

# Making Sense of Consumption

Selections from the  
2nd Nordic Conference on Consumer Research 2012

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Cover illustration: USBFCO/ Shutterstock  
Graphic design: Malin Tengblad

Printed in Sweden by  
Ineko, 2013

ISBN 978-91-974642-6-0

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## Preface

Consumption and the role of consumers attract researchers from a wide range of academic disciplines. The second Nordic Conference on Consumer Research, NCCR2012, arranged by the Centre for Consumer Science (CFK) at the School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg from 30 May to 1 June 2012, was no exception. The conference gathered about 150 researchers from a broad scope of disciplines ranging from the humanities and social sciences to technology who are interested in consumption and consumer research. 22 contributions from the conference were selected for this publication.

The Nordic Conference on Consumer Research was initiated by our colleagues at the University of Vaasa who hosted the first conference in 2010. We thank them for all their valuable input to the arrangement of the second conference.

We also want to thank all the authors who contributed to this book and express our gratitude to our conference sponsors who made it possible for us to organise the conference and put together this publication: the Partnership Programme; the School of Business, Economics and Law; the Swedish Research Council Formas; Handelsbanken; Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research; the Letterstedt Association; and the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

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## Making sense of consumption – an introduction

Lena Hansson

The conference theme “Making sense of consumption” emphasised “sensing”, in terms of understanding what consumption is all about, how to study the elusive phenomenon of consumption and the sensual aspects of consumption from consumers’ own perspectives ([www.cfk.gu.se/nccr2012](http://www.cfk.gu.se/nccr2012)).

Considering consumption as created in complex processes with a number of interacting actors such as consumers, marketers, retailers, producers, stores, devices, products, services etc. means that consumption is not a condition since these processes are in constant motion (Brembeck, 2011; Brembeck et al., 2010). Consumption can thus be seen as an intricate network involving a multitude of actors, a network in constant transformation. It challenges the way we study consumption and consumers, with questions on the how of consumption calling for answers: How is consumption made sense of in various settings? How are consumption and consumers captured in an ever-changing, fluid world? What are the peak theories and methods today and for tomorrow? And what about the senses of consumers themselves?

This anthology aims to illustrate the versatility that characterised the Nordic Conference on Consumer Research, NCCR2012, in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches, fields and disciplines. The authors came from different countries and disciplines and approached the conference theme differently in terms of theory and methodology. We believe that a transdisciplinary approach to consumer research is fruitful in order to grasp consumption, and also important for academia and society as a whole.

The selected contributions present a range of important concerns targeted within today's Nordic consumer research. An urgent but challenging matter for consumer researchers or researchers overall and for society at large is that of *sustainability*. Consumption is, in this context, often considered a negative aspect and something that needs to be addressed. In order for consumption to be either reduced or to move in a more sustainable direction, consumer behaviour will have to change and more sustainable alternatives and solutions will be required. However, for this to be successful a consumer and consumption focus in research is necessary, something that is lacking in much previous research according to some of the authors of the contributing chapters.

The increased interest in sustainability issues among consumption researchers is reflected in a number of chapters in this anthology. They discuss eco-fashion (chapter 12), the retail sector's role in promoting sustainable food consumption (chapter 13), animal welfare (chapter 14), organic food (chapter 18) and sustainable design (chapter 22). Within the field of energy consumption, three chapters focus on sustainability in terms of energy policies (chapter 19), the smart grid energy system (chapter 20) and solar collectors (chapter 21).

In addition to the chapters that explicitly address sustainability in general and the environmental aspects in particular, there are a couple of contributions that relate to the social and economic aspects of sustainability. They pay attention to poor consumers and necessary consumption (chapter 1) and the importance of upholding certain consumption for the purpose of social inclusion (chapter 2) in today's contemporary welfare society. One chapter illustrates the rise of the Finnish welfare state through a historical media analysis (chapter 11). While consumption then was viewed as the solution for reaching prosperity, today it is considered to be part of the unsustainability problem. Another area of concern is consumer empowerment, i.e. for consumers to become influential actors in the market they need to be active and well-informed (chapter 16). The need for improved policies and regulations to enhance the level of empowerment among European consumers is highlighted. Furthermore, gender products are scrutinised in the perfume market (chapter 9) and the gender issue is also a theme in the chapter on the *Sex and the City 2* movie (chapter 10).

*Food and consumption* is also an area of great interest among consumer researchers. In addition to the chapters related to food and sustainability just mentioned, our authors focus on children's food consumption (chapters 4



and 5), convenience food (chapter 7) and food and risk (chapter 17). A food-related theoretical concept that has emerged in research over the last decade is ‘*foodscapes*’ – defined by Dolphijn as processes where food and people mutually construct each other in a constant process of change, where food affects and is affected. Here ‘*foodscapes*’ is used to discuss institutional foodscapes when analysing the introduction of organic food in school meals (chapter 18) and children’s foodscapes in drawings (chapter 5).

A more recent theoretical perspective noticeable in consumption and consumer research today is *practice theory*. Regarding practices as the smallest relevant units of social studies, practice theorists advocate studying the mundane activities that consumers partake in and how the social and material world interacts.

An overall practice theoretical framework is used in several chapters of this anthology but applied in different empirical fields and in combination with other theoretical and analytical concepts. Practice theory is involved in the theoretical chapters investigating addiction as ‘circuits of reproduction’, that according to Pantzar and Shove, , who are quoted, are characterised by mutually constituted relations between practices and complexes of practice (chapter 6), and how to empirically study the consumption of convenience food in media food practices (chapter 7). Other contributions inspired by the practice theory perspective are the cultural media analysis of market practices (chapter 12) and the practice-oriented design approach to sustainability (chapter 22). You can also read about a different practice perspective based on Wittgenstein’s concept of language-game (chapter 3).

Further, the *methodological approaches* are multifold in the anthology, so are the chosen methods. Besides using interviews in different forms as the predominant method of data collection, a number of researchers carry out observations and collect media material as well. A natural field experiment in an in-store setting (chapter 14) illustrates one of the rarer methods used in consumer research. Other promising methods applied in the contributing chapters include co-research, where children participate as researchers and are researched (chapter 4 and chapter 5). The transdisciplinary nature of consumer research is also reflected in the emergent interest in design, both as a research field and as a practice. The use of design methods to create more sustainable solutions (chapter 22) and attractive city retail (chapter 15) or to enhance sensual experiences of packaging (chapter 8) brings a new dimension to the field of consumer research and works well with the conference theme.

## Structure of the book

This anthology is divided into three parts. The contributing chapters have been grouped into three overall themes that make up the different parts. The first part, Part I: *The everyday life of consumers*, offers a consumer perspective and the chapters acknowledge in different ways the life of being a consumer and the practices of consumption, while increasing knowledge about the consequences of consumption. The second part, Part II: *Marketplace actors*, focuses on actors at different levels involved in the making of the marketplace such as packaging, media, retailers, stores and the city. In the last part, Part III: *Societal perspectives*, we turn our attention to the mutual impacts of consumption and society and discuss consumer policies, consumer empowerment and the importance of considering a consumer perspective in research for future challenges. More specific presentations of each contributing chapter are presented below, part by part.

### Part I: The everyday life of consumers

In welfare societies much consumption is taken for granted and consumption that is considered important for social participation and for personal self-conceptualisation is considered as necessary. Being able to buy consumer goods for reasons other than survival is thus self-evident. However, this does not apply to all consumers. Consumers with scarce economic resources have to deal with the fact that they cannot afford to consume what they consider to be necessary consumption. Their inability to keep up with material consumption causes distress in terms of comparing themselves to other more affluent consumers and also as parents, being unable to provide their children with consumption items that they want. In consumer research, this group of consumers is seldom the focus of inquiry. The first part starts out with two chapters about this downside of consumption.

In the first chapter, *Hanna Leipämaa-Leskinen*, *Henna Syrjälä* and *Pirjo Laaksanen* discuss the concepts of poverty and necessary consumption in their study of poor consumers in Finland, focusing on *experienced necessity consumption*. The authors identify and present consumption that is experienced as necessary and how the meaning of this consumption is negotiated when economic resources are scarce. Their study shows that most consumption is experienced as necessary by poor consumers but that they are still forced to give up some of it due to their scarce economic resources. They therefore use different negotiation strategies to choose between alternatives. However,

the specific consumer items that are viewed as necessities vary among poor consumers, and thus what they choose to consume or not to consume.

In chapter 2, *Mari Rysst* and *Lill Vramo* discuss necessary consumption with the help of two case studies about how material goods, money and services are part of inclusion and exclusion processes among migrant families and children in Norway. The study shows that over time Norwegian Sikh families tend to change their consumption practices from transnational to more local oriented, ensuring their children of inclusion among peers. In turn, this may lead to exclusion of the extended family in India. For school children, the things and activities necessary for inclusion varies but this still puts pressure on some parents to uphold certain consumption for their children's sake despite their scarce economic resources. The need to be accepted among peers is discussed in this chapter using the concept of '*economy of dignity*'.

Although the importance of being accepted among peers influences our consumption, so do our aspirations in terms of who we want to be or how we want to be perceived. The formation of identity in the processes of making sense of clothing consumption is investigated in chapter 3 by *Ardis Storm-Mathisen*. She uses a *radical practice perspective*, inspired by Wittgenstein, to describe how diversity and patterns in what Norwegian teenagers' say about their own and their peers' clothing are contextual, and how the meanings of clothing and identity vary with context. She further reflects upon the practical (and methodological) implications, using a practice theoretical framework for her analysis.

In the two following chapters, a more active way of giving voice to consumers is presented. They have used co-research as a methodological approach to engage children in research about food.

*Sandra Hillén* sets out in chapter 4 to examine whether the concept of the *competent child* can be used to understand the research process when children participate as co-researchers. The children are then both acting as co-researchers and being researched. She presents a number of situations and events where children's different competences are illustrated and argues that in the process of making sense of food consumption, their competences pull in a number of directions. She proposes that using *co-research* as a method helps to gain insights into children's thoughts and reflections about food and food consumption that are difficult to obtain with other methods.

*Barbro Johansson* has also involved children in her research about food consumption. In a research activity, children aged 5-9 were invited to produce drawings of their food consumption. These '*foodscapes*' are analysed in chap-

ter 5 in relation to the concepts of 'becoming', 'smooth and striated spaces' and 'lines of flight'. The results show that the children found several ways of making sense of food consumption and were creating new, more or less striated, foodscapes. They found lines of flight out of established categorisations, created new categorisations and questioned generally held truths concerning food and eating. The research presented is based on a project aiming to obtain a rich and nuanced picture of children's and parents' attitudes and habits concerning food and health.

Health and wellbeing in relation to temporalities of addiction is the concern of chapter 6. *Minna Ruckenstein* suggests studying addiction from a *practice theoretical approach* as daily rhythms of everyday practices. This makes it possible to view addictions as effects of temporalities that define and construct contemporary consumer societies rather than only as individual psychological or physiological problems. Addictive involvements are thus treated as demanding *circuits of reproduction*, i.e. co-dependent practices that tend to cause various kinds of health disturbances. The theoretical framework presented aims to provide recontextualised accounts of health and wellbeing.

In the last chapter of Part I (chapter 7) *Bente Halkier* continues the discussion about using a practice theoretical perspective as an overall framework. She proposes that *practice theories* be combined with concepts from *media-use analysis*, *interaction analysis* and *qualitative social-network analysis* to empirically study how consumers use different material and mediated genres of convenience food for navigating and negotiating normatively appropriate food practicing. Consumption of convenience food is understood in this context as a particular, growing and differentiating part of food practicing in everyday life. Moreover, it is argued that the conditions of the organisation of food and eating in everyday life are the consequences of the mediatisation of food consumption in terms of so called '*media food*' that comes in different media forms and genres.

## Part II: Marketplace actors

The second part addresses the commercial side of consumption and includes a number of different market actors such as packaging, design, perfume, gender, movies, newsreels, media, fashion, marketing communication, sustainability, retailers, retail stores and cities. Part II starts with two chapters about packaging, an increasingly important mediator and actor in marketing, both to attract consumers and to create brand recognition.

According to *Karin Wagner*, packaging as material artefact is designed mainly to appeal to the sense of vision although the sense of touch is becoming acknowledged as playing a significant role in marketing. In chapter 8 she analyses different types of tactile qualities used in packaging design through the concepts of interpersonal function and offer/demand from social semiotics, and the concept of affordance. All four packages selected to illustrate the different approaches strive to fill interpersonal functions with the help of tactility and to establish a relationship with the consumer. How they do this varies and is discussed with the help of the two discerned categories of *anthropomorphism* and *facilitated gripping*.

In the next chapter (9), *Magdalena Petersson McIntyre* deliberates on the *meanings of gender* in the perfume market, particularly in perfume packaging. This chapter builds on ethnographic interviews with sales assistants, perfume manufacturers, shop owners and perfume buyers. In addition, observations and visual analyses have been made at a luxury packaging trade fair, and of perfume shop interiors and advertisements. Two different, but interrelated, ways of understanding gender, perfume and perfume packaging were distinguished. First, gender was described as a choice, something that an individual chooses to participate in or not. Second, choice was understood as a feminine practice, something that women, and not men, engage in.

We then move into another medium of communication, that of the movie. In chapter 10, *Jenniina Halkoaho* investigates women's consumption experiences of the movie *Sex and the City 2*. Based on Holt's typology of consumption the author analyses how the movie is consumed and what kinds of *consumption experiences* are present. The chapter shows that the movie is a versatile object of consumption and provides a number of quite diverse experiences for women. Most obvious is the aesthetic appeal and entertainment it brings but it also involves personal meaning-making, work as inspiration for consumption choices, and even has the power to unite people. A movie experience is thus, according to the author, far from a single, exclusive means of consumption.

Another chapter with a media perspective is chapter 11 about the images of the economy and consumption in Finland after the Second World War. This is the only chapter with a *historical approach* in the anthology. In this chapter, *Minna Lammi* and *Päivi Timonen* produce an empirical analysis of how the economy and consumption were featured in Finnish newsreels in the 1950s and 1960s. Drawing on a tradition of *social science film research*, where media material and moving images are explored as historical phenomena, the

authors focus in their analysis on three issues: the strong role of the newsreels in promoting trust in the economy; the nation's ability to build wealth for everyone; and how growing affluence had an effect on private consumption.

The second Part continues with an interesting *cultural media analysis* performed by *Cecilia Fredriksson* in chapter 12. She examines the value construction of green fashion and shows how different values linked to the phenomena of second-hand, eco-fashion and recycling are represented in the public media in the context of the Swedish charity shop Myrorna. She discusses how experiences and learning processes from second-hand shops make eco-fashion meaningful and functional across different logics and consumption worlds. The transformation process that second-hand goods go through to “become new” and infused with green values involves a number of aestheticisation practices.

The issue of ‘greening’ is also discussed in chapter 13, where *Matthias Lehner* argues that retailers’ role as an ‘*agent of change*’ in relation to *sustainable consumption* is not to be taken for granted. As gatekeepers of the food supply-chain, retailers are assumed to be in a strong position to make food consumption more sustainable. But based on empirical findings from Sweden, this chapter shows that although food retailers are positive in their support for expected future changes in food consumption towards sustainability, they are not willing to take a pro-active role to enhance sustainable consumption. Instead, they believe the strongest driving forces for changing consumption patterns over time are consumers and other societal stakeholders.

In the next chapter we continue along the retail track but move to an in-store setting. As in the previous two chapters, this chapter (14) deals with sustainability and more specifically the ethical issue of *animal welfare*. In order to show the impact of complex ethical considerations on consumer choice, an *in-store experiment* is performed studying consumers’ purchases of different types of eggs (battery, indoor free-range and organic). What the authors *Alexander Schjøll*, *Frode Alfnes* and *Svein Ole Borgen* want to illustrate with this method is its possible advantage over traditional methods used in consumer research, such as surveys and focus groups that investigate consumers’ stated attitudes and preferences. They argue that their method better captures consumers’ actual behaviour in the market, how they act in a real-life situation when choosing between alternatives. In this case, consumers seem to act on price rather than in accordance with their attitudes about farm animal welfare.

The final chapter of Part II takes on a city perspective of retail. In chapter 15, *Sara Sardari Sayyar* discusses the variables in the urban built environment

of cities that influence the attractiveness of retail facilities. First, the role of the built environment on the attractiveness of retail activities is explored. Then, the use of *configurative analyses* developed within *urban design* research is presented as a more precise and user-oriented analytical method for investigating which variables have the most influence on attractiveness. The final results lead to understand the role of urban form and spatial structure of cities on how such attractiveness is perceived by the consumers.

### Part III: Societal perspectives

The last part includes chapters that offer a more societal perspective on consumption. Consumer empowerment is the focus of chapter 16. In this chapter *Beatrice D'Hombres, Massimo Loi, Michela Nardo* and *Luca Pappalardo* propose a measurement for *consumer empowerment* at European level. They develop a composite indicator, the 'Consumer Empowerment Index' (CEI), based on data from a special Eurobarometer survey carried out by the European Commission in 2010. They then analyse the characteristics of empowered consumers with the help of the CEI's socio-economic determinants. The results show that Nordic consumers are the most empowered and that factors such as education, material deprivation, age and gender determine who the most vulnerable consumers are. This chapter contributes some critical insights into how empowerment should be evaluated and provides information for policymakers about how to increase consumer empowerment in Europe.

