

MARTIN HAND & ELIZABETH SHOVE
**ORCHESTRATING
CONCEPTS:
KITCHEN DYNAMICS
AND REGIME
CHANGE IN GOOD
HOUSEKEEPING
AND IDEAL HOME,
1922–2002¹**

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It has long been recognized that users and consumers actively appropriate new products and technologies and assimilate them into existing regimes and frames of reference. Much less has been written about how these frames evolve or about how processes of integration and appropriation are sustained and transformed. In this article we analyze "the kitchen" not as a place but as an "orchestrating concept." We subject representations of the kitchen, as depicted in *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* (two of the foremost home magazines in Britain) from 1922 to 2002, to two types of analysis. We begin by showing how

materials, images, and forms of competence “hang together” at different points in time and how kitchen regimes are formed. We then explore ways of characterizing transitions between one kitchen regime and another. The result is an account not simply of the elements of which kitchens are made but of the changing relations between these constitutive ingredients. The article is at heart about the processes and dynamics of regime change. Although we focus on the kitchen throughout, we do so because we believe better understanding of how meta-level orchestrating concepts like “the kitchen” develop is important for conceptualizing the dynamics of ordinary consumption and everyday practice.

INTRODUCTION



The idea that users and consumers actively appropriate new technologies and fit them into existing ways of life has been widely accepted across a number of social scientific fields. Countering overly simple representations of the social impact of new technologies and explicitly challenging all forms of technological determinism, Akrich’s influential article, “The De-scription of Technical Objects” (1992) analyzes the troubles involved in making a French-designed photoelectric lighting system “work” in Africa. In this account, the dynamics of appropriation have to do with the relation between real users, those imagined by foreign designers and the objects themselves. For Akrich, processes of appropriation are important because they reveal the interdependence of material artifacts and social networks.

Other commentators, especially those more interested in consumption than technology, have concentrated on the social processes involved in fitting new commodities into existing material and moral environments like those of the home. Whether inspired by an underlying interest in the alienative effects of mass consumption or the politics of the home, various authors have written about how people “domesticate” or make consumer goods “their own” (Lie and Sorensen 1996; Miller 1997; Røpke 2001; Silverstone *et al.* 1992).

Despite differences of orientation, both traditions deal with reciprocal adjustments between technologies or products and the environments in which they are used and consumed. In both cases, concepts like appropriation and domestication have been developed to counter or at least qualify arguments that have reified “technology” or “culture” in one form or another. One result is that most debate has been about how active or passive consumers really are, or about the relation between concepts of appropriation on the one hand and configuration (i.e. how technologies construct or “script” their users) on the other.

The very idea of appropriation supposes some preexisting “regime,” this being a rule-set or grammar that is embedded in

practices, products, and procedures and in ways of defining and handling problems (Rip and Kemp 1998). Despite the popularity of concepts like appropriation, much less has been said about the properties and dynamics of the environments into which products and technologies are (or are not) adopted. Few commentators doubt the relevance of orchestrating principles like those embedded in ideologies of domesticity. Likewise, notions of habitus (Bourdieu 1984) and even “lifestyle” can be useful in making sense of the ordering and patterning of daily life. But what holds such meso-level frameworks together, and how do they change? This is a question we want to address.

Rip and Kemp make the rather general claim that “Regimes are outcomes of earlier changes and they structure subsequent change” (1998: 338). Some clues as to how these transformations actually come about are to be found in the work of those who have considered how artifacts relate to each other. Building upon Cowan’s (1983) concept of the household as a “consumption junction,” that is as the place in which choices are made between competing technologies, de Wit *et al.* consider what they refer to as “innovation junctions.” Innovation junctions are sites in which “location specific innovation patterns” (2002: 51) arise because of the ways in which technologies interact. In the office settings de Wit *et al.* discuss, the existence of one technology, such as the typewriter, has implications for the development of others, for example, carbon copying, dictation machines, and so forth. These authors identify three types of interaction (*ad hoc*, partial, and centralized), associating each with a distinctive period of office development and with a particular configuration of actors including producers, professionals, and users. In this account, innovation junctions, like consumption junctions before them, are analytically neutral: they are places in which things, ideas and institutional relations come together. de Wit *et al.* argue that the office itself evolves through a set of specific interactions between artifacts and actors. However, the office is, for the most part, viewed as the emergent *outcome* of such interactions, not as a coordinative force or a dynamic entity in its own right.

Also interested in how artifacts relate to each other, Pantzar and Sundell-Nieminen (2003) identify competitive and symbiotic relations between things. They write about an “ecology of goods” within the home, showing how a “predatory” digital camera relates to its analogue rival and describing mutually supportive arrangements like those between a computer and associated bits of kit including shelves and chairs. These authors liken the home to a forest: both being battlegrounds in which some “ecological” arrangements survive and flourish and in which others become extinct. Developments in the home are, of course, mediated by “reflective human activity,” but the important point for us, and what distinguishes this position from that outlined above, is the idea that such interactions have cumulative consequences for the environment as a whole.

An evolutionary perspective suggests that processes of appropriation are themselves implicated in constructing the environments in which new arrangements do and do not take root. From this point of view, homes and offices are not simply sites in which things, practices, and ideas are co-located, rather they are functioning ecosystems that have a transformative potential of their own (Pantzar and Sundell-Nieminen 2003). This approach has a number of practical and theoretical consequences for the analysis of changing patterns of consumption and practice. First, if we are to understand the “domestication” of goods and technologies, we must pay attention to the regimes in which these processes take place, and to how these environments evolve. Second, we need to examine the relation between regimes and the elements and ingredients of which they are provisionally constructed. In the remainder of this article, we explore ways of addressing these questions with reference not to the office, but to the kitchen.

