are examples. This paper will discuss the variety of community-oriented consumption paradigms, addressing food as a linking concept, and their influence on shopping centre/mall design.
Keywords: community-oriented consumption; sense of community; shopping centre design; sustainability; consumer paradigms
Introduction

“Shopping is arguably the last remaining form of public activity. Through a battery of increasingly predatory forms, shopping has been able to colonize – even replace – almost every aspect of urban life” (Koolhaas et al. 2000).

The interiorised environment of the shopping centre is synonymous with suburban life, where often it is the only civic place for entertainment, social gatherings and cultural activities. This global permeation of the shopping centre has had significant impact at a local scale, privatising and internalising civic and social spaces. Shopping centres/malls have often been criticised for their oligarchical design and management styles (Flint 2006; Voyce 2006). Quasi-public internal spaces, privately owned but within the public realm, have caused many to question and discuss their role as productive, egalitarian community-oriented spaces (Flint 2006; Voyce 2006).

This is due to the connection shopping centres have with how the well-being of a nation, and therefore of society, is measured and valued. Currently, in most of the developed nations well-being is associated with consumption - the more that is produced and consumed the wealthier the nation, the better the well-being. Shopping centres are therefore physical representations of the well-being of a nation and consequently of its society. Consumers in this paradigm are disengaged, passive subjects, reduced to a singular role, consumption, their well-being directly related to the products they consume (Manzini and Jégou 2003). The spaces within which consumers shop are designed to promote consumption; this is what provides our sense of well-being. They are not, therefore, largely spaces that promote a sense of community and facilitate activity that encourages social interactions and gatherings.

However, whether due to increased awareness of issues related to sustainability, the global economic crisis or a growing fear of national and individual safety, values of consumers are changing. Increasingly this includes a greater connection to a sense of community and a form of consumerism that is more human-centred. According to the Nike brand president, Charlie Denson, “Consumers want to be a part of a community, whether it’s a digital community or a virtual community, or whether it’s a physical community. They want to feel like they’re a part of something. They want to be engaged.” (Botsman and Rogers 2010, 200)

We are witnessing a decline in conspicuous consumption indicating that the current consumer paradigm in developed countries will soon be a model of the past (Bansal and Kilbourne 2001; Binkoff et al. 2008; Botsman and Rogers 2010; Goodman et al. 2007; Miettinen and Koivisto 2009; White 2010). According to Botsman and Rogers (2010) we are currently at a tipping point, transforming from a culture of ‘what’s in it
for me?’ to ‘what’s in it for us?’. There is a new consumer in town, the ‘grounded consumer’ who, according to Blinkoff et al (2008), fully understands how to live within their means, embraces a ‘we economy’ balancing values of sociability, community and well-being, wants to reduce their reliance on ‘stuff’, and puts their ‘talk’ into action.

Using food as a linking tool to discuss the scale and diversity of community-oriented consumption, this paper will discuss why this paradigm is generating momentum in developed nations, what forms the paradigm is taking and how this will influence the future design of shopping centres.

What is Community-oriented Consumption?

There is a growing desire for a sense of community in contemporary societies (Botsman and Rogers 2010). Uncertainty on a global context, predicated by global warming and climate change, the global financial crisis and fear of perceived and real terrorism, creates a need for security found closer to home (Allon 2008). Communities can provide a greater sense of security and safety, decrease worry and increase self-efficacy (Sense of Community Partners 2004) in a world that may seem in some respects ‘out of control’, or at least out of personal control (Mojoli 2003). The Internet and other virtual technologies, while making connections more rapidly and easily over greater distances, have, concurrently, increased separation at a more personal level. Community-oriented consumption paradigms provide the participants with a positive sense of community and well-being, and the availability for social innovation.