Although consumers in the Nordic countries may be empowered there are some issues that can create great anxiety among certain consumer groups, for instance making decisions about what to eat and not to eat when pregnant. Some consumers then turn to the public authorities for answers in these matters. This is given a closer look in the next chapter. *Helene Brembeck*'s chapter 17 explores the contested landscape of the risks associated with food consumption and pregnancy. It renounces the conventional interpretation of risk communication in terms of regulation and governance. Using theories of *anxiety as social practice*, she discusses how anxieties are framed, handled and institutionalised in conversations between risk communicators and pregnant women about herbal tea at the Facebook site of the Swedish National Food Agency (NFA).

Another food area of concern for governments and the public authorities is that of enhancing sustainable development of school meals. In chapter 18, *Mette Weinreich Hansen* and *Niels Heine Kristensen* investigate how municipalities



in four European countries promote organic food in school meals, with very different success rates since the implementation of organic school food is dependent on many different actors. Its analytical approach is that of *institutional 'foodscapes'*, which makes it possible to identify the network of actors involved in the promotion of organic food in schools. The network includes not only the food itself, but also actors such as eaters, producers, politicians etc., as well as the physical and mental 'space' of the food.

Moving from food to energy this part continues with three chapters concerning sustainability in terms of energy production and consumption. *Carlo Aall* claims in chapter 19 that the energy policy in Norway lacks a consumption-oriented focus, which could have negative consequences for the future reduction of domestic energy-use. In the analysis it is shown that the levelling out of Norwegian household consumption of energy since 1990 has little to do with any energy policies aiming to reduce energy-use or with consumers striving to lower their energy consumption. Instead, it has other causes that can be traced to non-environmentally motivated policies like immigration politics, interest rate policy and consumer habits such as redecorating and modernising old houses. *Policy strategies for reducing domestic energy-use* in Norwegian households in the future are discussed at the end of the chapter.

The strong focus on the production side of energy-use is also discussed in chapter 20. However, *Toke Haunstrup Christensen, Kirsten Gram-Hanssen and Freja Friis* argue that this may be changing as new relationships between producers and consumers of energy emerge through the development of the so-called *smart grid energy system*. This is a socio-technical electricity system that is responsive and makes it possible to balance the production and consumption of electricity. In this way, consumers can be given a more active role. However, a technology-centred design approach has been used in the development of existing solutions, which is inadequate without an understanding of consumer practices. This chapter emphasises the importance of the cultural and social structures of consumers' everyday life in making this system successful.

In chapter 21 *Annette Henning* adds to the discussion about household energy consumption. In a *social anthropological study* she investigates the contradiction between climate concerns and the preservation of historical buildings in a case study about solar thermal systems for heating buildings in Visby Town. Her analysis shows how disagreements as well as consensus among the actors involved seem to concern the physical properties of renewable energy facilities, i.e. solar collectors, and the perception of space. For consumers it was a



question of which parts of their buildings were regarded as public or private, and thus could be altered or not. For the local authorities it was a matter of weighing preservation against an assumed private gain rather than a matter of balancing *heritage preservation* with improved *energy efficiency*.

Finally, *Kakee Scott*, *Jonathan Bean* and *Lenneke Kuijer* approach sustainability from a different perspective, that of design. In chapter 22, the potential of introducing *a practice-oriented design approach* for design students to address the issue of sustainability is presented. From such an approach sustainability should be considered as a systemic societal change rather than a mere technological challenge. At the core lies the importance of understanding consumers and their consumption: understanding what consumers do and why, what practices they are involved in and how material object is integrated into these practices. The lessons learned from a number of experimental design studio courses applying this perspective are discussed.

Our hope is that this anthology will contribute to energising and reinforcing transdisciplinary consumer research, and prove the need for this broad and flourishing field of research in both academia and society as a whole. The chapters all represent interesting points of impact in contemporary research into consumers and consumption.

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Part I  
The everyday life of consumers



## Is a small life enough? Making sense of Finnish poor consumers' negotiations of necessary consumption

Hanna Leipämaa-Leskinen, Henna Syrjälä & Pirjo Laaksonen

*“The reader might be surprised to learn that I regularly ate at McDonald’s. Yes, in rational terms, eating there was not very sensible. But loneliness is a terrible enemy. If you always eat alone, you’ll soon feel cut off from the rest of the world. That must have something to do with the fact that people are herd animals. People who sit alone at home all the time don’t feel very good. A hamburger chain was the cheapest alternative when I was trying to find a restaurant that serves meals large enough to satisfy my hunger and where there are enough people to make me feel socially connected.”*

*“Coffee is my only vice. I’m dependent on it. I need a cup of coffee in the morning to kick off the day properly. Otherwise I get a horrible headache. Good coffee is something I refuse to give up. Even poor people need a touch of luxury in their lives.”*

In the excerpts above, both informants state that there is something they do not want to give up, even if they live with scarce economic resources or in poverty. The objects of their necessary needs are different – spending time and eating in McDonald’s and having coffee in the morning – but their *justifications* are similar. Namely, they argue that poor people have just as much of a right as anyone else to say that they consider some items or experiences necessary, even though they may be luxurious.

This issue raises important concerns for the field of consumption studies: what do poor people experience as necessary consumption *and why?* While

today's consumer culture, often labelled as postmodern, is considered to highlight an ethos of global consumption (Ger and Belk 1996; Hill 2002a; Hill and Rapp 2008), and is even said to generate needless waste by idealizing ever-unfulfilled desires and the endless search for new consumption objects (Pereira Heath and Heath 2008), there are people among us who struggle with their everyday consumption. Even though extreme situations such as homelessness (Hill 2003) are still quite rare in affluent welfare societies, a growing number of consumers are living with scarce resources and in unequal and poor conditions (Ekström and Hjort 2009b; Hamilton 2009a). These low-income consumers are often excluded from today's consumption-focused society (Hamilton 2009a), and consumer researchers have largely ignored their views on consumption (Ekström and Hjort 2009b). However, it is important to make sense of these outsiders because "a full picture of today's society is not presented by ignoring the consequences of lower strata in the income hierarchy" (Ekström and Hjort 2009b, 698).

The aim of the chapter is to analyse *how Finnish poor consumers make sense of the meanings of necessary consumption in their everyday living*. In the following discussion, we first review the prior discussions on poverty and consumption of the poor and then those on necessary consumption. Our work is grounded on the discipline of consumer studies and therefore we only briefly discuss sociological poverty literature. After that, we justify our methodological choices and present our findings concerning the meanings and negotiations of necessary consumption. To conclude, the findings are discussed from the theoretical viewpoint of the contemporary, postmodern consumer. As we claim that the picture of present-day consumer societies is not complete unless we also listen to the voices of poor consumers, it is interesting to see how the present findings intersect with prior knowledge on postmodernism and the postmodern consumer.

We base our understanding of consumption on a rather wide view that was presented by Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2002, 5-6): "Consumption is individuals and groups acquiring, using and disposing of products, services, or experiences." Accordingly, we consider not only the material products but also various consumption actions that are related to products, services and experiences to be necessary in our analysis.

## Poverty and necessary consumption

We begin our theoretical discussion by examining different perspectives on poverty. After that we review prior literature on consumption of the poor, and finally we bring forward viewpoints from the literature concerning necessary consumption.

Even if sociological studies have been studying poverty and its manifestations for a long time, researchers seem to agree that poverty is something that is hard to define. According to Borgeraas and Dahl's (2010) review of different poverty concepts, income poverty, minimum budgets and the calculation of social assistance benefits offer slightly different perspectives on measuring poverty. These measurements are based on *objectively and collectively defined levels of incomes*, and because the resulting poverty levels vary greatly they should be used for different purposes (Lindqvist 2003). What seems to draw together the measurements is that poverty is not measured only in terms of incomes; it is also important to consider constructs such as “minimal acceptable way of life” or “a proper, but sober way of life” (Lister 2004; Townsend 1979).

Within consumer research, prior studies have often applied subjective measurements drawing from poor consumers' own experiences, thus aiming to define a *subjective level of poverty* (Lindqvist 2003). Even though these studies are scarce, they offer significant and critical standpoints for the prevailing material culture. Ronald Paul Hill (1991; 2002b; 2002a; 2008) in particular has rigorously studied the role of marketing and consumption in poor consumers' lives as well as their survival strategies, purchasing habits and possessions (Hill and Stamey 1990).

Parallel to poverty and poor consumers, prior consumer studies have discussed low-income consumers or consumers with scarce resources. These typically Nordic or European studies address *social inequality as a consequence of poverty*, and have usually focused on poor families' consumption. Hamilton (2009b, 252) states that in low-income families “financial resources are insufficient to obtain goods and services needed for an adequate and socially acceptable standard of living”. In a similar manner, Ekström and Hjort (2009b, 700) define consumers with low incomes or scarce resources as “those who are far below different types of poverty lines, but also people who are positioned just at and just above those lines”. This perspective relies on relative poverty, i.e. a person cannot keep up with the social norms and is stigmatized due to his or her scarce economical resources (Ekström and Hjort 2010; Townsend 1979). Similarly, the present chapter takes a *relative approach* to poverty, regarding it as a dynamic situation that is influenced by a particular context. Moreover, we

consider social inequality and poverty to be closely intertwined, but our focus is on poverty, and especially on poor consumers' own subjective experiences of poverty.

Second, when discussing the prior literature on *necessary consumption*, we discover that the roots of the research on necessity consumption can be traced back all the way to the early days of consumption research. Even then, researchers tried to find out what people really need. The classic example is Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs. If we look at the sociological research on necessary consumption, it appears that necessity consumption and consumption with scarce economic means are theoretically and empirically closely linked (Mehta 2011). That is, when sociological researchers have been interested in defining standards of good living, the collective norms and values of necessity consumption are implicitly pointed out (Atkinson et al. 2002; Borgeraas and Dahl 2010; Lister 2004; Townsend 1979). These limits of necessity consumption have been identified especially among poor people.

One of the conclusions of these prior discussions is that the function of the consumption of necessities has evolved from ensuring survival to enjoying full social membership of communities and societies (Wikström, Elg and Johansson 1989). Hence, the consumption of necessities is seen to involve more than what basic needs would suggest, i.e. having basic food products, clothes and shelter (Atkinson et al. 2002, 78; Ger 1997; Townsend 1979). When it comes to research on poor or low-income consumers' possessions, Hill and Stamey (1990, 311-315) have found that homeless people in America need the same basic items as average consumers: shelter, edible food, protective clothes, personal hygiene and health care products, and tools that are used to transport and acquire other possessions. Indeed, not even the poorest of the poor consume only to survive; instead, consumption is used also to fulfil so-called higher order needs in searching for social capital and achieving cultural goals, and consumption is employed as a means of compensating for poor living conditions (Subramayan and Gomez-Arias 2008).

Even though prior research has discovered these multifarious meanings of consumption for those who have scarce resources, what seems to be missing is any discussion of *experienced necessity* consumption. We claim that it is pivotal to listen to the poor consumers' understandings, emphasizing their subjective and individual views, in order to arrive at more equal views of the contemporary welfare society (Ekström and Hjort 2009b).



## Consumer narratives

Given that the purpose of our chapter is to examine how poor people make sense of necessary consumption, a qualitative methodology was adopted. The data were based on written poverty narratives that were published in an anthology of Finnish poor people's own stories of their daily lives. The anthology is called "Everyday Experiences of Poverty" [free translation] and includes 77 short stories whose length varies between 2 and 10 pages, with a total of 348 pages of written text. The stories were entries in a national writing competition held in the year 2006. For the purposes of the current chapter, 44 stories were analyzed (200 pages of text).

Even if the lines of poverty are difficult to define, it is important to interpret the experiences of poverty in the societal and cultural context of Finland. Relative income poverty is one of the measures that are often used when defining the share of poor people in a given society (Lindqvist 2003). When taking 60% of the median income as a poverty level (in Finland, EUR 1,800 per month in the year 2009), the official statistics show that in the year 2009 13.1% of the Finnish people could be defined as poor (Official Statistics of Finland 2009). It should be noted, however, that the present data are based on the informants' subjective evaluations of their poverty, and therefore we do not know whether they belong to this 13.1% of the Finnish population. While this should be taken into account when interpreting the findings, it is important to note that the present chapter is interested in poor people's own subjective experiences of their everyday living, and therefore the informants were allowed to define themselves as poor from their own premises. Naturally, these premises are different in consumption-oriented societies, such as Finland, than in less developed societies. Similarly, the "cut off" for defining something as necessary consumption came from the research informants themselves; whatever they state as being necessary was accepted as such. That is, the aim is to search for *subjective* truth rather than positivistic ideals of the objective truth (Cortazzi 2001; Deetz 1996, 202).

The background of the informants varied greatly in regard to the reasons for their poverty. The reasons were different in the cases of long-term poverty, which was often a result of permanent low-income living circumstances (for example, inherited poverty, long-term employment, low-wage jobs, small pensions or being a stay-at-home mother) and in the cases of sudden changes in life (for example, bankruptcy, excessive indebtedness, falling ill, sudden unemployment, becoming a student, getting divorced or being financially deceived). Often the informants reported having several serious life changes

in a short period of time, for example, becoming ill and unemployed at the same time, which made their financial situation hard. However, it should be noted that the reasons for poverty are not all-inclusive, as they were not explicitly mentioned in every narrative. Nor do our informants represent a generalised view on poverty.

Previously, Ekström and Hjort (2009a, 521-523) have raised methodological challenges regarding research on families with scarce resources. Access to data is one of the problems because poor people may resist participating in studies that categorize them as poor. The present data are secondary in nature and were thus not originally gathered for research purposes; therefore they give a more authentic view of poor people's experiences. Another problem is related to interpretation; it is important that the stories are analyzed in a critical way and not to overemphasize the misery of poor people while neglecting other aspects of their lives (ibid. 522). However, poor people should not be treated as "others" when the researchers are describing poverty from the outside (ibid. 523).

Broadly speaking, our research is situated within the interpretive approach of consumer research (Deetz 1996, 202), in which the narrative paradigm is also located (Shankar, Elliot and Goulding 2001, 437). The analysis of the data began by importing the narrative texts into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The data were split in half and coded by two of the authors. They discussed the bases for the coding in order to arrive at a synthesis. The coding scheme was developed through an iterative and multistep process so that all the themes and sub-themes were *inductively* created. The interpretation of data developed through the process of the hermeneutical circle (Thompson 1997), where interpretations were informed by previous literature. Thus, hermeneutical analysis was used with a view to relating *emic* and *etic* structures to create a theoretical understanding beyond the current context (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 288).

### **Categories and meanings of necessary consumption for the poor**

The data analysis was twofold. We first identified those consumption categories that were explicitly mentioned as being necessary. Secondly, at the deeper level of analysis, we examined how the meanings of necessary consumption were negotiated in the narratives. The findings are discussed next.

***Categories of necessary consumption***

We started our analysis by identifying ten consumption categories that the informants explicitly regarded as necessary consumption (Table 1). In the analysis, we divided these consumption categories into groups on the basis of the COICOP classification, i.e. Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (United Nations Statistics Division 2012).

Table 1. Categories of necessary consumption

<b>Categorizing necessities (COICOP classification)</b>
Food and non-alcoholic beverages e.g. home-made meals, coffee
Clothing and footwear e.g. second-hand clothes
Housing, water, electricity e.g. rentals for housing
Household appliances e.g. a freezer
Health e.g. expenses related to illness (medicines and doctor's appointments), also glasses
Transport e.g. a bicycle, bus tickets, sometimes a car
Communication e.g. mobile phone, social media (Internet)
Recreation and culture: - Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment e.g. computer, TV, radio - Other recreational items and equipment e.g. pets, walking in the countryside, children's hobbies - Recreational and cultural services e.g. spending time in a cafeteria, visiting free art exhibitions, concerts, library services (meeting other people)
Education e.g. owning a computer in order to be able to study
Miscellaneous services e.g. insurance, personal care (hygiene products) e.g. payments related to childcare

When interpreting Table 1, it can be seen that almost all of the main categories of the COICOP classification could be found from the current data, but their contents were significantly scarcer and simpler than in the original classification (see United Nations Statistics Division 2012). The exceptions were alcoholic beverages and tobacco, as well as restaurants and hotels, which were not discussed in the current narratives. Moreover, it should be noted that sometimes the necessities were regarded as vital for survival and sometimes for social well-being. For example, recreational services, such as libraries and hanging around in cafeterias, were regarded as important because of meeting other people, while housing expenses and food were literally discussed in terms of life and death. In addition, even though all of these were mentioned to be necessities at least once in the narratives, a number of informants were forced to give up some of these consumption items. For example, a TV was something that many informants either did not own or could not afford to watch. In all, many of the listed consumption categories were objects of *negotiation* in terms of either their quantity or their quality. Next we analyse the negotiation of necessary consumption and its meanings.