Over the last century, kitchens have undergone a variety of substantial changes in terms of layout, design, use, purpose, and the materials and technologies contained within them. They remain significant areas of capital investment with sales of kitchen furniture in Britain reaching the billion pound mark annually during the 1990s (Freeman 2004). “Churn rates” of this kind are, we suggest, driven by successive re-interpretations of what the kitchen “is” and is “for” and by the development of new meta-level visions of the kitchen into which previous models, activities, skills, and styles do not “fit.”

In what follows we consider the transformation of “the kitchen” not as a place but as an orchestrating concept. While the kitchen can be analyzed as an innovation junction we do not take that route. Nor, for the purposes of this article, do we view the kitchen as a site in which generic transformations in work, leisure and the gendered roles of men and women are given expression (cf. Chapman and Hockey 1999; Cieraad 2002; Cowan 1998; Doorly 1999; Nickles 1999; Worden 1989). Conran claims that “the kitchen mirrors more effectively than any other room in the house the great social changes that have taken place in the last hundred years” (1977: 1) and there are a number of convincing accounts of kitchens as physical locations in which images of domesticity and sets of appliances come together (Forty 1986; Sparke 1995). Design historians and scholars working in cultural studies have analyzed kitchens as complex arenas in which often contradictory materials, power/discourses and practices interact. Holistic studies in this tradition report on the kitchen as the emergent outcome of multiple interactions. Building on this material, our aim is to develop a theoretical account of the *processes* involved and to develop ways of explaining how and why particular regimes or *combinations* of technologies, images, meanings and forms of skill stabilize, become dominant, and fall into decline.

In contrast to those whose work we refer to above, we do not simply view the kitchen as the outcome of other tendencies and pressures.

Turning the tables around, we explore the value of conceptualizing “the kitchen” as an orchestrating concept, that is, as a kind of “force field” that repels and holds particular sets of images, materials, and forms of competence together and that is sustained by them. The notion that “the kitchen” might have effect as an organizing force in its own right is usefully illustrated by Catherine Beecher’s model of “home management.”² The idea that the home or kitchen might be deliberately ordered and scientifically managed first surfaces in the United States—for example, in books such as Christine Frederick’s *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home*, published in 1919—but can be seen in Britain and across Europe during the early twentieth century. In *The American Woman’s Home*, published in 1869, Beecher offers detailed advice about how to organize the kitchen for maximum efficiency (Beecher and Stowe 1969). No aspect escapes attention and none lies beyond the reach of this all-embracing Tayloristic framework. Whether this demanding model was realized in practice or not, Beecher’s vision is a fine example of “the kitchen” as a meta-level concept in terms of which elements are (or can be) arranged and ordered to produce certain outcomes.³

Not all formulations are as forceful or as well articulated as this. The advertisements, editorials, and advice columns of *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home*, two of Britain’s longest-running and most influential home management magazines do, however, provide a usefully consistent record of relatively homogenous visions of contemporary kitchens, and of the technologies and forms of life associated with them. We use this empirical material as a resource with and from which to develop a theoretical account of kitchen regimes and how they change. An initial review of all kitchen-related images and texts in four editions of *Good Housekeeping* and six of *Ideal Home* per year for each decade of their publication (1922 to the present)⁴ allowed us to construct a suitably coarse map of relevant trends and tendencies and to detect important turning points in the magazines’ representations of “the kitchen” as an orchestrating concept. In what follows we focus on three years (1922, 1952, and 2002), selecting these because each epitomizes just such a turning point. We take issues from 1922 to exemplify representations of the kitchen as a site of household *engineering*. Copies from 1952 illustrate narratives of *automation* and visions of the kitchen-as-machine or configuration of machines that can be managed “at a distance.” Finally, editions from 2002 represent “the kitchen” as a comfortable and convenient *living* space. The fact that these years are not equally spaced is to be expected; after all, there is no reason why visions of the kitchen should be overhauled on a regular basis every twenty, thirty, or fifty years.

Before going further, it is important to be clear about the status of this material. We do not suppose that these middle-class magazines tell us about what British kitchens are really like. Nor do we take

these magazines to represent the full range of images put forward in competing publications or more recently on television. *Ideal Home* and *Good Housekeeping* are both popular, long-running publications but the extent to which they do or do not provide an “accurate” representation of kitchen ideologies is not of overriding importance here. For example, we have no idea whether any of the “advice” offered was taken up by “real” householders. In addition, there is no reason to suppose that the rates at which kitchens are actually renewed and updated are directly pegged to these changing visions. To underline the point again, we are writing about the transformation of magazine-mediated ideals, not about real-life kitchens. Consistent with this approach we adopt a deliberately straightforward method of visual and stylistic analysis. We have sought to describe the sorts of images, competences, and technologies assumed and represented in each cohort of advertisements, features, and editorial comment. This necessarily interpretive work is not the main focus of our analysis. In other words we are not primarily concerned to offer a semiotic reading of the magazines, nor are we interested in what “real” readers made of the texts and pictures we describe. This is so because our limited ambition is to analyze patterns of continuity and change *within* a bounded sample of kitchen-related magazines.