The work of McMillan and Chavis (1986) still stands as the most common and widely held definition of a sense of community (Galley, Conole, and Alevizou 2012; Mannarini and Fedi 2009; Obst, Smith, and Zinkiewicz 2002). Their definition consists of four elements:
1. Membership
2. Influence
3. Integration and fulfillment of needs or reinforcement
4. Shared emotional connection

These elements can be used to describe how community-oriented consumption provides a deeper experience that engages the participants on a number of levels. The activity of participants is voluntary and empowered within the exchange, rather than controlled and passive.
Membership can be as a formal member of a community, such as membership to a library, or by simply being a regular user of a particular service, such as a laundromat or online service. The more regularly the service or product is used, the more personal investment is formed, creating a sense of belonging and identification. Symbols such as brands or logos may also play an important part in the creation of identity within the community.

Influence is an important element in forming an attraction to the community. By having an impact within the community, members feel they are influential, they are not passive actors, and can make a difference to the community. This influence can be minor, such as online feedback to an online service, or significant, such as a suggestion on how a community may improve its well-being through a design idea.

The third element, reinforcement, establishes a strong community through rewards. These rewards can be through status, such as the number of hits on a social media page, shared individual values with other members of the group, such as concerns for environmental issues through a shared car service, and by meeting other's needs by also meeting their own, such as a community kitchen garden.

Shared emotional connection is developed over time through continuing interaction with the service/product offered by the consumer community. This can be further enhanced through positive experiences and quality services/products, increasing the emotional attachment. The sharing of significant events, milestones and breakthroughs within the community will strengthen this emotional attachment. Therefore, the greater the emotional attachment the greater the sense of belonging and loyalty to the community.

In summary McMillan and Chavis identify strong communities as, “...those that offer members positive ways to interact, important events to share and ways to resolve them positively, opportunities to honour members, opportunities to invest in the community, and opportunities to experience a spiritual bond among members” (McMillan and Chavis 1986, 14).

Two other factors, social innovation and well-being, are significant for the future of community-oriented consumption to ensure diversity and relevance. Social innovation is defined by Mulgan as, “...innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organisations whose primary purposes are social...” or “...new ideas that work in meeting social goals.” (Mulgan 2007, 8). Social innovation will be an important driver for a sustainable future (Gong 2009) and for ensuring creative, diverse and relevant communities. A new idea of well-being needs to be adopted that is not
directly associated with the acquisition of goods. Manzini describes this new well-being as, "...a set of context properties which a person perceives to be positive and towards which he steers his action strategy." (Manzini and Jégou 2003, 49). Values are therefore concentrated on positive contextual properties, and actions are based on these values, rather than products. Social innovation and a new emphasis on well-being can create positive changes to values, attitudes and behaviour which, when related to consumerism, is a critical step towards a sustainable future. Coupled with a sense of community, community-oriented consumption requires the integration of social innovation and well-being as important contributors to a sustainable future and to encompassing the richness and diversity of communities. "...ways of living based on sharing and collaboration reinforce the transition towards sustainability: they regenerate the local social fabric and promote the creation of new common goods." (Cipolla 2009). Manzini adopts the term ‘creative communities’ to describe innovative citizens improving well-being through positive steps towards social and environmental sustainability (Manzini 2007). This term has also been adapted to integrate social innovation and well-being into the explanation of community-orientated consumption.

Figure 1 maps the variety of current consumption types, with community-oriented consumption on a matrix with creative communities on one axis and sense of community on the other. Consumption is divided into products and services, and places of exchange are divided into physical and virtual typologies.

In the centre of this matrix lie forms of community-oriented consumption with a high sense of community and advanced levels of creative community. To the edge of the matrix are more common current forms of consumption: supermarkets, retail stores, department stores, fast food outlets and online shopping. These forms have a low sense of community based on the McMillan and Chavis’ definition, and a poor level of creative community. These consumer forms have shown little innovation or variance over decades, remaining relatively static apart from the development of internet shopping, which in itself has largely adopted the same format within a different typology. In contrast, the variety of community-oriented consumption typologies has been growing and expanding, adapting and adopting as needs require, being creative in their approach to new opportunities and at the same time relating to a stronger sense of community. Peer to peer networks, collaborative consumption typologies, slow movement examples, prosumption, co-creation, shared and relational services, ‘me vs we’ economies and gift economies are some of the growing diversity of consumption forms that can be classified as community-oriented consumption.
Forms of community-oriented consumption are varied but what they have in common are the positive, active engagement of people, who together through their act of consuming (whether that is a physical product, service or virtual item, traded, loaned, shared or purchased) form a sense of community. The value of their consuming experience is not solely based on the product or service but the value of the personal engagement and sense of community they gain from the experience. These interactions and exchanges are occurring face-to-face in physical environments, such as traditional places of consumption, or less traditional places such as private homes, and virtual environments such as social media, online networks and web pages.