### ***Negotiating necessary consumption***

When we first began our inquiry we wanted to identify what types of consumption poor consumers do not want to give up. However, we soon noticed that the informants mainly talked about the items they are *forced* to give up, thus illustrating the obligatory reduction of consumption. Consequently, the poor actually considered almost *all* of their consumption necessary. For this reason, we concentrated in our analysis on the negotiations of meanings that were assigned to consumption in general, but taking the viewpoint of experienced necessity. Thus, our analysis focuses on three tensions that portrayed how necessary consumption and its meanings were negotiated in the data. These tensions emerged rather tangibly; their actual wordings permeated throughout the data, as phrases such as “to be (or not to be) enough”, “to be vain or compulsory” and “can (or cannot) afford to” came up repeatedly in the narratives. Accordingly, support for each of these tensions is provided in the form of verbatim quotes from the narrative texts.

#### **To be enough – Not to be enough**

Within the first tension, “To be enough – Not to be enough”, negotiations of necessary consumption were related not only to sufficiency of money but

also to sufficiency of life and its material and meaningfulness. Furthermore, the discussion of what is “enough” was also tied to oneself as a human being.

In many cases, the informants stated that they were content to live a smaller life and that this freed them from striving for money and new things all the time: *“For me, less is enough”*. Thus, they set themselves apart from “the other fortunate people”. To address this, the informants used expressions such as *“valuing real things”* and *“feeling joy from small things”*, highlighting that they were not driven by material values but instead sought a modest way of living; on the other hand, they described other people as *“slaves of money”* who are *“blinded by money and advertisements”*. Below, one informant writes about her relationship to consumption and money:

*“Sure, I do sometimes envy others and feel sad when I hear about their holiday trips, new mobile phones and other things they buy to entertain themselves. But money doesn’t buy you happiness. I’ve learned to appreciate small things.”*

However, at the same time, the data showed very clearly that the informants experienced that their current life circumstances were just not good enough. They frequently discussed the inadequacy of income, as the money they received in the form of social benefits or low wages did not stretch far enough to ensure a good living: *“I have shitty, intermittent and very short-term jobs, which is not enough even for basic livelihood.”* Hence, the negotiations of the poor cannot be paralleled to voluntary simplifiers who can be defined as individuals who opt out of free will to limit their consumption of consumer goods and services (Shaw and Moraes 2009, 215). Instead, the poor are forced and obligated to give up many consumption items that are taken for granted by the more fortunate people.

The data also revealed how poor circumstances made the poor feel that they were second-class citizens or how they felt that they were not entitled to own something or to do something. As one informant wrote: *“I guess the poor don’t need recreation.”* Many of the stories featured a great deal of irony and bitterness towards society and the state. At some points the poor felt that the welfare state had let them down because their lives were so hard, but they were surrounded by signs of affluent and shallow consumption (e.g. advertisements, TV programmes, shopping malls full of products). This tension between the vain and compulsory consumption is discussed more below.

### To be vain – To be compulsory

The second tension between “To be vain – To be compulsory” illustrates those negotiations of necessary consumption that were related to fulfilling vain or compulsory needs. The discussion concentrated on satisfying the most vital needs first; if there was any money left, the rest of the needs came later.

*“When we’ve pooled our money from different sources, we always pay our rent and other living expenditures first. We buy potatoes with the rest. [...] If we still have money left over after that, we go to a flea market to look for warm clothing, carpets for our cold floors, and furniture. [...] When our food stocks are running low, we have to cut down on our energy consumption. We move around less.”*

When the meanings of compulsory consumption were negotiated, the basic needs were often discussed with tangible expressions, as the following quote shows: “Every family should have at least enough money for food, clothing, a warm apartment, electricity and clean water.” Many of these compulsory needs can be described as representing the most necessary types of necessary consumption or the absolute minimum, for example a *library* (replacing all the other recreation activities) or *walking around the block* (instead of travelling).

On the other hand, when the informants wrote about vain or extra consumption, they appeared to be forced to justify it in many ways, for example social contacts were often mentioned in the given justifications. The search for social contacts led to behaviour (i.e. using public transportation and going to cafes) that was not vital for surviving, but experienced as necessary. Similarly, below one informant tells how she is ready to pay for access to the Internet in order to have social contacts and “luxury” in her life:

*“I still have an Internet connection. I previously needed it for my work. It costs me EUR 26 per month. I should give it up, but I feel that it’s something that I must have. I don’t travel – I don’t often leave my own neighbourhood, in fact. Due to my illnesses, I live a very small and confined life. My Internet connection is my only luxury.”*

Hence, the informant considered the Internet and the social contacts that become possible through it so important that she has decided to have it even though she cannot actually afford to have it. This tension between “Can afford to – Cannot afford to” is discussed in more detail below.

### Can afford to – Cannot afford to

The third tension appeared between “Can afford to – Cannot afford to”, and within it the negotiations of necessary consumption were constructed through what (consumption) the poor could afford and what they could not. Our data show numerous examples of what the poor could not afford, such as travel (going anywhere away from home), phone calls, (children’s) hobbies, new glasses, medicines, renting a movie, eating a healthy diet, repairing a car or having lunch at a workplace restaurant.

*“The poor can’t leave their homes. We can’t afford to have hobbies. And even if we could, two weeks without food means we don’t have any energy to spare.”*

In fact, it became evident that the poor could not afford many of the items that wealthier people regard as self-evident. Therefore, they sometimes deliberately decided to live like more affluent people, and even defiantly stated that they would not agree to give up everything. The following quotes tell how the poor tried to avoid feelings of shame and how they fantasized about some special items in order to get a feeling of a better life:

*“A woman thinks like a woman, even if she’s poor. I want to be feminine, right down to my underwear. That extra effort is worthwhile. No one points at me in the dressing room of the swimming hall and says, ‘She must be poor because her underwear is so awful!’”*

*“Why do we spend that money on something that seems frivolous? Even poor people need classy things that make life worth living. For a poor woman, that might be shoes that are too expensive for our budget, a women’s magazine for wealthy women, or a perfume.”*

Hence, it seems that living as a poor person in a welfare society such as Finland can create great anxiety, as the poor unavoidably compare themselves with the more affluent people.

### The poor in the postmodern consumer society

We started our chapter by stating that the picture of present-day consumer societies is not complete unless we also listen to the voices of poor consumers. As the contemporary consumer societies are often regarded as postmodern, it is interesting to contemplate how the present findings inform and relate to prior knowledge on postmodernism and the postmodern consu-

mer. Maybe most typically, postmodern consumers are seen as living in a world of contradictions, negotiating constantly and inconsistently between consumption alternatives (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Gabriel and Lang 1995). The negotiation came up very visibly in our data, too; however, for the poor the negotiation between alternative choices was about surviving and finding the best solution to cope with everyday life instead of using the consumption objects as markers of fluid identities or communicative tools for changing tribe memberships (Cova and Cova 2002; Gabriel and Lang 1995).

Still, the poor were highly aware of the signs and symbols of consumption objects. However, at the same time they noticed that they could not keep up with material consumption, which often resulted in anxiety, shame and regret. This was especially related to those situations when it was impossible to buy their children the goods that they wished for. Also, previous studies have shown that poor families try to put children's consumption first (Ekström and Hjort 2009a; Hamilton 2009b; Hamilton and Catterall 2007). But sometimes, the poor consumers mentioned that they were not ready to forgo all the "luxuries" and "vanity". Often these were related to social necessities, like going to a cafe or buying a nice-looking piece of clothing from a flea market. Parallels can be found to prior studies, as poor consumers are found to aspire to have "better things" by employing the signs and symbols attached to consumption objects (Ekström and Hjort 2009a) and to dream about better consumption opportunities (Hill 2002b). Especially when the consumption items are visible, such as clothes, a failure to follow trends and own the "required" brands has been found to influence people's self-concepts (Guillen-Royo 2011; Jezkova Isaksen and Roper 2008).

Also, real and authentic experiences have been considered to characterize postmodern consumers (Thompson 2000). This was something that also emerged from our data as the poor consumers strongly set themselves apart from materialistic and shallow consumers and felt that they found real happiness in a small and simple life. In this sense, our findings have parallels to Hill's (2002b) discussion on the survival strategies that poor and homeless people employ to reduce their psychological discomfort and improve their material lives. Even if our informants were not homeless, their striving for humane living and self-respect was forcefully present in the narratives.



## Concluding remarks

The current chapter has examined how Finnish poor consumers make sense of the meanings of necessary consumption in their everyday living. The findings first enabled us to compile a rather trivial, yet enlightening list of ten consumption categories that were experienced as necessary. It would probably not be an overstatement to say that most of us see all of those as necessities for living in a contemporary welfare state. However, a closer analysis revealed that the poor needed to bargain about both the *contents* of these consumption categories and the *quantity* of them. It should be highlighted, though, that our data included various kinds of poor consumers, and therefore the analysis cannot be generalized to cover all poor consumers. However, daily negotiations about *what to give up* are something that is common to all consumers with scarce resources. In fact, all consumers negotiate about their consumption, but the identified tensions between “To be enough – Not to be enough”, “To be vain – To be compulsory” and “Can afford to – Cannot afford to” seem to be the particular ways in which the poor make sense of their necessary consumption.

To conclude, as our aim is to allow poor consumers to have their voices heard, we want to deliberate on what more affluent consumers could learn from listening to these voices. Probably the most important issue is related to the poor people’s modest way of consumption. Most of our informants did not own a car, bought all of their clothes second-hand, and were critical of all types of unnecessary consumption. Hence, they can be seen as examples of environmentally responsible consumers who inevitably know how to reduce consumption. Indeed, prior discussions have claimed that perhaps the most important key to achieving sustainable consumption is to aim to decrease consumption (Schrader and Thøgersen 2011). This gives one more important reason to keep studying poor consumers and to ensure that they can play active roles in building welfare societies.

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## The social importance of things and money among migrant families in Norway

Mari Rysst and Lill M. Vramo

Since the Second World War, nation-building in Norway has focused on welfare, equality and equity (Liden et al. 1999). To this “climate” of equality thinking, people from non-western countries immigrated to Norway. They brought with them new smells, sounds, food traditions and appearances, and also networks stretching beyond the national borders of Norway. The Grorud Valley close to the capital of Oslo has the greatest amount of people of non-western and migrant origin, and is the place of focus in this chapter.

In the same time span as the influx of migrants, childhood has become increasingly commercialized, both in Norway and in other industrialized countries (Rysst 2008; Pugh 2009). This has implications for how families prioritize their use of money. What in previous generations was looked upon as luxury goods, for instance a bicycle, may today be understood as a need, something necessary for social inclusion (Lodziak 2002; Rysst 2008; Pugh 2009).

We will use the phrase “people with a migrant background/origin”, instead of “migrant” because the latter is easily associated with recently immigrated people. Our chapter includes these in addition to second and third generation immigrants. Most of them sustain multiple relations to their homeland: by letters, telecommunication, gifts and/or money transfers (Carling 2008), more or less frequent returns and/or establishing houses in their “homeland” (Danielsen 2004: 134). Transnational contact makes people connect and identify with two or more communities simultaneously (Glick Schiller 1992: ix).

This is related to the fact that technological development and the relevance of distance has diminished, challenging the merge between social and physical closeness (Fuglerud 2001; Eriksen 2008). Our studies show that local participation is nevertheless important.

Bringing in the knowledge that people with a migrant background often participate in multiple contexts, stretching far culturally, geographically and socio-economically raises several questions regarding economy and consumption practices, community, trust and integration. As we physically move, so too our personal and social boundaries shift; in this sense, migration involves a constant process of reinvention and self-re-definition (Gardner 2001: preface). Such processes of reinvention and self-re-definition also involve money and consumption. Expenditure is understood as necessary in multiple contexts – sending money to relatives or attending a marriage in the “homeland”, for instance India, and paying for sports activities for the children in Norway, might involve tensions and difficult priorities.

Our chapter includes data from two ethnographic subprojects of an overarching inter-disciplinary project located in the suburb of Alna, Oslo. The first case is drawn from data on Norwegian Sikhs living in or around the Grorud Valley or visiting the Gurdwara (the Sikhs’ holy building), which is situated in the suburb of Alna, and their transnational families and networks in Indian Punjab and the UK. The second study addresses the lives of some children and their families living in the Grorud Valley. Our different studies make varied use of the theoretical approaches according to our empirical findings. Our research question is:

*How are material goods, money and services part of inclusion and exclusion processes among children and families with a migrant background in Oslo, Norway?*

By focusing on consumption related to inclusion and exclusion processes, we make sense of both consumption and integration processes.

## Theoretical approaches

In our discussion, we understand consumption as part of social processes and social relations (Douglas & Isherwood 1996; Miller 1998; Pugh 2009). Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood write that “Goods are neutral, their uses are social, they can be used as fences or bridges.” (Douglas & Isherwood 1996) All things carry meaning, but in relation to a whole. The meaning

lies in the relationship between the things, similar to how music flows from the relationship between notes, and not from one note only (Douglas & Isherwood 1996). The things can be part of children's social classification and friendship networks, and are best understood in relation to each other, where they function as fences or bridges for friendship and belonging. Daniel Miller argues that commodities reflect "the material culture of love" and as such are used "to constitute the complexity of contemporary social relations" (Miller 1998:8). These ways of thinking resonate with Allison Pugh's understanding of consumption as expressions of care and belonging for children and parents, who engage in "economy of dignity" in their striving for belonging and inclusion (Pugh 2009:24). This concept encompasses a system of social meanings about what "it would take to be able to participate among their peers" (Pugh 2009:6), to be "worthy of belonging" and be able to join the circle rather than be excluded from it (Pugh 2009:7).

However, consumption also satisfies basic needs and wants. Pugh argues that children come home "with the desires turned into needs by the alchemy of dignity", which most parents respond to in order to satisfy their children's social belonging (Pugh 2009:8). In this chapter, we regard all "things" and paid activities needed for social inclusion as a need.

Of special interest are issues of reciprocity, for instance as analysed by Marcel Mauss in the essay on the gift. His main argument is that ties are established and maintained by gift giving and by the obligation to receive and return a gift (Mauss 1966).

### The field sites and methodology

The first study is based on knowledge of the multiple engagements of people with a migrant background in different contexts, and focuses on their participation in these contexts in Norway, India and the UK. The researcher focuses on things in motion. "...Even though from a theoretical point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context." (Appadurai 1986:5) The approach means to follow flows and see how things and money move in trajectories between places as Kopytoff prescribes (1986) and into the contexts and to the people and lives the things are *meant for* or *sent to*. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted in Norway, India and the UK. A survey in Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji (Sikh holy building) was conducted in autumn 2010.

The second study is based on long-term participant observation in a primary school setting in the Grorud Valley, Oslo. As a whole, the school has 460 pupils representing approximately 15-18 nationalities, where the ethnic Norwegians are among the minorities. Dal school is thus one of a small, but increasing, number of schools in Norway where ethnic Norwegians are in such a position. The study was done in the fifth, later sixth grade. The sixth grade consists of two parallel classes (6A and 6B) with 21 students in each. As a whole, 17 countries of origin are represented. We have ordered their backgrounds into these broad categories in order to anonymise: the Middle East, Asia, East Asia, North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Eastern Europe and Norway.

### **The importance of money and things in the social relations of Norwegian Sikh families**

In the relationships between Norwegian Indians and their relatives and networks in India and other places in the world, it is in the tension between distance and closeness that transnational economy is shaped. This study focuses on integration on a local and a trans-local level, by looking at material goods and money as mediators in localities and between localities (Punjab – UK – Norway). The Sikh Diaspora consists of about two million or 8% of all Sikhs. Sikhs – practically all Punjabi – comprise just over 20% of the British South Asian population (Clarke et al. 1990:19). Sikhs arrived in Norway in the beginning of the seventies. Most migrants from India come from Indian Punjab where the majority are Sikhs, resulting in the fact that most Indians in Norway are Sikhs (about 5,000).

Miller suggests that through studying shopping ethnographically, we can reveal underlying normative scripts related to kinship systems, and get an insight into tensions within the systems (Miller 2001:ch.2). Norwegian Sikhs experience tensions within their kinship system regarding responsibilities and reciprocity. These tensions are related to normative scripts from their homeland valuing collective responsibilities to a larger degree than in Norway, where standing on ones' own feet is a strong value. Here we will investigate how “time-space compression” is part of Norwegian Sikhs' reality, and their negotiations related to who one is responsible and indebted to. We will investigate how money and things communicate degrees of closeness in these relationships, by discussing Prableen's family's practices.