It would be possible to speculate on what lies behind the images with which we deal or to read them in terms of what they say about gender and in particular about women’s place within the home (Sparke 1995). One might also want to show where specific ideas, like that of the fitted kitchen, came from and how they have developed in other countries (Freeman 2004). Again this is not what we want to do. By restricting ourselves to an analysis of *Ideal Home* and *Good Housekeeping*, our aim is to identify distinctive models or regimes of kitchen management and explore ways of conceptualizing the relations between them. We begin with the first editions of *Good Housekeeping* in 1922.

THREE KITCHEN REGIMES

1922: Efficiency and Isolated Functionality

The first editions of *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* magazines (1922) are organized around a set of explicit themes: servant-less domestic labor, the rise of the “career woman,” and the reorganization of the upper-middle-class household in response to these trends. The disappearance of domestic service is treated in two ways. Some articles deal with the concerns of those few for whom kitchen management remains a matter of overseeing servants and providing them with the tools they need to do their work efficiently and effectively. New technologies like electrically powered washing machines are positioned and sold on this basis. The magazines also address the needs of readers who have recently lost servants or perhaps never

had them. In so doing they construct a new type of person, the modern housewife, situated within a new type of space: the modern kitchen.

The emergence of these magazines is itself indicative of the demand for new forms of knowledge and skill entailed by the rapidly changing concept of good housekeeping and by the development of a host of domestic appliances following (and contributing to) the diffusion of mains gas and electricity. As an editorial setting out the “reason for *Good Housekeeping*” explains:

The house-proud woman in these days of servant shortage does not always know the best way to lessen her own burdens. Household management will be a feature of *Good Housekeeping*, and every invention that is practical and economical in use will be brought to her notice after careful examination, month by month. (*Good Housekeeping* March 1922: 11)

The implication is that people need advice and help if they are to use new technologies to best effect. Moreover, an underpinning assumption is that readers of *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* are home-owners who can transform or reconstruct their kitchens at will.

It is here that the kitchen first emerges as an ensemble of elements many of which we recognize today. While it is still primarily associated with work, and while it remains a “back region” of the house (Goffman 1969), the kitchen is increasingly defined in relation to the rest of the home. Spaces and functions that used to belong to servants are taken over by the modern housewife and by an assortment of new machines (Cowan 1983). The following paragraphs elaborate on these themes as represented in 1922 editions of *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home*.

In both magazines, technologies, spaces and competences are framed in terms of two prominent narratives of improvement. Firstly, there is the idea of isolated *functionality*. “New” domestic technologies—electric washing machines, spin-dryers, heaters—are all presented in functional terms: each has a clearly defined purpose uncomplicated by further considerations of aesthetics or interoperability. Artifacts are rarely shown in context, instead being illustrated as stand-alone devices each self-evidently valuable in its own right (see in particular *Good Housekeeping* March 1922: 115, July 1922: 23, October 1922: 83). Taking just such an approach, an *Ideal Home* (March 1922: xv) advertisement for Western Electric features five household appliances, a washer wringer, dishwasher and kitchen table, vacuum sweeper, portable sewing machine and electric iron, all illustrated in separate frames. Other smaller gadgets, including hand-held tools like knives, vegetable cutters, and so on, are demonstrated and shown in use but by an anonymous pair of

hands (*Good Housekeeping* July 1922: 20–1), not by real persons and not in real kitchens.

The second dominant narrative is one of increasing *efficiency* in order to save labor, time or cost. Efficiency is explicitly associated with new technologies and new forms of power. A feature in *Good Housekeeping* entitled “Don’t Waste Energy” begins as follows:

Are you using up your energy unnecessarily, by continuing the old-fashioned drudgery methods of doing your housework? If you are, you do not appreciate as you should the value of mechanical appliances. (July 1922: 20)

It is not yet that machines will do everything for you, but they will do the “hard work,” making life easier overall and potentially saving money as well. As if to make the point, an advertisement for a “Super-Electric Washer and Wringer” (*Good Housekeeping* March 1922: 93) includes a financial breakdown of cost-savings and a paragraph explaining that the appliance “does all the hard work—silently, rapidly and efficiently.” In sum, machines are good for “taking the overtime out of housework” (*Good Housekeeping* March 1922: 115) so much so that “A Western Electric day is a day without fatigue—and all the dread of housework forgotten” (*Ideal Home* March 1922: xv).

Electricity and gas are central to the technologization of the kitchen, powering mechanical appliances within what constitutes the engine room of the home. New tools are particularly important given the idea that an efficient kitchen and proper attention to domestic details make for a comfortable and “civilized” home. An article explaining how to use a mincing machine makes this rhetorical link explicit: “On the proper organization of the kitchen depends the comfort of the entire household” (*Good Housekeeping* July 1922: 20).

These articles and images invoke an entirely linear narrative of *improvement*. However, improvements are required not because older ways of doing things were somehow inadequate but because new methods (technologies, power, and materials) are required to solve problems created by changes in upper-middle-class daily life. Appliances are generally referred to as “inventions,” a terminology that combines forwardlooking notions of progress with the need to find inventive ways of coping with contemporary challenges (losing servants, women going out to work, etc.). This is improvement not in the sense of being *modern*, but improvement driven by the necessity of combating changes, not all of which are welcome.