Using food to explain community-oriented consumption

To assist in explaining the various forms of community-oriented consumption further, Figure 1 uses the community-oriented consumption (COC) matrix to map various forms of obtaining food. Fresh food, in the current consumer paradigm, is mainly available from supermarkets, bulk food stores, online supermarket sources, specialised grocery stores, 24/7 convenience stores, local convenience stores, community gardens (including school kitchen gardens), farmers’ markets, directly from farms, roadside stalls and personal kitchen gardens.

At the edge of the COC matrix are supermarkets, bulk food stores and online supermarket sources. Convenience and efficiency are the characteristics of these forms. Customers are disempowered. Large varieties of products are available based on marketing information obtained through the patronage of customers. Supermarkets are shown on the matrix as having a low sense of community. Membership of supermarkets is confined to loyalty cards and the like, but not a sense of personal belonging. There is little or no individual power to influence the organisation or its products, and there is a low shared emotional connection between customers and between the employees and their customers. While reinforcement through rewards (ie loyalty cards) could be seen to satisfy McMillan and Chavis’ definition of reinforcement, this in itself is a controlling mechanism where customers’ information is being recorded and exploited by the company for their own benefit, controlling the choices of the customer (Uren 2011). Creative community is also low – there is little availability for social innovation and well-being is still aligned with product purchase rather than values.

Closer towards the centre of the COC matrix are local grocers and local convenience stores that have an increased sense of community. Membership is formed through
familiarity (between customers and vendors) and regular patronage (with an increased possibility to also meet other neighbourhood locals). Influence is formed through an empowerment of customers to request the store keeper to stock or bring in a particular item, which is then reinforced when this request is carried through – the customer has been rewarded for their patronage through personal recognition of their needs. A valuable exchange has taken place resulting in a shared emotional connection between both actors. Here creative community is also higher. Through greater engagement between customers and vendors, there is greater opportunity and openness for social innovation and more value can be placed on relationships formed over product.

At the centre of the COC matrix are farmers’ markets. Here both actors are engaged in a positive exchange of information on how, for example, the food was grown, or how it could be grown to suit the needs of the customer. A relationship is being formed through this exchange that creates an investment between both actors and other members of the market. While many people frequent farmers’ markets due to the quality and freshness of the produce, it is also this social quality and support for the local community that attracts visitors (Hunt 2007; Szmigin, Maddock, and Carrigan 2003; La Trobe 2001). A rich exchange emerges between all participants creating a membership of information and ideas. The farmers are investing in the health and well-being of the community, and through their patronage the community is investing in the health of the local economy. This circular reinforcement continuously rewards the local community and its individuals, creating a shared emotional connection. There has been a steady growth of farmers’ markets in many developed countries - there was an increase of 120 farmers’ markets in the two years after the first started in the U.K. (La Trobe 2001); in the U.S.A. farmers’ markets now outnumber Wal-Mart stores (Botsman and Rogers 2010); and in 2012 there was a reported rise of 9.6 percent in listed farmers’ markets (“USDA Directory Records More Than 7,800 Farmers Markets” 2012). This provides is a strong indication of the growing need and demand for community-oriented consumption.