The family's house is newly built. There are still small chores to be done in the house, Prableen explains. She was twenty-three years old and educated as a nurse when she got married in the 1980s. The man she married was a student in Norway who knew that nurses would easily get a job in Norway: Through the job they could both get permanent residence permits. Prableen explains that the marriage was arranged. Their marriage took place between families, not between individuals, a practice which has been, and still is, the tradition among South Asians. Scholars studying the Indian society have underlined that individual needs are subordinate to the collective. Dumont (in Reichelt 1998:41) writes that the individual in India is a product of its social relations. It is the community which is given rights, not the individual as in Norway. The boy's family had priorities in their choice of girl for their boy living in Norway. With a permanent link to Norway, more family members had the possibility to travel abroad, which today is fulfilled. Having family members abroad is also a source and a possibility for flows of money, things and help back to Punjab. "We used to send a lot of money," Prableen explains. They have helped the three sons of her husband's brother by paying for their private education. "And then we got his sister over here." Later, Prableen helped one of her brothers settling in Oslo. Prableen explains that it is normal for a boy to support a couple of his sisters and brothers and his mother and father, but she has also sent money to her sister, her sister's four children and one of her brothers.

Today, Prableen is fifty years old and has three teenage children living at home, as well as an older son studying abroad. The contact with India and her relatives has changed over time, and priorities related to family and kin and consumption practices in Norway have influenced and changed the economic priorities towards family and networks in India.

"I used to have a lot of contact and travelled [to India] every year or every other year." Prableen explains that it used to be this way in the first fifteen to twenty years after coming to Norway, but that the contact has decreased in the last ten years, because she has just one brother and her father left in India:

*His [her husband's] mother died, and he has hardly any family down there. And our siblings, both from my side and his side – we are scattered around. The siblings who are still there, they have grown-up children and... yes. The priorities have changed.*

Prableen explains why the priorities have changed:

*We are all involved with our children. We used to be involved with ourselves and the contact between us sisters and brothers. That fades a bit after a while, but I guess when the children have married and they are on their own feet, we will take up the contact again [...]. Everybody has got their own stuff. That's the same for all families.*

Prableen's three teenagers are involved in sports activities; ice hockey and handball. Ice hockey is an expensive sport, due to the need for new and costly equipment every season, and due to expenses for participating in tournaments and matches: "The boys travel to Lillehammer and to Sweden and other places; everywhere really. Then money moves quickly." Prableen thinks it is important that her children are involved with Norwegian peers, and even though she thinks these activities are expensive she lets them. *I will pay as long as they want, Prableen says. But every season you have to spend some thousand kroner, sometimes less. All of it is very expensive.*

Their family's contact with relatives around the world has decreased, illustrated by less frequent journeys to India, while the focus on their own children has increased. Miller (2001) points out that there is a tension between close kin and distant kin, which is revealed in gift exchanges and gifting. Here it is reflected in the use of money. The children are growing up and don't want to go to India, because they do not experience going to their relatives as a "proper holiday". Prableen does not feel it is the same to go to India anymore, either, because her friends are "scattered all around to various cities and are involved with their families". Prableen still travels to Ludhiana because of her father, but thinks this will be much less frequent when he is not around anymore.

The contact with relatives and networks has decreased for Prableen and her family. They do not travel as much as before and have changed their practices regarding sending money to people in India. This exemplifies how the geographical distance, time and the experienced relationships of kin are in a dialectical relationship, and influence the sending of money. The children's experienced distance to Prableen's homeland influences her frequency of journeys; the travel consumption. The children, as her closest kin, are her priority, while the more distant kin have to wait. Another change is a change from sending money without much reflection, to a new understanding of duties of reciprocity, where a feeling of being exploited by relatives in India has emerged. This can be understood as a movement away from a traditional

Indian way of understanding kinship and family relations, based on a strict system of duties – “a give-receive-reciprocity” towards an extended family which is a much wider understanding of family than the nuclear family.

*We used to send quite a lot of money in the beginning, I think; in the first ten years... The children were young then, and we were in India very often, almost every year. We brought money and helped them... But now I see that it was just part of spoiling them all. They had their means down there [in India], but we didn't want to see that at the time. And that was stupid. At the moment we can see that they don't need money. We have our own children, so we haven't got any extra.*

“And even if we had extra money, I think everybody has to stand on ones' own feet, and we have to be wiser, and say no to it.” She laughs a little and I ask if the relatives in India are still asking for money.

*Yes! The exploitation is constant. Give them an inch and they will take a mile. This is what I have experienced several times with my relatives. You have to be good at saying no. We have been helping out for so many years; if they are not satisfied, forget it. My children are speaking up; you are stupid enough to give them money when you are down there. And sometimes I reply: OK, you do not understand. And my children ask: What is it that we don't understand? No one is giving us money here if we ask, why are you supposed to give?*

Prableen continues by saying that it is difficult to make the children understand that India is different: “That one is born to help each other there. But it is not like that here. So the children think we are stupid when we say yes, yes.” The three teenagers and the older boy have got their own large bedrooms with their own television sets and three separate bathrooms, one with a Jacuzzi. Prioritizing giving the children individual space within the family home by purchasing furniture and designing their own space can be interpreted as a strategy of combining Indian and western values.

Through her children and living in Norway for nearly thirty years, Prableen has acquired new priorities and new thoughts about how she can spend money and who she has responsibility towards. The idea of being a large extended family in geographical space is being challenged. She is clearly expressing that she thinks everybody has to stand on their own feet, that to just *receive* will result in being spoiled. This is the same story related to giving as Miller finds among his informants; the fear of spoiling their children by giving them too much or too easily (Miller 2001), or aiding instead of trading in North-South

relations (Vramo 2006). Prableen tells us how refusing to send money might cut the bridge to the family for a period of time. “Then they might not phone us for three or four months. It’s only us making the calls.” Prableen tells us that they have lost contact with some relatives, who criticize them.

Those who still live in the Indian local community have knowledge and contacts which the Norwegian Sikhs often have a need for when they are visiting. These resources might be fenced off if one has not maintained the links and bridges to family the network by sending money and helping out. Quite a few of the Norwegian Sikhs want to redefine kinship and family duties. They want to prioritize close kin to a larger degree than distant relatives. One way of balancing their dilemma is through legitimizing their choices with a more Nordic/western theme for family responsibilities; to look after oneself and the importance of standing on one’s own feet. Prableen says it is more important to let their children take part and be included by their peers; for instance by having the right things such as equipment to take part in the ice hockey community, rather than having all the bridges open to resources through sending money to Indian relatives. The next section discusses the importance of things in children’s friendships at the place we have called Dal.

### **The importance of things and money among children at Dal, Oslo**

Our second case addresses the importance of things and money for inclusion by focusing on friendship networks among children at Dal. The local school has a distribution of racialised ethnicities of 4% ethnic Norwegians and 96% of immigrant origin. Many non-western immigrants are financially poor (Bonke et al. 2005). This implies that places and schools peopled with many people of non-western origin are also peopled with financially disadvantaged families, which may be relevant to social inclusion processes related to consumption.

The children’s friendship network is constructed with the aid of a sociogram the teacher asked them to draw combined with the researcher’s own observations. In combination with our observations, the sociogram made much sense and served as a guide for our construction of children’s friendship networks of strong and weak ties (Rysst 2011). The children had been told to draw a line with an arrow from ego position to wanted classmate. This resulted in all children having arrows from ego, but not all had arrows pointed at them. We interpreted the friendship to be reciprocal, and the relationship strong, if two persons pointed to each other. The following figure shows

the friendship network by way of strong and weak ties, where the latter are stippled lines and the former whole lines:

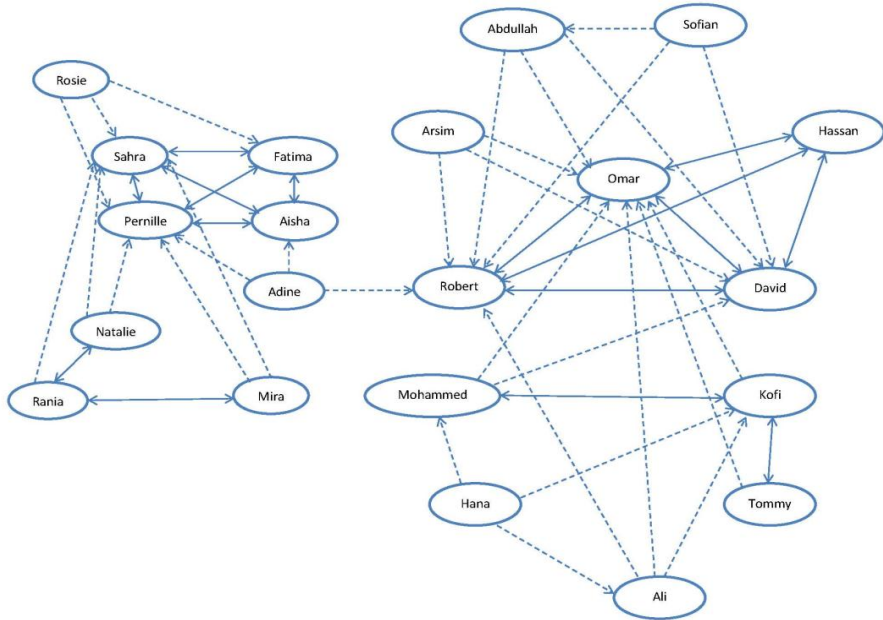


Figure: The children's friendship network

As the figure shows, among the girls most of the arrows point to Pernille, who has an ethnic Norwegian background (7), and Sahra, of North African origin (7). Among the boys, most arrows point to Omar, who is of Asian origin (9), David, of mixed ethnic Norwegian and West African background (7), and Robert, of East African origin, close behind (6). These children are understood as the most popular children in 6A. A total of seven children only have weak ties to their classmates and are understood as being excluded among peers.

The diagram shows that strong and weak ties are systematically distributed according to gender. However, the ties are not distributed according to ethnic background: the three most wanted boys and the two most wanted girls

represent different countries of origin. Pugh expresses well what children are up to in their relationships:

*Children together shape their own economies of dignity, which in turn transform particular goods and experiences into tokens of value suddenly fraught with meaning. And when children – even affluent ones – find themselves without what they need to join the conversation, they perform what I have termed “facework” to make up for the omission. (Pugh 2009: 8)*

“Facework” denotes impression management that involves “the presentation of an honourable self in order to gather dignity in public” (Pugh 2009:52). Both as individuals and dyads, the relationships between Sahra and Pernille on the one side and Omar and David on the other are important and interesting because, as popular children – which brings dignity and power – they dominate the class context in many ways. (See also Renold 2005; Thorne 1993; Rysst 2008.) They are the centre of attention and have the power to define what the relevant tokens of value are; which things are in or out; which child is in and who is out; in short, the content of their economy of dignity. We will show how this works among the boys.

### ***The economy of dignity in the boys’ network***

As we saw in the diagram, Omar appears to be the most popular boy, and he and David represent a strong dyad – which bring strong ties – that also includes Robert, who has almost as many wanting him as a friend as David. The most popular activity among the boys is football. They play every break time at school, all year round, even when the football pitch is covered with snow. Most of the boys also attend the local football team twice a week. The boys talk about football most of the time, even during lessons in the classroom. We therefore suggest that Omar has achieved this position for at least three reasons: he is judged to be the most talented football player in class, he has been chosen as the captain of the team, and he has a quiet, sympathetic personality. In terms of appearance he is slim, not very brown skinned, and of average height. He is also clever at school work, has a lot of knowledge about football and wears cool enough clothes. These clothes are generally not the most expensive brands, but are brands like Adidas, Nike and others bought in sports gear shops. The “in” clothes among the boys have a sporting character and jeans are not often seen. In short, Omar scores highly on important competences, and as such he encompasses bridging things and activities for popularity among these boys. Football magazines, football shirts

and all things related to football and sports are good examples of things that function as bridges in relationships and thus in their economy of dignity.

It is also evident that David has a high position because the boys also gather at his desk and call out his name repetitiously. The girls classify him as handsome; he has brown skin and curly hair which he tries to fix into fashionable styles. And of course, he wears football shirts and cool enough clothes in the same style as Omar. The boys' social hierarchy is thus related to football competence, both as players, as consumers and by general knowledge. Together, these items are fundamental to the boys' economy of dignity. Most of the boys seek inclusion in the football group, and try in different ways to establish strong ties to Omar, David and Robert. In other words, the game of football in all its aspects, material as well as proficiency, is a vital ingredient in the boys' economy of dignity. Therefore, participation in football also outside school is an asset for inclusion, and here certain things, such as gear and participation fees, are needed which all cost money. As such, participation in football strains the family budget. One such "strain" is a bicycle, which the following story about Ali illustrates.

Ali is of Asian origin; he is small for his age, which is commented upon to his dismay. As the diagram shows, he has only weak ties to his classmates. It appears evident that he experiences some social exclusion, which his conduct in class indicates. He engages in facework, which includes being cheeky, and he tries in different ways to impress the boys. It appears necessary in the boys' economy of dignity to have some minimum competence in football, as a player, in terms of knowledge and by way of dressing. Ali didn't play on the football team in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He said the reason was that he didn't manage to get to the football pitch because it was too far away to walk. The family was in a difficult financial situation as the father lived abroad and the mother only had a part-time job. She did not have a car and Ali did not have a bicycle, and he was therefore unable to attend football training. However, he said, when the new school year started he was going to get a bicycle, and then he would join the football team. We asked him if he wanted a special bicycle, and the following exchange ensued:

*Ali: Not special, but one that is very nice, that cannot be broken. But it doesn't matter to me really, as long as it is a bicycle. But if it is a girl's bike, then I will not have it! (He laughs a bit.)*

*Researcher: So it has to be a boys' bicycle, and then it doesn't matter how it looks?*

*Ali: No, not really, but it cannot have squares, then I will not have it.*



The social importance of things is highlighted here, particularly in that he didn't accept just *any* bicycle, it had to be a certain kind after all. We guess he feared humiliation and more exclusion if it was a girl's bicycle or had the wrong pattern. In his peer context, a certain bicycle may thus be understood as needed for inclusion. The correct type of bicycle was even in the end more important than participation in the football team and through that, stronger ties to the boys. The end of this story is that Ali must have received an acceptable bicycle when the new school year started, because he started playing football. Most families at Dal can afford to send their children to football games, although one mother said she had to postpone her son's participation because of a lack of money. In summary, money is important for social inclusion among the boys.

For the girls and boys, the interesting question is what things are defined as necessary for inclusion and by whom. This is an empirical question as the necessary things vary between schools, places, regions and countries, but probably have teenage-inspired fashion and looks in common (Pugh 2009; Rysst 2008). At another school in the Grorud Valley, where the distribution of ethnicities was 60% ethnic Norwegians and 40% children from an immigrant background and generally include more middle-class families, the tokens of value were more exclusive and the things of more expensive brands than at Dal (Rysst 2008). This may be because the socio-economic situation at Dal was more homogeneous; most families did not have much money to spend on expensive products and brands. However, the importance of expensive brands is not absent at Dal, as the following conversation with Sahra's mother indicates:

*Mother: When the children were very young, I could buy clothes on sale at Hennes & Mauritz, but now when they are older they don't want the same clothes as before. So it is expensive for us as a family when they want more expensive clothes. I have to buy clothes that fit their age, and sometimes I don't buy clothes for myself, I totally forget myself. I can only possess one pair of shoes, one dress, one coat... and sometimes I teach them that I cannot afford it all, and they understand that well. We know many children are bullied because of clothes, and that is rather sad.*

*Researcher: In what ways are they bullied?*

*Mother: For instance, some may say "You don't have clothes with a brand", or "you don't wear Levi's, or Adidas or Nike". We try to plan so that she doesn't experience that. And as I said, me and their father, sometimes we don't buy anything for ourselves at all. We forget.*



Sahra's mother also says how certain things are important, certain brands are important, and she expresses her love to her children by trying to satisfy their wants. Her utterance illustrates the point made by Miller about "the material culture of love" (Miller 1998:8) and how Sahra's parents nurture their relationships with their children through consumption. Her story tells of how low-income families have to prioritize how they spend their money, and resonates perfectly with what the low-income parents in Allison Pugh's study from the US expressed. They all illustrate how "children come first", and in that they are not alone. Research from other Nordic countries and the UK reveals the same (Rysst 2006; Pugh 2009; Ridge 2002).

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown through two case studies how material goods, money and services are parts of inclusion and exclusion processes. In Norwegian Sikh families, we found that priorities related to consumption and their use of money change by residence time in Norway and bringing up children born in Norway. Their changing priorities, from an extended global family to a local nuclear family, give families the economic recourses and things that enable inclusion for their children in, for instance, sports activities among peers in Norway. However, the strategy of not sending money and things to kin and networks in India is risky because it might exclude the family from resources the extended family has at its disposal in India.

Among children at Dal, we found that the necessary things and activities for inclusion varied according to gender, but that the economy of dignity for both girls and boys did not have to include the most expensive brands and products. However, families with less money than average had a hard time trying to meet their children's needs for inclusion. As such, having enough money appears vital for social inclusion. In summary, it appears that the majority of parents of all social classes and ethnic groups living in western countries do their best to help their children comply to their peer culture's economy of dignity.