For *Ideal Home* and *Good Housekeeping* in 1922, effective management involves the successful arrangement of technology, space, and materials within the newly colonized “kitchen”—this being a space until recently defined as part of the “servants’ quarters.” The challenge of accommodating new appliances—vital for efficiency but yet to have an established place within the home—is a major

preoccupation and there is much discussion about whether they should be positioned under, on top of, or behind existing physical structures. *Ideal Home*, for example, resolves the problem of planning into four parts: “(a) the fireplace, (b) the sink, (c) the larder [and] (d) the furniture” (*Ideal Home* May 1922: 262).⁵ Planning is important, but only in so far as it affects the accomplishment of specific tasks. A *Good Housekeeping* article, “A Place for Everything and Everything in its Place” (October 1922: 20) consequently discusses the merits of wall racks and the importance of pot stands, but says nothing about style, appearance or the aesthetic arrangement of the kitchen as a whole. Though an increasingly important site of activity, the kitchen has no identity of its own.

1952: Automation, Aestheticization and “The Kitchen” as an Entity

During the 1950s there are a number of significant changes in the way “the kitchen” is represented within the two magazines. While narratives of functionality and efficiency intensified during the war, postwar articles are organized around concepts of “automation,”⁶ integration, and customization. These go hand in hand with an *aestheticization* of the kitchen as a distinct entity, a move that confirms its status as a front rather than a back region of everyday life (see also Forty 1986; Sparke 1995: 196). Domestic technologies are associated with a new rhetoric of freedom: not freedom from hard labor and drudgery, but freedom for the housewife to leave the kitchen as and when she wants. The vision here is one in which integrated suites of automated machinery define kitchen-based practices, the effective accomplishment of which requires a bare minimum of human intervention. Rather than being wheeled around and having no certain home of their own, 1950s appliances are quite literally “built in.” As such, the fitted kitchen physically embodies a modernist materialization of practice, also signifying an aesthetic of coherence and stylistic order. Drawing these threads together, 1952 issues of *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* exemplify three new dimensions of kitchen management.

Firstly, they work with an elaborated concept of *automation*. The appliances of the 1950s are manifestly different from the electrically powered tools of 1922, most of which required constant supervision while in use and which were, in effect, mechanical extensions of the arm or the hand. By contrast, machines of the 1950s promise multiple benefits: saving labor and money, and affording an unprecedented measure of spatial and temporal freedom. Illustrating this trend, a 1952 advertisement for “Hotpoint Electric Appliances” depicts a housewife playing the piano (*Good Housekeeping* January 1952: 14) and another, also for Hotpoint (*Ideal Home* May 1952: A1), shows a woman admiring a strip of film that her husband has just developed. The accompanying text says it all: “How nice to have the time ...

time to relax . . . even on wash-day and still not too tired to share HIS pleasures . . .” In these representations, automated appliances allow women to be absent from the kitchen for longer periods. “Walk out on Washday! It’s not a dream—work-free washing is a reality,” declares a Bendix advertisement featured in *Ideal Home* (February 1952: 15) and in *Good Housekeeping* (January 1952: 74). Walking out is possible because the washer “Automatically fills itself—washes clothes three times *automatically*—drains, damp-dries, and switches itself off—all *automatically*” (emphases in original).

The sense that machines, in conjunction with increasingly specialized products like Tide, the molecules of which “*pluck* the dirt off the threads by a very rapid ‘surrounding’ action” (*Good Housekeeping* July 1952: 17) really do manage themselves is reinforced by images of depopulated kitchens. Achievements previously dependent on human labor and skill such as the production of appropriately clean clothing or a nourishing meal appear to have been delegated to products and appliances.

Secondly, kitchens embody a new kind of aesthetic, one in which leisure, beauty, and sociability figure alongside themes of functional efficiency. For example, *Good Housekeeping* (July 1952: 54) describes a model plan combining “a gay, attractive appearance with efficiency.” This arrangement includes a “breakfast nook” for “informal meals” alongside the “working parts” of the kitchen. An extensive range of appliances is expected as standard, including a washing machine, cooker, refrigerator, kettle, toaster, coffee maker, mixer, etc. Perhaps related to this proliferation of things, stylistic coordination is an important subject in its own right. *Ideal Home* is particularly keen on an “electric refrigerator styled to match English Rose kitchen equipment” (April 1952: D 59), demonstrating an enthusiasm for “streamlining” not just the form of individual devices (Lupton and Miller 1992; Meikle 1979) but the lines and layout of the kitchen as a whole.

This aestheticization of the kitchen is most clearly indicated by references to “design,” as opposed to engineering, in relevant subsections of the two magazines and in advertisements that highlight styling, color and materials. “Burco” describes its washing machines as being “handsome” and “beautifully finished” (*Good Housekeeping* July 1952: 4). Meanwhile, a company selling kitchen cabinets with the brand name “Leisure” offers “Beautiful Stainless Steel or Porcelain Enamel Leisure units in lovely gleaming pastel colours of Cream, White, Green or Blue” (*Ideal Home* June 1952: 21).

More generally, readers are invited to think about color and texture and to exploit the patterns and possibilities afforded by a range of synthetic surfaces and decorative materials (e.g. Formica or Wareite). Coordinated and automated, the kitchen becomes a work of art, something that is, to quote an advertisement for Nevastane “Supreme” Kitchen Equipment, “lovely to look at” and “delightful to use” (*Good Housekeeping* July 1952: 29).