While farmers’ markets have many benefits there are also perceived and real negative elements. For shoppers wanting quick, cheap options and extended opening hours, local supermarkets are currently often the better alternative. Some of the supermarket chains in the U.K. such as Tesco and Asda have trialled having farmers’ markets open outside their stores in an attempt to combine the two typologies (La Trobe 2001). However, rather than mimicking and adopting the farmers’ market as a typology, existing operators need to adopt the principles and values set by the farmers’ market, such as socialisation, local economic return, ethical values, healthy
options and reconnection with the producers of the food and the seasonal, local options available (La Trobe 2001; Szegedin, Maddock, and Carrigan 2003). This creates the true nature of a community-oriented consumer paradigm.

In London, England, The People’s Supermarket is challenging the current status quo and changing the current dominant paradigm of the supermarket. A food cooperative, the supermarket combines the benefits of a supermarket (convenience and efficiency) with the local fresh food, social engagement and community benefits of a farmers’ market. It is, “...a sustainable food cooperative that responds to the needs of the local community and provides healthy, local food at reasonable prices.” (Anonymous 2013a) The People’s Supermarket employs volunteers from the surrounding community who benefit from their input by trading their time for the availability of fresh local produce. The produce is selected from farms as close to the supermarket as possible, reaching further out only when necessary. There is a direct engagement with the local farmers and the supermarket endeavours to find the most cost efficient options available, providing competitive prices to the surrounding traditional supermarkets. To facilitate and enhance community engagement and a sense of community amongst volunteers, employees and members, various social events are organised after hours, including music and movie nights or promotional events of local produce. The People’s Kitchen (situated in the supermarket) was installed initially to ensure that no food waste was sent to landfill. Members benefit from skills learnt directly in the kitchen, such as food hygiene and cooking, and four jobs have been created for the unemployed. The People’s Supermarket is an excellent example of a community-oriented consumer form, taking the benefits of two consumer typologies to create a successful shopping experience.

To a lesser extent, the American supermarket chain, Whole Foods Market, has managed to incorporate some of the farmers’ markets’ principles through the selection of organic and sustainably managed food and the inclusion of in-store restaurants and cafés. The food has been labelled according to its origins, providing explanatory information on how it has been farmed or produced, replacing the face-to-face interaction that would be found at a farmers’ market. This form of information concerning food origins is now popular in many supermarkets throughout developed countries. However a difference in the Whole Food Market stores is the integration of small demonstration restaurants and cafés engaging the shoppers in how to cook healthy meals using products from the store. On visiting the Whole Foods Market store in Austin, Texas, there is a notable difference in atmosphere and experience compared to ‘traditional’ supermarkets. While the strength of community is probably not as great as in The People’s Supermarket, there is a sense of
community not found in many supermarkets, generated through the strong ethical values of the company as well as the incorporation of positive engagement with the customers.

On a smaller scale, Unpackaged, a small boutique store in London, England has reduced and/or eliminated the packaging of its groceries to minimise waste. This small act has re-engaged the consumer with the storekeeper, as customers must require the storekeeper to fill supplied, or personal, reusable containers with their selected products. Through this direct engagement knowledge is shared between both customer and storekeeper, as in contemporary farmers’ markets. This exchange provides a positive interaction, enhancing a sense of community through membership, influence, reinforcement and shared emotional connection.

At Rouse Hill Town Centre in Sydney, Australia, the ‘farm’ has come to the shopping centre in the form of a community kitchen garden. While not big enough to supply the needs of the local community, the Kitchen Garden is looked after by local school students who learn first hand of the benefits of producing, cooking, eating and sharing freshly grown fruit and vegetables.

The concepts behind supermarkets such as The People’s Supermarket, Whole Foods Market and others have been largely adapted from traditional markets and farmers’ markets, places where people are more fully engaged in the social transaction as well as the form of trade taking place, providing a higher level of community-oriented consumption. However with the development of the internet, other technological advances and the move to a more sustainable lifestyle, there are a growing variety of other community-oriented consumption forms being developed by creative communities.

**Other developing forms of community-oriented consumption**

Continuing with the theme of food, we can explore other developing themes and forms of community-oriented consumption, using some of the examples provided in Fig.1.