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## Making sense of clothing, making sense of identity – A radical practice perspective on data from a study of Norwegian teens

Ardis Storm-Mathisen

This chapter describes how clothing consumption, as an aspect or moment in complex practices and social processes, plays a part and is used by young Norwegian teens in their on-going efforts to construct identity and coherence. The analytical approach applied is a radical praxis perspective, inspired by the late Wittgenstein and his concept of language games. The importance of attending to and developing practice theoretical insights to consumer research has in recent years been argued by several (Halkier et al 2011; Halkier and Jensen 2011; Helle-Valle and Slette-meås 2008; Warde 2005). The dominant discourse around practice theory in consumer research departs from Ward's (1995) interpretations of Reckwitz (2002) and his understanding of practice as *Praktiken* (routine) in the plural (see Halkier's chapter, this volume). The radical practice perspective applied here takes a different starting point seeing practice as *praxis* in the singular (the whole of human action) (Helle-Valle 2010). From this perspective, practice is what *is* – it shall not be explained – it is what explains (Wittgenstein 1979 §§204, 559; Latour 2005). Hence, the routine – the repetition of human action and sensemaking – cannot be a predefined concept or a theoretical tool that researcher can classify or know the elements of in advance. Rather, it is something we gain knowledge of through studying what people do and say, how they make their acts go together (i.e. how they repeat, stabilise and form routines etc). Thus, whether or not the acts we study are a routine for the people we study, what the

routine is generated through, is an empirical question, something for the researcher to investigate. Such a study demands that close attention is paid to concrete social processes and what moves them; what people actually “do” (communicate and accomplish) when engaged with consumer objects and how the consumer objects in question impact on these processes (Latour 2005). The approach to “doing” here includes both attention to bodily enactments (what people “do” with their bodies) and verbal sensemaking (what is said and what is “done”/accomplished with these words) (Goodwin 2006; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995). The discussion in the chapter draws on insights from a study that set out to investigate the ways in which clothes influence young people’s identity projects with a scope to reflect upon the practical (and methodological) implications of analysing survey and interview data, on young people and clothing, in coherence with a practice theoretical framework (Storm-Mathisen 2008, 2010).

### Framing the theme

Concern about increased buying pressure among youth is from time to time voiced in the Norwegian public debate. A common claim is that young people are increasingly preoccupied with material things, and that many experience they need to have certain clothes in order to be accepted by their peers (Storm-Mathisen 2006; NOU 2001; Brusdal 1999). Concerns are also voiced about the look and price of the clothes that young people have and want, as well as how their preoccupation with clothes can be an expression of or influence on their identity formation.

The empirical study discussed in the present chapter presents, in the light of such debates, interesting findings. The survey showed that most young people said they were interested in clothes, but a far higher percentage answered that it was important to have comfortable and practical clothes than expensive branded clothes. In the interviews with young people however, brands and fashion were generally a more frequently discussed topic, and only a few talked about comfortable clothes. There was also a clear disparity between what people said about clothes in the questionnaire and what they said in the interviews. What people said within the individual interviews also varied. The same person could claim, for instance, that it was both important and unimportant for them to have branded clothes with a high status in peer culture, or that they were both interested and uninterested in the clothes they themselves and others had.

Finding such inconsistencies in what young people say about clothes is not peculiar to this study (Wærdahl 2003; Lynne 2000; Arnesen 2000). They have been interpreted in a variety of ways (e.g. as expressions of ‘post-modern’ dilemmas, double motivations, ambivalence or paradoxes among the respondents, or a problem related to methodological weaknesses in the survey), but have rarely been given special attention. There is hence a need to generate knowledge of what such inconsistencies consist of, how they arise and what could explain them.

### Research claims about clothing consumption and identity

The consumption of clothing (such as buying, dressing, speaking, handling and discarding clothing) is, in Western society, taken for granted as an everyday activity. The acts of choosing, wearing and speaking about clothing are ‘moments of consumption’ (Warde 2005) with meanings that are woven into complex bundles of the on-going social processes and practices they are parts of (Helle-Valle 2003). The consumption of clothing is done by everybody, but not all people do it, or make sense of it, in the same way. The research literature argues that clothes have a special role as identity-forming resource and a category of consumer goods with especially heavy identity-related symbolic value in modern society (Davis 1992; Willis 1990; McCracken 1988; Douglas and Isherwood 1978; Goffman 1959). Clothing is also found to be one of the consumer areas most strongly connected to young people and the distinctive youth-cultural forms of expression (Brusdal 2001, 1996). Young people are seen as young “not only because they have a certain age, but because they follow certain styles of consumption” (Melucci 1992: 65). Theories and analyses of clothes have focused on the clothes system, fashion and the clothes’ function for morals, social order and identity with a macro-social and theoretical character (Corrigan 1993). Clothes theories have tended to concentrate on how clothes reinforce belonging and distinctiveness, drawing on a sociological, structure-oriented identity concept which implicitly operates with an idea that people dress for *one* relatively stable identity project (see e.g. Craik 1994; Jacobson 1994; Dittmar 1992; Finkelstein 1991). The question of how contemporary people make sense of clothing – how they speak, use and understand clothes in processes of identity formation; that is, the dynamics between the individual and the cultural – is at present less studied and enlightened (Frønes 1994, Storm-Mathisen 2008). To approach such an investigation, a processual identity concept must be elaborated.

Identity is a concept with roots in the Latin “idem”, which means the same, similarity or continuity, and in the Latin “individualis”, Middle English “individual” , which means indivisible, unique (Williams 1976). A common everyday understanding of identity is that it is the persons’ own answer to the question “Who am I?” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). The content or theme of identity is often specified as social belonging (How am I similar to something or someone?) and individuality (How am I different to and separate as a unit from others in time and space?). The identity concepts which are used in today’s social sciences vary in the extent to which social belonging and individuality are seen as stable or changeable. Hall (1992) describes this as a historical movement from the Enlightenment conception, the sociological conception and finally the postmodern conception of identity. In the Enlightenment, an understanding of the individual arose which was tied to the idea of the Cartesian rational, thinking subject and Locke’s definition of individuals with identity which stayed the same and was continuous with its subject. The sociological conception of identity, which can be linked to Mead’s, Cooley’s and Goffman’s work, emphasises an understanding of identity as structure, a relationship between individual and culture, the internal and the external. The postmodern identity conception, which arose in the wake of the linguistic turn in the social sciences, focuses more on processes and the changeable, fragmentary, multifaceted and ambivalent in our identities. Giddens (1991) points out, for instance, that we cannot assume that identity is a stable *something* which we *are*, but rather that it is *something* which is continuously created by *what we do* in the world we inhabit with others. Identity is, in this conception, shaped through a person’s narratives about himself/herself. Modern Western cultural repertoires about the self require that people maintain a degree of coherence and similarity over time in order to be taken seriously (Barker 2003; Williams 2000). In this context, identity and the formation of identity is much about a person’s “capacity to keep a certain narrative going” (Giddens 1991; 54). Moreover, when the understanding of identity is moved away from a dualistic distinction between external and internal structures to processes where we develop narratives about ourselves in different settings, our understanding of how clothes can affect identity formation must also be moved. The same clothes on the same person can generate different identity-related meanings in different settings. The challenge, then, is how we can study and explain these variations. How do persons achieve a coherent narrative about themselves across such variations? For this we need an analytical tool which can help us analyse identity formation as a process (Storm-Mathisen 2008; Frønes, 2004).

## Analytical framework – a radical practice perspective inspired by the late Wittgenstein

The late-Wittgensteinian practice perspective (Wittgenstein 1968; 1979) gives a fruitful contribution to developing such an analysis (Helle-Valle 1996, 2007, 2010; Storm-Mathisen 2008) as it emphasises that meaning is use and that, in order to understand meaning, we must look at applications within concrete communicative contexts. Wittgenstein uses the term “language game”: “to bring into prominence the fact that speaking of language is part of an activity or of a form of life” (Wittgenstein 1968: § 23). Language game is a useful concept to work with because it invites the researcher to investigate what people who speak (or write) do with words (Goodwin 2006:8), and to tie the meaning associated with people’s actions and plans to the different language games of which they are a part. The application of the late-Wittgensteinian perspective inspires, therefore, investigations into how discursive empirical patterns and inconsistencies (e.g. with respect to how young people use and make sense of clothing) can be understood in the light of what people “do” with words and the contexts they take place in.

The approach is in accordance with other theories of practice (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; Bourdieu 1991/1977; Latour 2005; Butler 1990; Giddens 1976; Garfinkel 1984) in sharing the theoretical conceptualisation of practice as a “nexus of doings and sayings” (Schatzki 1996: 89). However, contrary to the dominant explorations into what practice perspectives can offer consumer research (Halkier and Jensen 2011; Halkier, Katz-Gerro and Martens 2011; Warde 2005; Couldry 2004), the late Wittgensteinian approach departs from a practice concept in the singular, not in the plural. Whereas practice in the plural (*praktiken*) is a more specific concept used about elements that are part of routinised behaviour (Reckwitz 2002: 249; Warde 2005), practice in the singular (*praxis*) designates all of human action (in contrast to theory) (Helle-Valle 2010). The view taken here is that surveys and interviews generate data that make it necessary to depart from a simpler and more concrete understanding of practice than that of routine behaviour. Whether the language acts and non-verbal doings in surveys and interviews are routinised (or portray something routinised) cannot be determined in advance, but is revealed through the investigation of practice in the singular – by looking at what people do verbally and non-verbally.

In order to study what people “do” with their verbal and bodily deeds (language-game) and how it is related to their identities, the processual concept

of identity must be moved from a theoretical, abstract notion or claim to something which can be empirically observed and is possible to document. Identity project or identity work are concepts that point out identity as what we see as a task/plan for our expression of ourselves (Willis 1990). Following Garfinklian conversation analysis (Goodwin 2006; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995), such identity projects are identified by investigating empirically what people orient their actions towards in specific situations. Following this logic, the analysis of clothing consumption must pay attention to how clothes, both as a linguistically focused topic and as a material aspect of situations, are part of people's work of managing a narrative about themselves. With respect to identity, there is a special focus on how the narratives (and how they are told) shape the narrator vis-à-vis the topic they speak about and in the social situation where it takes place. Identified diversities in people's identifications are seen, not as an expression of the specific mix or combination we are as individuals, but as evidence of a practical reality where our identifications happen in process and we do them one at a time (Mouffe 2005: 77).

### **Teens making sense of their clothing: an empirical study**

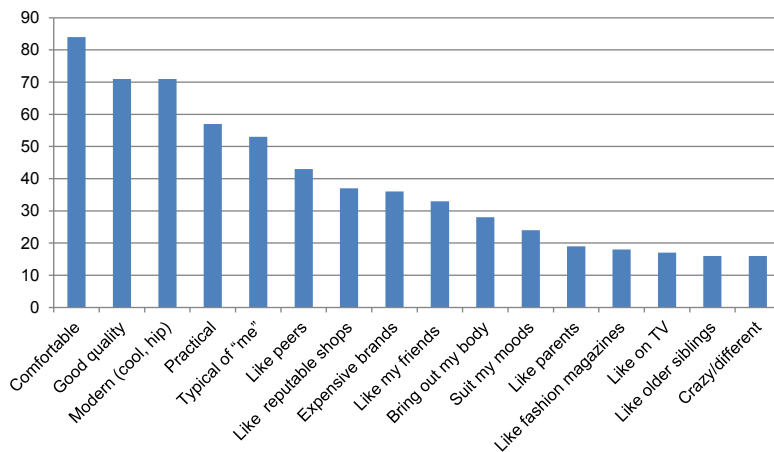
The examples used in the chapter derive from an empirical study where several data sets were generated to investigate in different ways how young teenagers made sense of their clothing (Storm-Mathisen 2008). A survey was conducted among 860 eighth grade Norwegian pupils in their classrooms during school hours. 527 pupils (1999) at eight different schools in Oslo and 333 pupils (2002) at nine different schools in Hedmark County, Norway, responded to the questionnaire. The schools were chosen to form a strategic sample of community variations evenly distributed along an inner/outer city socio-economic (Bakken 1998) and rural/urban axis (Almås and Elden, 1997). A conversational interview study included a total of 43 eighth graders from five different schools, 34 from Oslo and nine from Hedmark. The interviews with the young people were conducted together with a same-sex friends in the core informant's home. The interviews preferably took place in the informant's room behind closed doors, but sometimes also in the living room or in the kitchen with other family members present. A selection of 24 pupils at three of the schools answered the questionnaire, and participated in a conversational interview with a friend and a conversational interview with their parents.



## How young teens make sense of their clothing – comparing data in survey and interview

One of the questions the young people were asked in the survey was: *When you want new clothes, to what degree are the statements below important to you?* There were 16 statements in total, and each emphasised different aspects of clothes. The respondents answered by ticking one of the five given values (*very important, important, neither important nor unimportant, unimportant and very unimportant*). In the table below these clothes aspects are arranged in decreasing order of importance according to the young people's answers.

Figure 1. Clothes aspects



Clothes aspects which 13-year-olds state as being important and very important when they want new clothes, arranged in decreasing order of importance according to the respondents' answers. Percentage. (N=737-770)

An interesting result, in the light of the on-going public debates at the time, was that aspects of comfortable clothes and good quality clothes were rated as important/very important by a larger share of young people than, for instance, that the clothes were modern or from expensive brands. A factor analysis of this suggested, however, that there were variations and that the young people's answers tended to form into four different patterns: "socially recognised clothes" (brands), "individually different clothes", "functional clothes" (comfortable) and "family clothes". The variables which went into these answer patterns are listed in the table below.

Figure 2. Factors for young teenagers' orientation towards clothes

Socially recognised clothes	Individually different clothes	Functional clothes	Family clothes
Modern (cool, hip) Similar to peers Like clothes in reputable shops Expensive brands Like clothes my friends like Bring out my body Like those in fashion magazines Like those I see on TV	Characteristic of "me" Suit my moods A little crazy/different, like those I see on TV	Comfortable to wear Of good quality Practical, suited to the activities I do	Like those my parents like Like those my siblings like
Associated with: young people who went to school in the inner parts of Oslo and expressed high interest in clothes	Associated with: no specific group	Associated with: girls who expressed high interest in clothes	Associated with: boys who went to school in the inner parts of Oslo

Although the survey identified these patterns, and the answer patterns were also activated in what the young people verbally said about themselves in the interviews, these patterns do not in systematic and consistent ways depict how clothes form or formed part of the young people's identity projects. It cannot be said that it will in all cases be more important for a larger share of girls to have an individual style and that boys are more concerned with what their family thinks. There are many examples where young people describe or can be observed to do the opposite. An exploration into how different young people in the same environment characterised the clothes atmosphere in school revealed school-specific differences which made it reasonable to claim that what the survey had identified was a type of local discursive pattern which the young people use around specific themes in a situation where they are engaged in a given identity project. The challenge is that the questionnaire does not provide information that can help us identify what identity project this is, and if the project is consistent. An investigation into what the young teens answered in different parts of the data material further problematised that the young people were consistently engaged in one single identity project.

For instance, when the young people articulated the answers themselves, either in writing in the questionnaire or orally in interviews, the pattern described above emerged almost reversed. They used the word "comfortable" relatively seldom, but referred a lot to different brand names. A close examination of this pointed towards a pattern where the young people used

the category “comfortable” and categories for brands in different ways. The concept of comfortable was used more flexibly and ambiguously and with meanings which were shaped in context-specific ways. The young people talked about bodily comfort in one connection (“this pair of trousers is soft and comfortable”) and about social comfort in another (“I think that it is more comfortable to wear jeans when I am out with others”). The concept of comfortable was also used to give reasons for having branded clothes or fashion items (“I like Diesel sweaters best, because they are so comfortable”). Individual persons could also use the word “comfortable” in varying ways by, for instance, characterising the same item of clothing as both comfortable and uncomfortable.

Categories for brands (especially brands such as Ragazz, Cubus, Miss Sixty and Bik Bok), were used less flexibly than the category “comfortable”. One common characteristic of such use of brand names with both positive and negative connotations was that these categories were given meanings which were more rigidly associated with age, gender and price. The fact that relatively few of the respondents in the questionnaire survey said that it was important to have clothes from expensive brands might be associated with the young people being oriented, when answering, towards a notion that it could easily imply something negative or undesirable about their identity projects if they stated that they were concerned with or liked one or more specific brands. Again, this is something we cannot know when it comes to the questionnaire data. The fact that these young people identified more with brands when they articulated the answers themselves than when they responded to pre-formulated questionnaire alternatives indicates, however, that it is easier to manage possible positive or negative inferences concerning identity matters when one articulates answers oneself than when one must adhere to a given verbalisation.

### **Variations and context specificity in how teens made sense of clothing**

Some of the respondents in the material said that they were concerned about dressing appropriately for the occasion; for example they chose different clothes according to whom they were with and where they were. They had a changeable clothes style and happily changed clothes several times during the day. Others said that they were more concerned with wearing the same clothes, the same style, almost regardless of where they went; one boy said that he always “sagged” his trousers to show his strong identification with his

interest in skating. One girl said that she liked practical clothes and preferred them whether she was going to school, going to the riding centre, with friends or at home. These teenagers seemed to emphasise being continuous in their clothes projects in different ways: some emphasised being consistent with the changeable aspects of their surroundings, while others were concerned with being consistent in their relationship to a specific look.