Thirdly, narratives of automation and coordination run together to form a new concept: that of “the kitchen” as a commodity in its own right. By 1952 there are advertisements for mass-produced kitchen units that fit under unifying worktops of durable laminate. The notion of buying “a kitchen,” inconceivable in 1922, has become a reality. As represented in an “EZEE” kitchen advertisement (*Good Housekeeping* January 1952: 74), design, layout, and materials are sources of labor saving in their own right. Under the title “Don’t be kitchen bound” one illustration shows a housewife struggling to cope with a separate sink and table and with stacks of pans. By contrast, there is no one at home in the fitted kitchen shown alongside. Racks and pot stands previously important for work efficiency have been replaced by banks of cupboards and clean continuous worktops. As a result there is almost nothing to see but surface.

Although selling standardized elements, manufacturers explain that ready-made kitchens can be tailored “for you” and “your needs.” Worcester Ware cabinets are, for example, “Designed for YOUR kitchen” (*Good Housekeeping* April 1952: 14). Despite or perhaps because of increasing standardization, advertisements highlight the potential for personal customization, particularly with respect to color. That said, it is clear that kitchens are defined and conceptualized as complete aesthetic entities. This has a number of implications. First, it makes it possible—even necessary—to overhaul the kitchen as a *whole*. Selective replacement and renewal is no longer an option. Second, appliances are designed to go together with the result that manufacturers produce and advertise integrated ranges of kitchen equipment.

In 1922 kitchen management meant dealing with an assortment of distinct artifacts and materials. In 1952, the concept of the fitted kitchen fuses these elements together around new principles of order. One result is a depopulation—not only of people but also of food and related equipment. Surfaces are free from clutter, the visual aesthetic of open space echoing the rhetoric of freedom and leisure. Although 1952 kitchens contain many of the same technologies as in 1922—washers; cookers and so on—the crucial difference is that they are integrated to form a unified, color-coordinated “kitchen.” New kitchens represent improvements in function, aesthetics, and cleanliness but there is something about being modern that is important as an end in its own right. Seen as a totality, the truly modern kitchen of 1952 resembles a *machine* made of functionally synchronized, smoothly interconnecting, aesthetically coherent parts.

2002: Living, Leisure and Self-expression

From the 1950s onwards, there is a growing tension between standardization and differentiation. This is most obvious when the idea of a fitted kitchen is entirely taken for granted but when people are expected to determine the finer details of layout and appearance.

In the 1950s, new materials (plastics; enameled metal; color) were presented as the vanguard of *modern* science and engineering and of *modernist* style. By contrast, molded, laminated fiber board can be used to replicate and reproduce the old as well as the new, thereby permitting the makeover of kitchens in whatever style suits. Under these circumstances, choosing the right kitchen is essentially a matter of personal taste and is as such unrelated to functional, financial or domestic need. Magnet, for instance, promises to deliver the goods “No matter whether you want that space to be contemporary or traditional in style” (*Good Housekeeping* January 2002: 2). Similarly, Amtico claims that:

Whatever your taste, however hectic your lifestyle, there’s a floor design to make your kitchen a more pleasant place to be. (*Good Housekeeping* January 2002: 80)

There are, however, some themes common to the kitchens of 2002 whether styled as “traditional farmhouse,” “ultra modern,” or “American.” One has to do with their status within the home. As we have seen, the kitchens depicted in 1952 editions of *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* are empty of people but full of machines. By 2002 the kitchen has been repopulated and redefined as a space for living and leisure. The headline of one advertisement declares that:

The kitchen is the focal point of the family home, so you need hassle-free elegance. Get the perfect kitchen for your lifestyle. (*Good Housekeeping* January 2002: 80)

In the magazines of this year, cooking and eating feature prominently, not as obligations or domestic duties but as sociable lifestyle activities. Under the slogan “Turning Spaces into Places,” Magnet explains that the kitchen should be “somewhere you want to spend time, where you feel comfortable, where you can simply live your life” (*Good Housekeeping* January 2002: 2). The accompanying images show people in pajamas and other casual attire just “being” in the kitchen.

Second, as people return, so the technologies seem to disappear. Not literally of course, kitchens are full of more appliances than ever, but they are no longer in view. The fact that there are far fewer advertisements for washing machines, dishwashers, freezers, etc. almost certainly reflects their “normal” status within the home. The tendency to hide these silent devices behind uniform kitchen facades is part of this normalizing trend. The idea of moving washers and dryers out of the kitchen and into specialist utility rooms further confirms the kitchen’s status as a space of “quiet” or of sociability. One way or another, contemporary kitchens are not *primarily* represented in

terms of the technologies they contain, figuring instead as places of leisure and as places the whole family thinks of as home.

The idea that one might buy a completely new kitchen emerged during the 1950s but remains important in 2002. Although now used for eating, cooking, socializing, and entertaining, kitchens are still designed, bought, and sold in their entirety. Partly because of the new roles they have acquired, the kitchens of 2002 are expected to be comfortable and convenient as well as efficient and functional. Compared with the streamlined versions of the 1950s there are more obvious opportunities for reflexive self-expression. This takes a number of forms, including the prominent display of “antique” scales, bottles of olive oil/balsamic vinegar, wine and wine glasses, chopping boards, and so on. The kitchen illustrated in a combined advertisement for Amtico flooring and Neff appliances even includes hanging racks of pans and utensils reminiscent of the 1920s. The difference is that these gleaming stainless steel artifacts are carefully lit for exhibition as much as for use.