**The Food Atelier**

The work of Manzini & Jégou explores alternative forms of consumption, to reduce the consumption of products through the use of services and to increase social relations, modelling these ideas on scenarios of what they term ‘multi-service centres’. “A multi-service centre is an enabling platform that operates in the everyday sphere,
offering solutions, opening opportunities, and facilitating co-operation between those in the production and consumption system...and doing all this at a high degree of systemic eco-efficiency...” (Manzini and Jégou 2003, 160). Multi-service centres have related activities, provide local-global relations, have eco-efficient processes, contain products with ambient intelligence to enable communication concerning performance, and provide technology that connects people and services at a high standard. Each multi-service scenario contains service solutions that are either Quick: solutions for the quick resolution of problems, accepting therefore limited variety and customisation, Slow: solutions for those prepared to commit the necessary time and attention to achieve a high level of quality, and Co-op: solutions that are collaboratively based. (Manzini and Jégou 2003)

The Food Atelier is an example of one such multi-service centre. Based on the Quick, Slow, and Co-op themes, the Food Atelier consists of ‘Fresh Food of the Day’, ‘Food Tasting Groups’ and ‘Kitchen Club’. ‘Fresh Food of the Day’ provides an area for picking up pre-ordered fresh food, pre-packaged food for a particular meal, last minute items and the help of a store manager/dietician to organise and pre-prepare meals on a weekly basis. ‘Food Tasting Groups’ are centred around a large table within the multi-service centre where food can be sampled and orders placed from local producers. The ‘Kitchen Club’ has a professional kitchen that can be used much like a community kitchen, where food is prepared for shared eating or sold as ready-made dishes to others. A professional chef provides advice to users.

**Go Slow**

The Slow Food Movement began in the late 1980’s as a reaction to ‘fast food’ - seen as a mirror to the lifestyles being led across many nations of the world. “Speed became our shackles. We fell prey to the same virus: ‘the fast life’ that fractures our customs and assails us even in our own homes, forcing us to ingest ‘fast- food’” (Anonymous 1989). The movement has developed widely across the globe with currently (in 2013) over 100,000 members in 1,300 local chapters around the world (Anonymous 2013b) and its philosophies are practiced by writers, economists, town planners, designers, sociologists ad philosophers (Mojoli 2003). The Slow Movement has strong connections to community-oriented consumption. Where consumption in the modern world has been one of instant gratification, the human connections have been neglected. The Slow Movement seeks to regain these connections by providing space in time for these connections to happen. Slow design for example seeks to design space to think, react, dream and muse; to design for people first and
commercialisation second; to design for socio-cultural benefits and well-being and to catalyse behavioural change and socio-cultural transformation (Fuad-Luke 2009).

Droog, a design collaborative founded by curator and author Renny Ramakers, created Go Slow as part of the Milan Furniture Fair in 2004 with Saai Design and Marije Vogelzang (Anonymous 2004). The installation/presentation celebrated the philosophy of the Slow Movement. The calming, white interior-scape invited visitors to slow down and enjoy the food being prepared and serviced by senior people, whose own ‘slowness’ accentuated the experience.

**Soil Starter**

Artist Kevin Kaempf works under the title ‘People Powered’, offering simple solutions to everyday problems associated with sustainability. One of these projects, Soil Starter, takes kitchen and garden waste from city neighbours and friends who don’t have the inclination or space for composting, to compost the waste at his own home and return it as compost in transparent medium-sized ‘tea bag’ packets – a good size for revitalising city dwellers’ pot plants. Kaempf was inspired by the realisation that through acts of consumption we ‘connect’ to some degree or other with people who are outside our immediate circle of friends and family. By collecting compost materials from people within, and external to, his own immediate friendship circle, Kaempf was able to build a small community within the limits of his neighbourhood. Through Soil Starter he was able to access a range of people via this small-scale composting network (Smith 2005).