At the same time, a range of examples appeared showing that what young people say about clothes does not necessarily express consistent meanings in the clothes they talk about or in the person who speaks. The interviews gave a good opportunity to investigate how the young people's opinions about clothes were adapted to the communicative context and the connection in which something was said (language-game). In some cases, concepts were used in variable ways to characterise their relationship to one and the same item of clothing. In other cases, it was also possible to observe how clothes and other elements present in the interview situation became central to the generation of meaning in the dialogue and in the challenges which arose in connection with their management of consistency. In the following, an example is given to illustrate how specific clothes could explicitly form part of the identity project formulated in the interview, and how the radical practice perspective helps us explain the inconsistency in this clothing narrative.

The interview with Håvard took place in his home together with a friend. Prior to the interview his mother had described him as not very interested in clothes, and this information was used as an introduction to the discussion.

I: Håvard ... your mother has stated on the questionnaire that you aren't very into clothes. But can you say something more about it yourself [...]?

Håvard: *We're sitting here in Adidas and Umbro, but...*

I: On you, yes. You do.

Håvard: In my case, it's like my mom buys all my clothes [...]  
When I have so many branded clothes, I sort of don't have to keep nagging about it and be so keen on it. So therefore I'm not very [...] I suppose that if I hadn't had it, then it's, like, I'd end up nagging about it. But now I get so much that I don't need to be very, like, into it [...]

I: But would you say that you're keen on clothes nevertheless?

Håvard: No [...]

I: Or interested in it, or aren't you?

Håvard: I'm not, like, very interested in it, really. It's, like, I go ...  
if I go to a store to buy clothes, I don't look at the label, I look at  
what I think is cool.

The excerpt shows a certain inconsistency in Håvard's description of his own interest in clothes. Håvard answers the question about his interest in clothes by pointing out what he and his friend are wearing – directing the interviewer's attention to the fact that they are sitting there in brand name college sweaters. This can be interpreted as an indirect answer to the question, because the knowledge he demonstrates of brand names indicates a certain interest. At the same time the direct answer is that he does not “have to be very, like, into it”. This causes me, the interviewer, to pause. Pointing out such inconsistencies may create discomfort because we would like people to present themselves as consistent and credible. The next question indicates that this is indeed how the interviewer reacts because she suggests that Håvard and his friend are perhaps nevertheless interested in clothes. But Håvard chooses to uphold the first construction that he proposed – that he is not interested in clothes. Perhaps the clothes that he had on were characteristic of what he usually wore. Perhaps he had chosen them to show that he was knowledgeable about the issue he knew we were going to discuss, that in choosing them his identity project was aimed at communicating that he knew what clothes were cool or uncool among his peers. However, the first theme of the interview (his interest in clothes) directs him towards a completely different project. This project can be described as maintaining his mother's original definition of him to me – i.e. to keep up a continuous narrative about himself that also incorporates her narrative/decoding of him to me. It is not reasonable to assume that the clothes he wore said something more authentic or correct about him than the verbal statement he made in this segment of the interview. Nor is it reasonable to claim that his answers in the survey, where he stated that he was “very interested in clothes” and liked “expensive brands”, provide a more correct and more “real” narrative about who Håvard is. A fruitful approach to understanding the inconsistency that appears in Håvard's self-presentation is instead to see it in the light of the context in which these self-presentations are given. In the interview situation we can see that the inconsistency between the display of knowledge about and ownership of brands and what he said about his interest in clothes becomes meaningful in different communicative contexts, different language games. They can therefore be seen as two equally valid expressions that give meaning to Håvard and who he is in this situation.

He is both a young boy with knowledge about youth-cultural values and his mother's loyal son. What happens in this interview situation is that my question, his elaboration and my subsequent follow up drive him to construct an explanation that connects the material clothes he is wearing to what he said about his own relationship to clothes. He attaches meaning from one context-specific expression about himself to another context-specific expression. By saying that his mom bought his clothes and that he did not have to ask for branded clothes because she bought them for him without him asking for them, he creates a unified and reasonable explanation of the fact that he is wearing branded clothes and at the same time declares that he is not interested in clothes. He does not have to be. This manoeuvre unites two identity projects: on the one hand an identity project about belonging to a peer culture where branded clothes are important, and on the other hand a project about appearing consistent with the narrative generated about himself (by his mother) as uninterested in clothes. Here, the issue of interest in clothes creates a language game where the clothes of the speaker become a situational aspect with a clear influence on the meaning that was generated about Håvard and what he said.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that variations in content in the young people's descriptions and use of terms (about clothes and themselves) were tied to the specific context of use, not to a particular identity project that characterised a particular person or to particular qualities in a specific item of clothing. In looking at all data and informants, a clear pattern that emerged was that certain thematic contexts, for instance "at home" and "peers", generated different formations of meaning. Another pattern was that the interview situation could contribute to joining these different formations of meaning into one language game. This suggests that institutionalised social spaces create expectations about certain types of behaviour. But this is not something a researcher can take for granted. Factors that could change this are easy to imagine. The interviewer may for example not pursue ambiguities in a person's utterances (e.g. because it feels inappropriate or ruthless, or goes unnoticed).

### **Conclusion: Making sense of clothing – making sense of identity**

The empirical material discussed in this chapter has shown that there can be great variations within answers from the same person in relation to how they make sense of their consumption (context dependent – inconsistent).

Those same people may at the same time repeatedly emphasise that they are unique and have something constant about them with respect to consumption (context independent – consistent) over time. This is neither a paradoxical nor a contradictory pattern, but a pattern that provides a picture of how people's real world practices actually *manifest themselves*. The fact that the real world is complex gives us methodological and interpretative challenges. It requires us to apply methodologies and analytical approaches that can grasp aspects of this complexity without simultaneously claiming that we understand everything. The chapter has sought to show how the late-Wittgensteinian practice perspective (the concept of language games) as well as the combination of methodologies can be useful in identifying and approaching these challenges. It is valuable in itself to combine different types of data in the analyses, but it requires us to specify how empirical data are linked to the processes we try to grasp as well as to theoretical claims (Irwin 2009: 1124). The late-Wittgensteinian perspective reminds us that all utterance data, whether generated through surveys or interviews, have context-specific meanings. One methodological implication of this is that all survey data and interview data should in principle be treated as discursive (non-objective) data and as context-specific utterances. In practice, this principle may be more important in the treatment of some themes than others. This study shows that it is particularly important when dealing with utterance data that are tied to people's identities – their statements about who they are (see also Storm-Mathisen 2008). The possibilities of making context-specific interpretations require good qualitative data and are limited for quantitative data. However, this should not stop social researchers from using quantitative data, but it must inform our attempts to draw conclusions from them. As previously shown, quantitative data can provide an important contribution to identifying *that* there are variations and patterns, but they do not help us to understand why they occur. It is only when these data are read together with solid qualitative data from the same field that we can study and explain why variations are connected to contexts and gain insights into the complexity in which identity formation is interwoven. As for the question of how ways of consuming can form part of or function in young people's identity projects, an example was presented to illustrate the different roles uses of clothes can play in different contexts – and thereby also in the relevant identity projects. It was argued that certain thematic and situational aspects of the context generated different formations of meaning around the clothes. Since situations never are completely identical, we cannot say that it will always be like this. The general

claim of this chapter is therefore that we can study clothes, and consumption of clothing, as elements in identity projects in different concrete, practical situations. What we do then is to study context-specific identity work. What we cannot do is to assume that a context-specific type of identity work (for instance that which led Håvard to claim disinterest in clothes) is relevant in any other context. Thus we cannot know a priori how consistent the identity work is. Future studies should develop analytical tools and approaches that can provide greater insight into these processes.

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## Children as competent co-researchers. Exploring potentials and complications

Sandra Hillén

Participatory research includes a number of different approaches. In this chapter, I discuss the potentials and complications of involving eleven-year-old schoolchildren as co-researchers of food consumption. I include “co-” in the word “co-research” to emphasize that the children are more than participants; they are also co-creators of the research process. Moreover, I focus on the similarities of two diverse fields: childhood research and consumer research.

The central question is that of competence. I examine whether the competent child is a theoretical concept that enriches the analysis of children as co-researchers or if it is a pitfall. I also raise the question of what a competent child is. Is it a child that is a good researcher according to the adult world, or is it a child that makes something unexpected out of the research situation?

The examples are taken from my PhD study about children’s research on food, in which children from two different schools participated. The first school is situated outside Gothenburg, and the second school near the city centre. The schools were chosen based on two criteria: the first was that they should vary in terms of their environments (a smaller community vis-à-vis inner city) and in the range of places where food can be bought or eaten. The second criterion was that the children’s socioeconomic situation should not be too diverged; both schools are fairly homogenous in terms of middle class or upper middle class conditions.

To make them more appealing, the meetings were designed as food research clubs, using the concept of research clubs as a way to gather children and conduct research under fun, yet serious, circumstances (cf. Kellett 2011). I wanted membership to be exclusive but voluntarily. A total of 14 children participated as co-researchers. In the first school, two groups of four children from two classes attended the food research club. In the second school, six children from the same class participated in our meetings, divided into two groups of three. Some of their fieldwork was carried out single-handedly or in pairs. In both schools, boys worked with boys and girls worked with girls. In the first school this was because the groups from each class consisted of only boys or only girls, but in the second school this was the children's own choice. The children's fieldwork was mainly carried out during school hours, with some exceptions. My role was to act as mentor for the children in their research, rather than as a teacher. In this chapter, I discuss situations and events in which children's different competences are illustrated.

### **A developing field**

The field of involving children in research is expanding and changing. The intention to involve children can be understood on the basis of children's rights and their opportunities to influence matters that affect their everyday lives, as established in the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, and a changed view of what a child is, from being considered as "becomings" on the way to adulthood and in need of care and, to "beings", as citizens in their own right (James & Prout 1990; Qvortrup 1987). Children today are, to some extent, viewed in another way (Johansson 2012; Lee 2001). They are connected to a "different" competence compared to adults, not "lesser" (Christensen & Prout 2002; Kellett 2010:8; Kellett 2011:207).

Research where children are involved in the process has been criticized for overlooking the fact that children may lack competence in several areas. The response to this critique is that children may have less experience, but that everyone needs to learn new skills, be they children or adults (Alderson 2000; Mayall 2002). This corresponds well with Nick Lee's concept of an "immature sociology", which could nuance the notion of competence. We are all "becomings"; none of us is a complete "being", neither child nor adult (Lee 2001). Nick Lee argues that the idea of the competent child fitted the purposes of childhood-centred sociology, and made children worth studying,

when it connected children to essential reflexive and active agency (Lee 2009:61), but today it is possible to look beyond that point. The “immature sociology” can be a way out of this dichotomy of competent/incompetent, adult/child etcetera.

I am not the first to involve children as co-researchers; there are many good examples of this (cf. Hart 1997; Kellett et al. 2004, Johansson, this volume). The field of children’s involvement in research includes children both as participants in research and as co-researchers. When children are participants they contribute to the compilation of materials, but they have no real power to steer the direction of the research. When they are involved as co-researchers they “learn” how to do research and they influence the course of events.

In my research, children are in some way making sense of food consumption. Two different fields meet each other: children and consumption, and childhood research. They are both small but, hopefully, expanding (cf. Buckingham 2011; Cook 2008). The fields have a lot in common regarding their theoretical framework, especially when it comes to thoughts about competence. In both fields, children are regarded either as competent beings in their own right, or as vulnerable victims, in need of protection. Another similarity is that children are seen as learning to become consumers and becoming adults (Buckingham 2011:46-49), while adults are learning to be consumers – a lifelong process (Ekström 2006). This corresponds well with the “immature sociology” of Nick Lee (2001).

### The competent child

By regarding children as competent researchers (Kellett 2010; Kellett 2011) and as rational consumers (Buckingham 2011), rather than just objects in need of adult care and provision (James, Jenks & Prout 1998/2002), a number of questions arise. What effects will research carried out from a “competent child” perspective have? What practical complications might occur when trying to “offer” children power over the research process? The idea of the competent child is problematic, especially when it becomes a “black box”, and is left unquestioned (Brembeck, Johansson & Kampmann 2004). What kind of competence do we mean when we talk about the competent child? Could it be the case that competent means a number of things?

An aspect of the range of competences children share is their knowledge of what it is like to be young, less experienced and smaller than adults. This is

connected to the hierarchical order where adults are considered to be above children in a variety of different dimensions; psychological, economical and juridical, for instance (Alanen 1992; Qvortrup 1994). In my research I see their experience of being children as a competence; they are the experts on this matter (Kellett 2011:207). On the other hand, children's ability to conduct research is not about their age, it is their learned skills to do this that determines whether it works or not. Neither adults nor children can do research if they do not learn how to do this (Kellett et al. 2004:332; Kellett 2011:207, 208).

According to Mike Featherstone, "playful" is a key concept for understanding the postmodern individual, mainly as a consumer (Featherstone 1991:84), but I believe that the concept also might be useful in order to understand the child as a consumer researcher. Playfulness, in Featherstone's sense, is a concept that describes *why* people engage in consumption, education or leisure activities that are not necessary for them, and points out that people can be driven by playful objectives (ibid). The notion of playfulness, in this case, can be used to understand the momentum that enables children to become co-researchers, and why they decide to participate in this kind of research.

### Co-research as a method

Children can participate in research in a number of different ways; they could be asked to solve tasks, do parts of the data collection, come up with ideas for further research etcetera. But to involve them as co-researchers goes beyond that sort of participation; co-research is about including them in the planning of the fieldwork, choosing methods, analyzing the collected data and presenting the results. The most vital part is the collaboration and dialogue that occurs within the group, which is where the "co-" in co-research occurs (Hillén 2011). The co-research itself, and the dialogue preceding the research, reveals children's thoughts and reflections about food and food consumption that are hard to capture with other methods.

Caitlin Cahill points out children's diverse abilities, where some are more visual and some are more verbal. By being sensitive to what children are good at or prefer, their skills are utilized to the benefit of the study and the possibility of some children feeling excluded or uncomfortable is avoided (Cahill 2007:305). Ethical symmetry is based on similarities and differences being managed, and one possible way to make the most of them is to adjust the methods accordingly (Christensen & Prout 2002). Another way to benefit



from some children's abilities can be the use of creative methods. Storytelling, poetry writing, role playing, drawing or painting are some artistic ways of doing this. Uses of technical equipment such as cameras or video cameras are other examples that are suitable for children (Clark & Moss 2001; Johansson et al. 2009:28-30). In my own work, I found that children in general are mostly interested in doing research the "proper adult way", such as doing interviews, counting, measuring, performing tests etc.

The use of the word "co-research" in this chapter implies that the children are included in the design of the research process, but they are not researchers in their own right. They are informed, guided and supported by a supervising adult researcher (cf. Brembeck et al. 2010; Clark and Moss 2001). There is a distinction between children as co-researchers and children as researchers in their own right, and the distinction is mainly about adults managing or supporting their research (Kellett 2010:105; Kellett 2011). Even though this case is about adult-initiated and adult-directed research, this kind of approach still qualify as participatory child research, because of the high degree of influence the children have on the actual outcome and the fact that they are fully informed regarding the purpose of the research. They are not manipulated, nor are they there as decoration or to be displayed (cf. Hart 1997).

### Co-research in progress

The objectives of the study were both to involve the children as co-researchers in authentic research and to explore how to involve children in research. The children are thus both co-researchers and the researched. The core of the process has been our weekly dialogue-based meetings, where ideas could be aired, the fieldwork planned and the material analyzed. The children's questions included issues such as nutrition, environment, consumption and taste. In their fieldwork they used various methods suited to their needs and their research questions, for instance surveys and field observations. They participated in the analysis of the collected material, but the writing-up phase has varied in the different groups. One group's research resulted in lessons for their own class, as well as for other classes. In the lessons they used their own research, and made up tasks for the other children to solve. They also re-used surveys with questions that they had previously asked adults. Another group's research about their school meals resulted in a school paper that was handed out to the children in the third, fourth and fifth grades in their school. Yet another group presented their research both in their school and for other researchers at the university where I work.

The research has been the searching kind, and about letting the children take the lead. This seeking kind of research is not unique, but makes it hard to plan the methodological and theoretical approach in advance, and is similar to the methods of grounded theory. Instead of doing the research from a previously decided theoretical framework, you let the research lead you to the suitable theories (Dellve 2002). I, or maybe I should say the children, have used a variety of methods appropriate for the research questions. When using multiple methods, one has to think about what each method can contribute to the research question and how it fits into the puzzle that you are completing (Mason 1996/2002:79). The multiple methods used are also related to the mosaic approach, which emphasize that many different methods in the same study may be appropriate, and that a variety of materials can provide a more consistent picture of children's reality (Clark & Moss 2001), or as in this case, to explore the method of involving children as co-researchers.