Not all of the objects shown in the 2002 editions of *Ideal Home* and *Good Housekeeping* are necessarily used in practice. They are, however, suggestive of the kinds of foods that might be prepared and eaten. Just as important, they imply that people (men as well as women) can call on a range of sophisticated culinary skills as required, and that the kitchen is an appropriate place in which to entertain and dine. While there is some continuity between the potential for customization in 1952 and in 2002, magazine readers, now addressed as “consumers,” are expected to acquire and exercise talents in interior décor. Skills in shopping and design appear to be an increasingly important part of “good housekeeping.”⁷

TRANSFORMING REGIMES

Having outlined three quite distinctive kitchen regimes we now explore ways of conceptualizing the relationship between meta-level concepts of what the kitchen is about and what this means for the selective but also successive appropriation of new technologies, material arrangements, meanings, images, skills, competences, and forms of knowhow. In the process we consider different ways of thinking about how the three orchestrating concepts of “the kitchen” described above come to be as they are, and how they change.

One possibility is that regimes change because the ingredients (i.e. material arrangements, meanings and images, competence and knowhow) of which they are made have trajectories of their own. Another is that they develop as a result of continual interaction and mutual adjustment between constituent elements. In addition, orchestrating concepts like “the kitchen” may have a life of their own, structuring whilst also being structured by the elements they hold together. We consider each possibility in turn.

Table 1 Constitutive elements of kitchen regimes represented in 1922, 1952, and 2002.

	Material arrangements and technologies	Meanings and images	Skills competences, and forms of know-how
1922	Isolated appliances (1)	Efficiency and time saving, back region work place (2)	Judgments of quality, culinary skills, and domestic management servants' skills
1952	Coordinated system, sets of appliances, new materials, and color schemes	Modernity Streamlined place to live and integral part of the home (3)	Delegation (to machines), time management, coordination of the whole ensemble
2002	Surfaces and appearances are important but appliances are invisible	Customized expression of style Place to live an integral part of your home	Image managements Design and lifestyle to the fore

1 Tracking the Elements of Which Regimes are Made

As we have seen, *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* magazines describe and illustrate *material* arrangements and technologies expected to belong in the kitchen. Articles and advertisements embody *images* and meanings that circulate within the pages of these two magazines. In addition, dedicated advisory columns articulate *skills and types of knowhow* expected of competent practitioners. By teasing these dimensions apart it is possible to detect patterns of continuity and rupture between the three regimes described above.

Table 1 summarizes the three regimes in terms of the material arrangements, images and meanings, and forms of competence and skill around which each revolves. Each column of this table has a different story to tell about continuity and change. For example, reading down the left-hand column the most dramatic break appears to be between 1922 and 1952 (indicated by the thick line marked (1)). Whereas the kitchens of 1922 featured an assortment of stand-alone appliances, those of 1952 and 2002 contain integrated suites of technology. From 1952 onwards, the concept of the “fitted” and “integrated” kitchen makes sense materially (the continuous worktop literally unifies previously separate devices) and symbolically (the kitchen is designed and conceptualized as a ready-made whole).

This is also an important turning point in terms of the kitchen's status with respect to the rest of the house. In 1922 it figures as a back region and as place of work. In 1952 and 2002 it is an integral

part of the home, a break that is represented by the thick line marked (2). At the same time, representations of the kitchen in 1922 and 1952 have some features in common: in both, questions of design and layout are discussed in terms of functional efficiency rather than style and taste. By contrast, the magazines of 2002 suggest that design is, above all, a matter of personal preference. This is consistent with 2002 representations of the kitchen as a room for *living* in, rather than as a center of domestic production.

There are other points of difference. For example, the exceptionally empty kitchens shown in the 1952 editions stand out in contrast to the more populated versions of 1922, in which kitchens feature as servants' quarters, and 2002, in which they are full of family members. And so we could go on.

The point is not to draw up some definitive chronology but to demonstrate that the three kitchen regimes are marked by an uneven mosaic of development, fracture, and continuity. While *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* routinely represent “new” kitchen arrangements as improvements on those that went before, patterns of stability and change are not entirely synchronized.

There is no doubt that the arrival of mains water, gas, and electricity and the loss of servants had real impact on what middle-class kitchen management involved and how it was understood. It would, however, be wrong to suppose that new material arrangements simply sweep in and transform the types of competence or the sorts of images of which kitchen regimes are made. Instead, the regimes described above each represent a moment in what is better understood as a continually shifting set of *relations* between constitutive elements.

2 Analyzing Relations between the Elements of Which Regimes Are Made

Reading across the table, each row describes the elements of which kitchen regimes are constituted at any one moment. By taking this “horizontal” view, we can see how material arrangements, images, and forms of competence co-evolve. de Wit *et al.* (2002) describe interdependencies and patterns of mutual influence that characterize the development of co-located office technologies. Taking these ideas a stage further, we suggest that the kitchen is a junction of more than technological innovation, important though that is.

To give just one example, the introduction and widespread use of automatic washing machines did not simply “replace” the twin-tub as a means of getting clothes clean. Amongst other things, automatics removed the need for somewhere to put large piles of wet washing. Because of this and because they were literally plumbed in the home, they had immediate consequences for kitchen planning and for the design and development of related appliances like dryers. At the same time, they transformed what you needed to know in order to do the laundry well—new skills were required and old ones

rendered redundant. More than that, these appliances reflected and contributed to a generic enthusiasm for automation and for delegating entire sequences of tasks to a new breed of dependable mechanical servants.⁸

The consequences of conceptualizing the kitchen as a “living space” rather than as a place of employment or domestic drudgery have similarly far-reaching implications for design and for the kinds of skills that *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* suppose and seek to develop. Even a brief comparison between editions of 2002 and 1922 would show that competence in interior décor is now more important than an ability to remove stains or bottle fruit.