**Landshare**

Collaborative consumption is concerned with how we share, rather than what we own. It is based on the ‘we’ economy rather than the ‘me’ economy, and plays a major role in community-oriented consumption. It seeks to balance individual and community needs with the needs of the planet in new economic and social mechanisms. The four principles of collaborative consumption are:

- critical mass
- idling capacity
- belief in the commons
- trust between strangers (Botsman and Rogers 2010, 75)

*Critical mass* refers to the momentum needed for a system to be to self-sustaining. Malcolm Gladwell termed this as the ‘tipping point’. There has to be enough choice to
compete with existing consumer paradigms in order for collaborative consumer systems to survive. Idling power refers to things, skills, space, commodities, or even time we have, that are not used to their full capacity but could be used by others. The commons refers to things that should remain in the public realm such as air, water, wildlife, parks, roads and so on. However much of what should be classed as common has been privatised. Belief in the commons understands that in order for collaborative consumption to succeed there must be a return to the true understanding of this concept – this creates shared values between people. Trust between strangers refers to a self-governing within the system and a trust in people we don’t know. (Botsman and Rogers 2010)

In keeping with the theme of ‘food’, Landshare is an example of collaborative consumption. The Landshare program is a United Kingdom program that connects would-be gardeners without land with people who have land to spare. It also connects people with extra time and additional skills to help. As of May 2013 there were close to 72,000 members in the U.K., with also just over 2,200 Landshare members in Australia and nearly 700 in Canada (Anonymous 2013c). The success of schemes like Landshare (other schemes include YardShare, SharedEarth and Urban Gardenshare in the U.S.A.) relies on the social networking capacity of the internet – without which it would be very difficult to match needs with wants. Members include people who don’t have the physical strength to attend a garden, the time or perhaps the right tools or skills to grow a successful garden. The benefits, apart from the shared produce, include friendships and sense of community (Botsman and Rogers 2010).

The Living Room Restaurant and Les Jardins de Cérès

Relational services are “...based on the quality of interpersonal relations between and among participants.” (Cipolla 2009, 233). The services are relational because the encounters are face-to-face with known connections. The relationships between the people are not an involuntary consequence as a part of the service but an integral component of the service, and therefore of the solution. The characteristics of relational services that set them apart from other service models are that:

• they interweave clients and providers
• they require mutual responsibility, intimacy and trust
• they focus more on ‘actions’ than on ‘things’; well-being is the considerate focus
• they include conviviality (Cipolla 2009)
The Living Room Restaurant is a relational service established in the Netherlands where the service providers or hosts provide a meal within their own home. The guests book a seat at the table via email or phone, and a three course meal is provided with unlimited drinks. Guests can choose the music they wish and only need to clear the table between courses. The providers sit at either end of the table and swap halfway through to chat to all guests. The service provides an affordable meal in a cheerful environment with an opportunity to meet new people and be socially active. (Stuyfzand 2005)

Les Jardins de Cérès is a group of people who make an agreement with a local farmer to produce organic food. The crops are pre-ordered and paid for in advance in three installments, guaranteeing an income for the farmer. The crops and availability are adjusted with the farmer depending on the seasons and what crops are available. The members of the group also assist the farmer at all stages of the growing and harvesting. During this process a strong relationship is formed between both parties, each benefitting from the relationship and creating a stronger sense of community within the local region (Abderamane-Dillah, Sa, and Deutsch 2005).

There are hundreds if not thousands of examples of traditional and new consumer paradigms that could be classified as forms of community-oriented consumption. These new forms of consumerism are highlighting the desire of people to reconnect, to seek value beyond the short-lived satisfaction of a new product. People are engaging with each other, rather than (just) engaging with the consumption of products, through collaborative consumption, service design and the ‘we’ cultural paradigm. “We are seeing compelling examples of individuals and communities rediscovering a sense of meaning and reconnection beyond consumerism.” (Botsman and Rogers 2010, 63)