### **Fieldwork encounters**

I have described the field of involving children in research, and how the idea of the competent child can be used as a concept of understanding the process. I have also given a brief description of the conditions for co-research in this particular study. Now I will give some short examples from the fieldwork to illustrate the practical aspects of working with children as researchers. All names are fictitious. There are many aspects to relate to in the situations that occur, such as dealing with conflicts between the participating children, as well as handling the children's expertise, skills and analytical abilities that come into focus in the research process. Another dilemma is to be positioned as an adult/teacher.

The participating children decided what they would do research on and how. My role was to lead discussions, plan the meetings and act as a mentor. I helped them with all the practical issues for the research, and made sure that the technical equipment and other things they needed was in place. Our altered roles made it possible for the participants to take control of the research process. The power could be redistributed among us, according to what was suitable. It became apparent that the children understood and took advantage of that opportunity. They expressed their displeasure when they found the tasks boring, and they did not do things if they didn't feel like it, while they were very enthusiastic about other tasks.

The fact that the study were situated inside the school walls, and was carried out during school hours, had an influence on the expectations on competence as well. The Swedish school system is built on traditional norms of children as pupils and adults as teachers, but it also emphasizes the pupils' abilities to find information on their own, in books and on the internet. The children are encouraged to do "research", even though it is primarily a question of collecting existing information rather than finding new knowledge. Although the quality of this "research" can be questioned, with more focus on quantifying than analyzing, they are familiar with this sort of work and they have the competence to find out answers to their questions, even though they find it harder to process the collected information.

In some cases, the problem with being one single adult researcher became very apparent, and in the following example I had to ask for help from their teacher because I was accompanying another child to the local food store, and didn't have time to grasp the situation. This example also shows how some children with a dominant role in their group can be very upset when their position is questioned:

*Elise was sitting by a computer in the classroom and had begun making a PowerPoint presentation, but the others wanted to sit in another room. Elise became irritated, but followed them reluctantly. When we were going out she rushed past us down to the lower floor. When we passed her she was standing in the corner of the cloakroom and the teacher was talking to her. (From field notes 2011-11-24)*

I didn't know quite what the conflict was about; if Elise wasn't allowed to decide or if the others were making decisions without her. The group of girls in this example was very excited about the research, and the conflict was eventually resolved. In other situations, the girl that took on the role of leader really pushed the group forward, but at the same time there were a lot of conflicts in the group that interfered with both their research and our meetings. Furthermore, this affected the other research group, which also took part in our meetings.

One of the boys was not as motivated as the others, and I quickly noticed that I attempted to get him to stay in the food research club, but my patience was not always enough to keep him enthusiastic. The other boys also took it on themselves to reprimand him when it got too chaotic, as the following passage from my field notes shows. In this situation we are looking up information

on the internet about a dish that is served in the school restaurant, spaghetti Bolognese. Ivar is not concentrating on the task they have set for themselves, and is constantly telling jokes; this both amuses and disturbs the other children:

*Jacob tells Ivar to stop, and that he is being difficult. Ivar looks at the list of content and asks what B6 is, is it child sex ("barnsex" in Swedish)? "It is not, Ivar", Jacob says and sounds pretty harsh. It is clear that he assumes the role of keeping track of him. Ivar goes on saying: "Can't they have drugs in (the food), so that everybody falls asleep?" I say that one learns that it is both durum wheat and wheat flour in spaghetti. (From field notes 2009-11-17)*

Ivar behaves in a way that is both careless and provoking, and he is challenging the norms of what it is OK for a child to joke about. He is also challenging my authority as an adult. Another child steps in and shows the boundaries for proper behaviour in this situation, and I choose not to say anything at all, instead I continue to talk about our findings about spaghetti on the website.

Some of the children have shown good technical skills, and most of them learn to use quite complicated programs like PowerPoint quickly. The following example shows how one of the boys takes on the role of an expert:

*The boys seem to agree that they will do a PowerPoint presentation. Tage is the initiator, and he wants to demonstrate. He seems skilled and shows the others what features are available, how to get the slides to come in from the side, how to make them dissolve and then materialize again etc. (From field notes 2011-10-27)*

Managing the technology seemed unproblematic for them; however, some of them found it harder to understand the results, and how one can draw conclusions from them. So, achieving technical competence can be easier than gripping abstract problems, like managing and analyzing collected material. It may be stated that this is because of the status of their psychological development at this age (James, Jenks & Prout 1998/2002:17-19), but it may also be claimed that this relates to their not-yet-learned abilities to process and analyze information, and that they just need training, like grown-up researchers do (Kellett 2011:207-208).

It was also interesting to see how the children alternated between what are generally seen as adult roles and positions that are normally associated with children. For instance, they sent questions by e-mail and conducted surveys with adults. The researcher's role that is traditionally associated with adults,

however, was not always comfortable. During our meetings, the children revealed that they did not take the adult's attention and respect for granted, and I witnessed some disrespectful responses to the children's questions out in the field.

In the next section I will give some examples of the different roles that appeared in the research and sketch out a possible idea of how this is connected to children's competence.

### Different roles emerging

The children who participated in the research took on different roles, and five types became apparent among the children.

- The first is the “old fashioned” child, a child that is interested in research, acts out the traditional scientist role and talks and acts in a more adult-like way.
- The second is the Dionysian child that prefers play to work (cf. Jenks 2005, Smith 2011), and whose behaviour forces the adult researcher to take on a teacher role and makes the other children lecture him/her.
- The third role is the dominant child that bosses the other children around and tells them what to do, when, how, where and with whom.
- The fourth is the conventional child that goes with the flow and works hard, but does not deliver the most visionary ideas or lead the group.
- The fifth type takes on the role of an expert, and shares her/his expertise with the others in the group, for example knowledge about food or their technical skills.

It is important to point out that the roles are temporary, and not always connected to one particular child. Even though the children go in and out of these roles, some of them are more permanent and linked to the dynamics of the group. Despite the fact that I tried to ensure that everyone should have equal influence and be equally involved in the conversation during our meetings in the food research clubs, this was not always the case. It became clear quite early on which children took on the leadership roles in the different groups. The dominant child is not always the one that pushes the group forward in a constructive way, as indicated in the example with the girls' quarrel when they did PowerPoint presentations, where Elise gets upset when the other girls take charge, and causes a scene.

It also became apparent that some of the children always adopted a conventional role and that a few always acted in a careless, childlike manner and were put in their place by other members of the group, forcing me into a teacher's role, or an adult-in-charge (cf. Johansson 2012). The example where the children looked up information on the internet highlights how one child steps into the role of the Dionysian child; he is crossing boundaries and jokes about sex (cf. Jenks 2005). He is disturbing rest of the group, makes other children step in to reprimand him and thereby changes the power relations within the group.

By thinking of the children's research as a kind of performance, the diversity of their competences comes into view more clearly. A performative act that embraces their play with age and professional roles can, for instance, be a child that acts out the traditional scientist role, or the "old fashioned" child that talks and behaves in a non-childlike manner.

In one group, two of the boys took turns at being leaders and experts, and they both behaved in a non-childlike manner. They mutually contributed with their knowledge and they motivated the other participators. In another group, one of the more "old fashioned" boys preferred to do his own study, but shared his expertise with the others.

The "old-fashioned" child could very well be the leader or take on a conventional role, depending on the situation and the composition of the group, and the expert and the "old fashioned" child were often the same child, as shown in the example with the boys producing PowerPoint presentations. Playfulness could be seen as a common competence that all the children adopted and made use of from time to time.

### **A diversity of competences**

In my research, I found out that children are capable of acting out a number of different competences, but these competences are not always the same as "adult" competences. To be a child, for instance, is a competence that you cannot re-learn; once you grow up it is lost (Kellett 2011:207). This competence represents several abilities like playfulness (Featherstone 1991), curiosity, creativity and the will to learn new things, as well as sassiness and courage (cf. Shaw 2010:108), but also shyness and rudeness. I want to point out that this competence should not be divided into good and bad abilities, it is rather a question of how these competences could be assets in this particular case; co-research. I am not saying that every child has these abilities, or that

everyone outgrows them, but being a child is associated with learning and playing, and therefore it is somewhat easier to incorporate more creative and playful elements into children's research than if the co-researchers are adults (Clark & Moss 2001). Another aspect is that different children bring different competences to the group, and identifying and validating those different capacities could be of great value to the project (Cahill 2007:305).

On the other hand, I could see in my research that children have a preset picture of what research is, and this picture is not entirely creative and eclectic. Instead, they have a very quantitative approach; research according to them is about measuring things, completing questionnaires and testing things (cf. Brembeck et al. 2010:35). It is hard to tell whether this is dependent on the view of what "research" is that is taught in school, where more effort is put into quantification than training analytic skills, or if it is connected to children's development and their inability to think in a more abstract and analytical manner. It could also be a case of performance; they are "playing" researchers, and in this game they incorporate the roles and tools they are familiar with: the researcher in a laboratory or out asking questions to find out the "truth" about something. To see children's research as a form of performance, where they are "playing" researchers, might be provoking, but in a sense we are all acting out different roles (cf. Butler 1990; Peterson 2003:12). This performance may very well be about children's ages and their views of professional skills. It may also be connected to the fact that 11-year-olds are in an intermediate position; they are not yet teenagers, but are not small children either. In many ways they have abandoned the position of a playful, spontaneous child for a more adult, reflexive attitude towards themselves.

### **Implications, potentials and complications**

So, what do these implications mean for a researcher that wants to involve children as co-researchers? I have suggested a variety of notions of what a competent child is. At the beginning of this chapter I asked the question of whether a competent child is a child that is a good researcher according to the adult world, or a child that makes something unexpected out of the research situation. The children's research interests, their methods and what sort of conclusions they draw from the results are influenced by their experiences of being a certain age, and the skills and maturity that come with this age (Kellett 2011). As a researcher working with children as co-researchers, this is something that should be regarded as positive, instead of resisted. A trouble-

some child can also be a competent child. Questions, views and ways of approaching the field can be innovative and enlightening, as well as uninteresting and traditional. Even among researchers, a childlike approach can be appropriate; asking naive questions can give unforeseen answers and make people put events and feelings into words.

Competence could be seen as something that is constructed in the minds of adults, in the same way as childhood can be seen as socially and historically contextualized, and something that children have to adapt to (cf. James, Jenks & Prout 1998/2002). This is linked to children's position in society, where adults have a greater influence over what kind of rules and values society should be built upon (Alanen 1992; James & Prout 1990). One of the major complications that a researcher of children's co-research may face is that the study hardly ever evolves in the predicted direction. The reality may very well collide with research designs, aims and time planning. The inner vision of children as creative, happy beings that the researcher might have can easily be crushed by children that are obnoxious, loud or jokers, or children who simply cannot think outside the box. This is just as it should be; if competence is considered to be something multidimensional, all these unforeseen situations can be valuable. If playfulness is encouraged instead of controlled, the adult researcher can avoid manipulation and enable the children to be co-creators of the research process.

### Concluding comment

In this chapter I have shown that eleven-year-old children are capable of being involved in and doing research, but the way they carry out their research may vary from the way adult researchers might have done it. In the process of making sense of consumption, their competence pulls in a number of directions. It is possible that one competence can be an asset in one situation, and an obstacle in another. I consider playfulness, in Featherstone's sense (1991), as one of their main motivations to participate in this kind of project, as it includes the children's desire to test their skills and abilities and to gain new knowledge. Playfulness can, on the other hand, be a problem if it is acted out to test boundaries, or to disturb the others in the group, as when performed in a Dionysian or dominant way. If it is used in a creative way, or becomes a driving force that pushes the research in one direction or another, it can be a real advantage.



I have also suggested that when children take on the role of researchers it can be seen as a type of performance, when performance, in my notion, embraces all the different competences that were revealed in my research. I have used the concept “immature sociology” to stress that we are all learning new skills, and that we are forced to adapt to new situations, whether our age is eleven or forty (cf. Lee 2009). The different types of children’s competences appearing in my fieldwork do not differ that much from adults taking on a new task, or adults handling a situation that is new to them. Competence does mean a number of things, and as a theoretical concept it does enhance the analysis of children as co-researchers, if used with awareness, and from an “immature sociology” perspective.

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## Meatballs with ice-cream: Foodscapes in children's drawings

Barbro Johansson

This chapter is an attempt to approach children's foodscapes through the concepts of smooth and striated spaces (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) as well as the concept of becoming as it is used by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Stuart Aitken and Nick Lee. Striated spaces are structured and defined, and leave little room for alternative actions and definitions, while smooth spaces are floating and undefined, open to several possibilities (Aitken 2008; Brembeck and Johansson 2010; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). It is important to note that nothing is solely either smooth or striated; instead, smooth and striated spaces are in a process of continuous interchange: 'smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into striated space: striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:479).

In food contexts, children encounter more or less striated spaces, where various ways of becoming are performed. Established routines of what makes up a proper breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as routines concerning how to behave in relation to food and to other people, frame the everyday meal events in children's lives. On a discursive level, eatables are arranged into structures such as the food pyramid or the plate model, where food is categorized according to its content of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals and where certain things, such as snacks, sweets and soft drinks, are consigned to the margins or totally excluded.

In contrast, weekend meals are often smoother and more flexible, and offer opportunities for children to demonstrate other definitions and performances. In weekend meals, the value of good nutritional composition tends to leave room for social and emotional values, where commensality, cosiness and ease are important and where children's own initiatives concerning activities and food choice are taken into account (Johansson and Ossiansson, 2012a).

The aim of the chapter is to investigate a) how different kinds of foodscapes emerge in a specific type of research situation with children; b) what these foodscapes do to the included elements as well as to the children; and c) what this process could add to our knowledge about smooth vs. striated spaces in childhood.

### Some concepts

'Becoming' is a central concept in Childhood Studies, and is mainly used in two ways, which I have previously referred to in terms of 'becoming as the opposite of being' and 'becoming as a general condition' (Johansson 2012). Becoming as the opposite of being contrasts 'human beings' to 'human becomings' and is associated with incompleteness, dependence and lack. Researchers within Childhood Studies challenged this view, claiming that children are active, competent beings, influencing their own lives as well as their surroundings (James & Prout 1990; Jenks 1996; Qvortrup 1994).

Becoming as a general condition means that nobody and nothing is complete or finished and that becoming is a trait within everybody and everything (Lee 2001). Researchers who adopt this definition are interested in studying events and movements rather than fixed entities, such as people, institutions or objects (Aitken 2008; Olsson 2009). Inspiration comes from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), who distinguish between 'becoming-the-same' and 'becoming-other'. Becoming-the-same means to establish or 'territorialize' the existing order, while becoming-other means to escape, deterritorialize the order, following lines of flight, claiming other identities than those assigned (Aitken 2008; Olsson 2009; Wenzer 2004).

The generational order in our society is a structural asymmetric power relation between adults and children, where adult definitions of, for example, children and childhood either are kept outside discussion in black boxes or are the target of reconsiderations and exchanges of views between adult experts (Alanen 1992; Qvortrup 1994, 2005). However, '(a) first condition of society is that it is leaking and producing lines of flight in between segments,'

Liselott Mariett Olsson (2009) writes. Stuart Aitken (2008) stresses that it is in material actions that lines of flight emerge and new identities are formed (Aitken 2008). There are plenty of food consumption events in children's lives and they are interesting in a number of ways. They are intersections between foodstuffs, bodies, sense of taste, meaning-making and identity-making, and they offer a multitude of ways of performing becomings.

The concept of *foodscape* emanates from Arjun Appadurai's definition of 'scapes', such as *financescapes*, *technoscapes* and *mediascapes* as fluid, irregular shapes of landscapes (Appadurai 1996:33ff). It has proved to be useful from a number of angles, such as the occupation of retail space by large international food companies (Winson 2004), the formation of a corporate-organic *foodscape* alongside competing counter-movements of food democracy (Johnston, Biro & MacKendrick 2009) an imaginary geography of food, so called 'mental *foodscapes*' (Bildtgård 2009), and institutional *foodscapes* (Weinreich Hansen and Kristensen, this volume). In his book *Foodscapes*, Rick Dolphijn (2004) discusses how *foodscapes* came into being during the discussions between him and his informants. In Dutch, as well as in Swedish, 'create' and 'scape' are the same words (Sw: 'skapa' and 'skap'). *Foodscape* connotes the organization of a life according to food and it can be done in one's eating, talking, drawing and playing, and in many other ways. *Foodscapes* are, according to Dolphijn, to be seen as processes where food and people mutually compose each other in a constant process of change, where food affects and is affected (Dolphijn 2004:8). Brembeck et al. (2013) use Dolphijn to discuss how certain kinds of *foodscapes* – e.g. a *tastescape*, a *scape* of routines, a *scape* of social relations and a *thingscape* – came into being in a project where children carried out research on their own food environments. This chapter is also a way of responding to the invitation from Dolphijn to approach the concept by paying attention to the becoming aspect of our lives with food.