In thinking about how the cells in the rows of Table 1 relate to each other, we suggest that links and connections between materials, images, and skills are continually being made, broken, and made again. This co-evolutionary process is *itself* a source of change, not just for the elements involved but also for the relation between them. We might therefore picture orchestrating concepts of the kitchen as a kind of “force field” that influences the ways in which constituent elements interact but that is also shaped by them (Jay 1993). Figure 1 illustrates this idea. This figure distinguishes between “the kitchen” as an orchestrating concept, that is, as a *mechanism* of integration, and the kitchen regime (indicated by the outer circle) that is the outcome of the resulting configuration of constitutive elements.

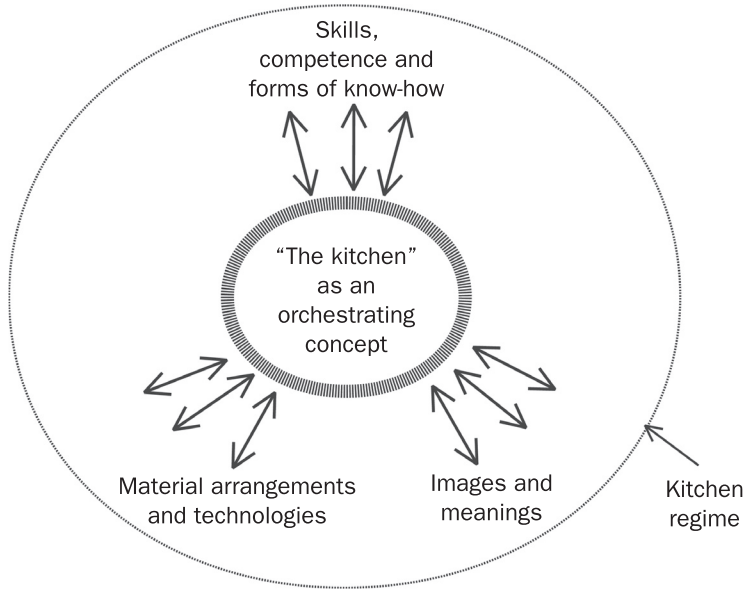


Figure 1 Orchestrating concepts: the elements they hold together and of which they are made.

Conceptually, the difference is clear. Orchestration is the process through which regimes are made and sustained. Empirically, it is less so not least because images and visions the kitchen have a dual role, figuring both as selection mechanisms—permitting some arrangements but not others—and as outcomes of previous processes of selection. Either way, the first point to be made here is that the relation between materials, images, and skills is of some consequence for the stability and transformation of kitchen regimes. The second is that orchestrating concepts and processes influence the nature of that relation.

3 Orchestrating Concepts and How they Change

To summarize, there is no doubt that kitchen regimes are shaped by the various elements of which they are made, and that regimes change as new images, materials, and skills are drawn in. Equally, there is no doubt that new images and artifacts are situated, adapted and appropriated within already existing regimes (Akrich 1992). Our final step is to think about how these different dynamics intersect. Having suggested (1) that meso-level orchestrating concepts influence the manner in which elements co-evolve and (2) that the qualities and characteristics of such meso-level concepts depends on the types of elements of which they are made, and that they hold together, we are now in a position to think about what is involved the transformation of entire regimes of kitchen management.

By plotting a series of figures like that sketched above we can illustrate and perhaps specify how regimes of kitchen management relate to their successors and predecessors. More than that, we can ask how one regime relates to the next. Instead of analyzing the trajectory of one or another of the elements (materials, skill or image) involved, we need to think about how the force field itself evolves.

Figure 2 suggests that orchestrating concepts like “the kitchen” contain the seeds of their own development because they *selectively*

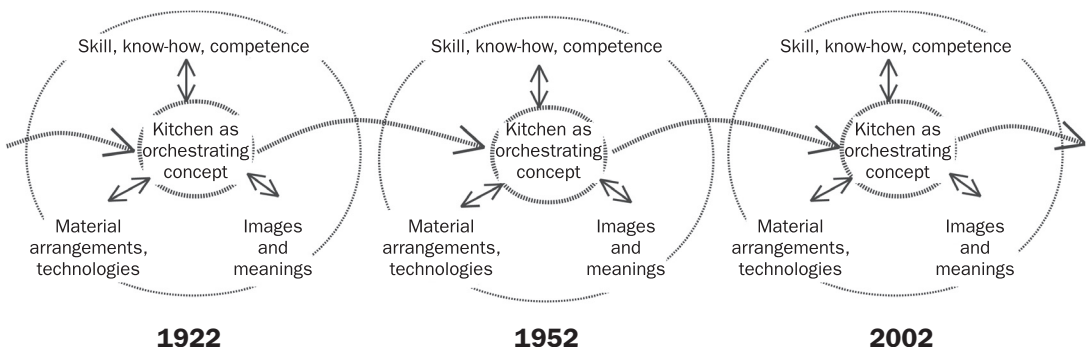


Figure 2
Orchestrating concepts and how they change.

facilitate and inhibit the appropriation of some but not other new technologies, images, and forms of competence. As we have already noticed, visions of “the kitchen” have a kind of magnetic action, favoring the integration of certain constitutive elements and the rejection or expulsion of others.