Possible impacts of community-oriented consumption on shopping centre design

In their current forms, shopping centres have been designed for conspicuous consumption - they are the bastions of the consumer age and have been rightly criticised for their ineptness in creating positive and engaging community experiences. Community-oriented consumption can be viewed as a catalyst for changing this paradigm of shopping centre design.
While not everyone will be volunteering their time at a local supermarket, growing food in someone else’s garden or hosting a restaurant dinner in their own home, what community-oriented consumption will provide is a slowing down, to provide time and opportunities for interaction and engagement. Those involved in the design, operation and management of shopping centres will need the skills and research of ethnographers and anthropologists, not in order to control consumer behaviour to increase spending, but to understand how to facilitate a sense of community, engage in social innovation and create well-being that values contextual interaction over mere acquisition of products.

As the community becomes more involved as co-creators of their retail environments, the life of the shopping centre will change to extend over a 24/7 period. No longer ‘ghost towns’ after shopping hours, shopping centres will be alive with varieties of activities that change and adapt over the course of the day, the week, the times of the year. Activities will morph from day-time selling to night-time hospitality; from weekday shopping to weekend recreation; from summer sun activities to winter warmth and reflection. With this, shopping centre design will be required to be more flexible, adapting to these changing activities and creating opportunities for user involvement. The homogenised designs of contemporary shopping centres will be replaced with designs that facilitate engagement, encouraging users to be active participants, rather than passive witnesses within their environments.

The homogenous rows of shops, with their designs stylised and branded to fit with the style guide of the shopping centre management, will turn into a cornucopia of diverse forms of activities that engage the visitor as a member of a vast and varied set of communities. The design of shopping centres will need to be rethought to be able to integrate the complexities associated with community-oriented consumption. Students from the University of Tasmania have imagined what the results might be if the principles of a community-oriented consumption paradigm dominated a shopping centre environment. The site was the adaptive reuse of an historic manufacturing building in Launceston, Tasmania. Here farmers’ markets have been integrated into the community of the newly formed shopping centre of 2030. Food is being produced and marketed on site using either high technology for indoor crops or large, edible vertical gardens straddling central open areas. External local farms are coordinated with the local community farms, and farmers’ markets sell the produce on site. Community kitchens, and dietary and health advice are also available.

The reuse and adaptation of goods, through repair, swapping and redesigning, increases participation and involvement from many members of the local community and reduces pressure on resources and waste. Markets and light industry associated
with product adaption and repair are incorporated, as are designer/maker studios, peer-to-peer services, exchange, loan and hire facilities, for example; all of which facilitate local employment and provide a greater diversity of skills. A clothing exchange service incorporating the full service of sorting, cleaning, repairing, swapping and selling, integrated with a smart phone app to select items, has been integrated into one of the designs. A designer/makers’ hub provides a diverse range of equipment and spaces including kilns, timber and metal working machinery, textile equipment, water and wastewater facilities, computers, storage and safe working areas with natural light and quality ventilation. Other members of the community are also able to use these facilities to repair and make their own goods. The use of technology such as mobile phone apps, social media and the internet plays an important role in the project and helps develop trade activities and community involvement. As the centres will be producing their own energy and collecting their own water, the community may also benefit from these services, adding energy and water to a collective storage system, for the use of the entire community – the commons (Mäté 2013). These productive hubs (Mäté 2013), as opposed to consumptive shopping centres, create and provide for the needs of the local community, utilising the principles of community-oriented consumption paradigms that encompass a diverse variety of needs and desires.

Conclusion

Shopping centres, currently, do not generally provide a sense of community or accommodate the complex variety of needs, wants and desires of community groups. As bastions of the consumer age, shopping centres have been designed to promote consumerism, not community fulfilment. However a change in consumer values and practices (including sustainability and virtual technologies) is set to turn this around, as community-oriented consumption becomes the dominant paradigm. The diverse range of consumption forms that this new paradigm will bring with it will force the hand of designers, operators and managers to rethink the typology that is ‘shopping centre’ - a design form captured by the age of consumerism - into new ‘productive hubs’ that facilitate social innovation, positive well-being and a strong sense of community.
Bibliography