In following the meta-level history of “the kitchen” as a conceptual force, it is as important to take account of what is “repelled” as of what is “attracted.” In other words, purging aspects that do not fit is as much part of the process as is the selective incorporation of elements that do. To give a simple example, ordering principles that define kitchens as sites of family life suppose the expulsion of non-family members. The process of becoming “at home” in the kitchen, and of turning a back region (engine room) into a front region (site of social interaction), requires substantial overhauling of the space itself and of the very idea of what a kitchen is for. Similarly, conceptualizations of the kitchen as a materially and symbolically coherent entity demand the wholesale replacement of entire cohorts of domestic appliances. Such actions make sense and are in fact required when the kitchen is viewed as an entity in its own right. In these circumstances, the need for coordination constitutes a newly demanding rationale for renewal, renovation, and aesthetic competence.

The trajectory of orchestrating concepts illustrated above is, we suggest, energized by the continual challenge of integrating a set of defining elements, each of which have relatively independent careers of their own. In the model outlined above, new elements, whether these be ideas about family life, technologies like the fridge-freezer, or skills like those of interior décor, change the configuration of the whole. To continue with the magnetic metaphor, this results in a new dynamic of attraction and repulsion and a new environment into which future elements are, and are not, appropriated. The model is therefore one in which processes of appropriation/rejection reconfigure orchestrating concepts and hence the regime or environment as a whole. This in turn favors new forms of appropriation/rejection. This scheme provides us with a generic account of change the relevance of which reaches far beyond the kitchen.

Before taking these ideas further, it is important to recall the limits of our work. In practice, the regimes we have described acquire significance, legitimacy and transformative power by virtue of being reproduced and replicated not only in the pages of magazines but also in the way that kitchens are designed, used, and inhabited by real people. In the real world, regimes of the kind we have examined are reproduced in ways that are partial and provisional and that reflect the dynamic complexities of individual, social, and infrastructural contexts and forms of agency. Some kitchens and some ways of using and being in them have changed much more than others. The British government’s standard for “decent homes” (Office of the Deputy

Prime Minister 2003) suggests that kitchens should be updated every twenty years, but in the private sector rates of renewal are rather higher. One commentator, for example, claims that British kitchens are upgraded on average once every seven years (Bennett 2004). In practice, the pressure to “keep up to date” may be increasing. Likewise, the meaning of being up to date may be subject to shorter and shorter fashion cycles. However, the more general point is that the logic of renewal is itself *dynamic*. Now that the kitchen figures as a central part of the home and as a room for living in it counts as a legitimate target for renovation and renewal on grounds of style and appearance alone. This was clearly not the case when kitchens figured as “back regions” and workshops.

Rather than seeing the kitchen—what it contains, how it is used, and by whom—as the outcome of external developments in ordinary consumption and everyday practice we have taken the unusual step of viewing orchestrating concepts of “the kitchen” as forces for integration in their own right. This move identifies the need for design histories that go beyond description of *outcomes* (the changing form and structure of the home) and that are explicitly concerned with *process* (the transformation of meta-level regimes). Building on existing studies of innovation in technology and practice, (Cowan 1995; Shove 2003; Shove and Southerton 2000), we have sought to track relationships between the elements of which kitchen regimes are made. In so doing, we have focused on the environments into which flows of materials, meanings, and skills are appropriated. This has led us to examine the always dynamic relation between constellations of images, materials, and skills and the manner in which they are woven together with reference to also dynamic formulations of “the kitchen” as an orchestrating concept. In short we have tried to develop a method of capturing and comprehending the reproduction of meta-level regimes. For this reason we have concentrated on the ways in which relatively abstract images and representations of the kitchen and of related skills and technologies hang together and how they change. This reflects our more general aim of conceptualizing the ways in which systems develop and how elements and orchestrating regimes intersect. To conclude, we have used the case of the kitchen to develop and explore ideas which will, we hope, stimulate wider debate about the selective and reproductive processes involved in regime-level transformation.

NOTES

1. This article is based on a current research project “Sustainable Domestic Technologies: Changing Practice, Technology and Convention,” in which Alan Warde and Dale Southerton are also involved. The project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of its Sustainable Technologies Research Programme. Award number: RES-332–22–0014.

2. Efficiency is just one of a number of themes around which ideas and practices have been oriented. Concepts of hygiene have had similarly far-reaching effect in coordinating and giving meaning to a range of habits and domestic routines.
3. Of course, the idea of kitchen management could be analyzed at a number of levels. We could focus upon micro-level processes of individual action where notions of management are analyzed as practice; or macro-level processes of sociocultural change; and so on. The point here is that we choose to focus upon meta-level processes of “orchestration” while recognizing alternative possibilities and forms of agency.
4. We are grateful to the British Library, London, and to Oxford University Library for supplying the materials for this research.
5. See also, an article in *Good Housekeeping* (October 1922: 46) entitled “The *Ideal Home*, Part IV, Things to be Considered in its Achievement: The Kitchen Quarters.”
6. In *Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home*, the idea of automation appears during the 1930s, particularly in articles that look forward to the “kitchen of the future.” However, automation does not become part of the present until the 1950s.
7. This cannot be overstated—sections of the magazine are now defined in terms of consumption and the rights of consumers.
8. Whether this is in fact what happened or not is beside the point for the purposes of this analysis (see Cowan (1983) and Parr (1999) in particular for discussions of why promised labor savings were not realized in practice).

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