Lines of flight occur in moments 'where something new and different may happen, something that increases all participants' capacity to act and create interesting connections and features' (Olsson 2009:62). It is these lines of flight, the zig-zag cracks that cut through established segments, and create something new, that are of interest in Deleuze's and Guattari's philosophy, as well as in this chapter. In the various food events that children take part in, lines of flight might include new ways of making sense of food consumption. There are always leakages, always interplay between smooth and striated, where new affective connections are made possible. Children position them-

selves in some way in the foodscapes that adults provide, reshaping them according to the norms and practices of the actual situation (Brembeck and Johansson 2010; Curtis et al. 2010; Ludvigsen and Scott 2009; Marshall et al. 2007). Sometimes new alimentary events (Dolphijn 2004) occur, situations that have not existed before. An example is when my 18-month-old grandson found a box of apples on the stairs outside our house. He was already used to consuming peeled apples cut into pieces and this was the first time he took on the task of eating a whole apple by himself, something that he solved by eating right through the apple, spitting out peel and pips along the way. Research can be another way of arranging new alimentary events.

## Method

In a project on families, food and health, carried out at the University of Gothenburg's Centre for Consumer Science, my colleague Eva Ossiansson and I conducted qualitative studies with children and parents in twelve Swedish families. The aim of the project was to get a rich and nuanced image of children's and parents' attitudes and habits concerning food and health. The families came from two residential areas in a municipality near Gothenburg with different socioeconomic statuses. They all took part in the large-scale European study IDEFICS, aiming at investigating diet, social determinants and lifestyle factors of children and at developing new approaches to a healthier diet and physical fitness of children in Europe ([www.idefics.eu](http://www.idefics.eu)). The families were chosen at random, but in a way that aimed to achieve equal gender distribution of children. Fifteen children – nine girls and six boys – aged between five and nine, took part. Both researchers visited each family in their homes three times over a period of seventeen months. We used several methods in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the families' foodscapes. The idea was that methods drawing on sources other than spoken language give other information, not least when small children are targeted.

During most visits, one researcher interviewed one or both parents and one researcher interviewed the child. (In some cases two siblings took part.) The children were between five and nine years old. The families were asked to take photos when they were having meals, cooking, storing food and shopping, and the parents were asked to save their receipts when buying food. We asked the children to make collages of foods they either liked or disliked, and to draw freely in relation to food in one way or another. The project thus generated knowledge on a number of aspects of family life in relation



to food and health: food choice, time constraints, negotiations, economic aspects, everyday organization etc. – issues that we have addressed elsewhere (Johansson and Ossiansson 2012 a, b; Johansson et al., 2013). In this paper I will, in contrast to the previous articles, turn exclusively to the children and take a close look at one specific subject, namely the foodscapes of the children as they emerged in the drawing activities. It was on the third occasion that the children were asked to produce a drawing related to food, and 13 children produced such drawings. The children in the chapter have been given pseudonyms.

### Drawing foodscapes

When introducing the drawing activity, we asked the children to think of places and situations where food was involved in one way or another. We tried to be as open as possible, not giving suggestions or revealing any expectations. The research situation thus offered the children a comparably smooth space for performing their foodscapes. We did not serve any food; instead we served paper and crayons, and invited them to ‘striate’ the space in their own ways. The processes of striation took various directions, and the children striated their foodscapes in different ways and to different degrees. In the drawings certain logics appeared, not necessarily aiming at assembling products for a meal, but rather assembling items for a moment of pleasure and imagination. Several children chose to draw various eatables, usually primary products, where food appeared singularly; one apple, one hamburger etc., and not as meals including dishes, plates and cutlery, people and commensality. Some children drew their favourites that are not normally combined in the same meal, such as ice-cream, cake, noodles and meatballs. In these pictures every product stands by itself, in a free-floating universe, not yet defined as for instance ‘main dish’, ‘side dish’ or ‘dessert’, or as ‘healthy’ or ‘unhealthy’.

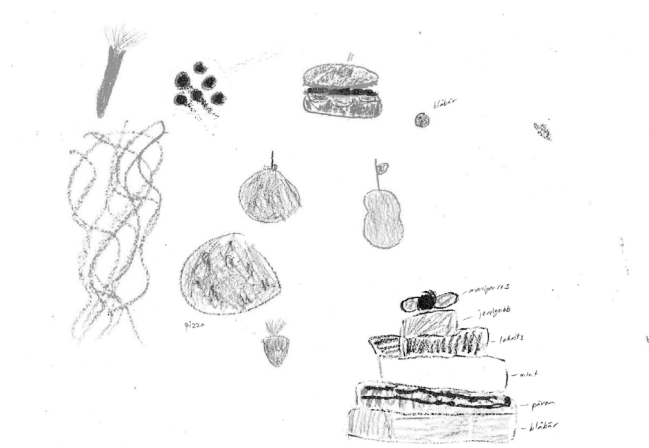
There were certainly various reasons for children to draw the way they did, some of which were not stated or even reflected on. Sometimes the discussions we had before they started to draw, concerning places where they came into contact with food, gave inspiration for choosing a specific subject. Other reasons for drawing the way they did might have been a preunderstanding of how to draw eatables, or they might have simply chosen things that were easy to draw. Sometimes the children commented on the drawing and the equipment in a way that explained their choice of subject and drawing style. In this chapter, I am not trying to capture a general truth

of children's meaning-making of their food consumption. My ambition is to study the very foodscapes that emerged in these particular events with these particular elements, and thereby hopefully stretch the limits of the understanding of the meanings of food and eating in childhood.

Some drawings assembled units in foodscapes striated according to the very act of drawing. One boy wanted to draw his favourite food and drew sushi instead of tacos because it was easier, since he could start by drawing the box in which the sushi lies. Some children were so enthusiastic about the glittery crayons that the main purpose became to try these colours out in various forms. A girl composed a foodscape where eatables such as a bun, an apple and a plate with spaghetti and minced meat sauce shared the space with heart-decorated curtains, a colourful rug and a portrait of herself in a beautiful dress, creating a territory of enjoyment and luxury as well as being a performance of traditional 'girlishness'. Abundance was a common theme in the drawings, which often seemed to assemble all the favourites of a child. One girl composed a scene in the countryside with a happy girl on a picnic, bringing buns and bananas, and surrounded by bushes with blueberries, lingonberries and blackberries as well as an apple tree. Other drawings were arranged according to norms of 'good' and 'bad'. In the introduction to the activity, when a boy was asked about his associations with food and eating, he mentioned 'healthy food' and that 'you should not guzzle down'.

Adopting the view that foodscapes emerge as you move around to where food and eating is (Dolphijn 2004) means opening up to various performances. The relative freedom of creating foodscapes of their own choosing offered the children a number of possibilities of becoming-other as well as becoming-the-same, focussing for example on enjoyment and luxury or the moral order of food and eating. The freedom, however, does not only relate to the children themselves, but also to the eatables, dishes and ingredients that were reproduced on the sheets of paper. In many cases the drawings offered lines of flight also for these non-human actors.

## Assembling good tastes



Picture 1. Julia, 6 years, has created a foodscape composed of singular food items as well as a cake with many layers and flavours. (The text in the picture was written by the researcher as Julia explained the picture.)

In the picture above, Julia, a girl of 6, has drawn a carrot, spaghetti, meatballs, a hamburger, a blueberry, an apple, a pear, a pizza, a strawberry and a cake. It is an example of what several children did: drawing things they liked – and/or things that were easy to draw – presenting them neatly side by side and not necessarily proportional in size. In that way this is still a smooth foodscape, where the eatables have every opportunity to form new assemblages. Actually, this is what has happened to the cake. The cake consists of several layers with various flavours that the girl described: blueberry, pear, mint, liquorice, strawberry and, at the top, a candy made of marzipan. The cake thus represents a stratification in which some of the singular items have been transformed into components of a unit on a higher level. The blueberry, the pear and the strawberry are no longer single, un-defined elements; they have been enrolled by the cake project and turned into cake ingredients. This transformation from smooth to striated, from floating to fixed, turns limitless entities into a unit that it is possible to relate to, to handle and to use (Olshammar 2009).

Moreover, the cake is a performance of a specific hedonistic moral ascribed to children. Children are seldom trusted with composing their own diets. As ‘human becomings’ in contrast to ‘human beings’, children are positioned as

individuals in need of education, guidance and surveillance (Qvortrup 1994). It is a duty for responsible parents to limit their children's access to sweets and other eatables that are regarded as being unhealthy and for which children at the same time are expected to have an insatiable appetite (Brembeck and Johansson 2010; Brembeck et al., 2013; Ludvigsen and Scott 2009). The Swedish custom of 'Saturday sweets' and the practice of arranging 'sweet showers' for children are just two examples of how children and sweets form an unproblematic assemblage in common thought. As Brembeck and Johansson claim, 'there are age-specific expectations that categorize children as a certain species positioning them as becomings and as fundamentally different from adults' (Brembeck and Johansson 2010:805). However, at the same time as Julia is 'becoming-the-same' by reconstructing the image of the child as a being with an insatiable taste for sweets, the cake, with its six layers, could be seen as a line of flight from adult authority and from a foodscape where adults rule and where tastes are not mixed just anyhow. It is becoming in the meaning of moving away from a rigid territory of major adult dietetics (Dolphijn 2004:63), creating universal norms of what makes up a healthy diet (ibid. Brembeck et al., 2013).

### The ambiguous drink

An 8-year-old boy, Peter, created a scape only loosely connected to food.



Picture 2. Peter, 8 years, drew a bottle including several exciting ingredients and symbols.

His drawing depicts a bottle with the text 'Peter's Special' and some illustrations that he explained to the researcher:

Peter: Peter's Special in a bottle. It's the colours of Barcelona, Sweden, a death's head, a monster...

/.../

Interviewer: Then I'm curious about what's in the bottle.

Peter: Peter's Special that is a mix of vanilla, strawberry... Pepsi... and some alcohol.

Peter's Special brings a third destination for the strawberry. The strawberry thus occurs in three guises – as a unit, mashed in a layer and mixed up in a drink – where it gradually loses its specific shape and finally end up in a mix where it is impossible to distinguish it from the other ingredients. These three guises also belong to three different spaces: a smooth space where the strawberry is free to connect to anything; a space striated in the logic of pleasure; and a space striated by pleasure but also by age and gender. Peter mixes not only ingredients that are not commonly mixed, but also things and symbols belonging to different areas and different ages. The symbols that decorate the bottle, the monster and the death's head, are traditionally assigned to boys, and the same goes for an interest in football. Vanilla, strawberry and Pepsi, tastes that are common in drinks and eatables for children, are mixed with alcohol, that belongs to the adult context. The issue of alcohol was also mentioned in the interview:

Interviewer: Are there differences between how adults and children eat and drink?

Peter: Yes, an adult drinks beer, alcohol, spirits, wine and other stuff.

Interviewer: How do you know, have you seen it? Or do you know it anyhow?

Peter: I've been to restaurants many times; I've seen these big bottles, 'zoom'.

Interviewer: A lot of big bottles, mm. And do you think you will drink when you grow up, too?

Peter: Yes, maybe a little. Not so much so that I get drunk, I really don't think that.

The interviewer brings up the well-known dichotomy between adults and children, confirming the boy's becoming status by asking him about how his habits will change when he grows up. Alcohol is a product exclusively associated with adult consumption and Peter confirms that he assumes that he will consume alcohol, too, when he grows up. 'Peter's Special', however, is not a future artefact, it exists here and now, created by the 9-year-old boy. In a certain way the territory that Peter creates continues to be smooth, difficult to define, difficult to catch. Is it a childish or an adult foodscape? Who is going to drink 'Peter's Special'? Is it even a drink or is it just a bricolage, where inseparable elements are playfully assembled?

### Subversive categorization

Hilda, a girl of 7, used a categorization system and arranged her drawing in four columns: Drinks, Candy, Cosy food, and Food.



Picture 3. Hilda, 7 years, has arranged her foodscape in columns that are relevant to her approach to food, and she thereby challenges an established organization of food based on nutrition and health.

This foodscape is striated according to time and healthiness. The categorization could be said to discipline the eatables, directing each of them to its specific column. This becomes even more apparent since the categorization extends to include the time of the week (Saturday candy, Cozy Friday) and the time of the

year (Christmas food), as well as a nutritional categorization, marking snacks on ‘Cosy Friday’ as unhealthy (Brembeck 2012). Categorization – striation – serves to make the world conceivable and possible to handle. The most effective categorization consists of binary oppositions that split the world in two (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Dolphijn 2004), thereby creating a world free from disturbing complexity and ambiguity. Several binary oppositions emerge in Hilda’s drawing: drinks vs. food, healthy food vs. unhealthy food, Saturday sweets vs. Cosy Friday snacks and ordinary food vs. Christmas food. It is a classification that makes the eatables one-dimensional, defining them out of one specific trait.

But the foodscape is also imbued with a subversive trait. Hilda’s foodscape differs on essential points from the general organization of foodstuffs into food pyramids and plate models, where things like vegetables, fruit, meat, fish and cereal products dominate. In Hilda’s categorization of eatables, snacks and sweets reside in the centre of the foodscape, flanked by ‘drinks’ and ‘food’, occupying as much space as the two others together. Moreover, ‘food’ is not just ordinary food, such as tomato soup, but also festive Christmas food. This is a line of flight where the child subject has subversively made use of an established structuration for her own purposes and been able to occupy a position where she has the authority of definitions and interpretations. Like Julia, Hilda creates a ‘childish’ foodscape, where pleasure makes up the core value.

The lines of flight that are discernible in children’s foodscapes certainly are escapes from generally held (adult-made) definitions of what childhood involves, and what characterizes children’s beings and doings. However, that does not say anything about possible escapes from actual adults. It goes without saying that parents, teachers, researchers and other adults can be subversive to ‘adult-defined’ structures, find their lines of flight and becoming-other as well. Parents’ answers to the many possibilities of ‘becoming-the-same’ and ‘becoming-other’ are to be found in our study, though they are not discussed here, but in other articles (Johansson and Ossiansson 2012a; Johansson et al., 2013).

### **Bodies that eat and bodies that are eaten**

In his book about foodscapes, Dolphijn declares his interest in ‘how food moves in structures, how it changes them, and is changed by them’ (Dolphijn 2004:8). This means that there are no predetermined limits for how a food-

scape can emerge or how to comprise the eater and the food. In the discussion that served as an introduction to the drawing activity, two sisters of 6 and 7 invited the researcher on a giddy journey that went to spaces where the definitions of both eater and eatables were stretched:

Interviewer: What do you think of when you see food or eat food?

Elva, 7: When I see salmon I think that they are tormentors of animals.

Interviewer: Okay.

Elva: And when I see a lot of animals, meat and such.

Ronja, 6: And when I see salmon and everything disgusting, things from animals... yes, then I think like, ugh, I would never like to buy that.

Elva: Ugh, could you dare to eat that? Poor animal, it's so cute.

/.../

Ronja: And then, I've even seen that they murdered a crab.

/.../

Interviewer: Do you ever see food outdoors?

Ronja: Yes, I've seen a real fly agaric.

Interviewer: Is that food?

Ronja: Yes, for flies.

Elva: Do you know what I've seen? I've seen a rat or a mouse that lay like this on the ground because someone had chewed on its head. And that's food... for a cat.

In the discussion, the conventional separation between bodies that eat and bodies that are eaten is deterritorialized. The girls are not vegetarians, for example they say that they like fish fingers, but in the foodscape that is taking shape in the discussion fish are units of quite another morally defined assemblage, including cute salmons, murdering crabs and tormentors of animals. The new territory overturns generally held opinions and habits. Not only is fish-eating placed on a par with murder, the anthropocentric worldview is substituted for a universe where fly agaric and mice are food – for animals. Instead of a fixed definition of what food is, one could, like Dolphijn, say that ‘something is considered food, when in the event it affects us as food and we are affected by its “foodliness”’ (Dolphijn 2004:99). Elva and Ronja



here distinguish the 'foodliness' of a mouse and a fly agaric from the affective bodily potential of a cat and a fly.

Elva brings along her critical eye when the interviewer asks them if they have seen food on television. Then she associates food with commercials, and claims that they show that the food tastes good, but when they stop filming they spit it out. Eventually, television was the hub from which the girls striated their drawings. Elva drew a TV chef cooking a vegetable soup and Ronja drew vegetables and fruit framed by a TV screen.



Pictures 4 and 5. Two sisters, 7 and 6 years old, have been inspired by TV programmes when drawing their foodscapes.

The new foodscapes emerge in the framing of a TV programme as well as a TV set, as can be seen by the blue frame in Ronja's picture, the brand name in Elva's picture and the buttons in both. The assemblage, consisting of fruit and vegetables, a kitchen and a chef, is thereby extended to embrace a media audience as well as the living room in the girls' home, where they sit during the evenings watching television and having tea with their parents. Both in their talking and in their drawings, the girls' lines of flight bring them far from their own daily meals at home and at school. While the raw carrots the girls usually eat at the dinner table are framed within a family meal, carrots in this drawing session are actors in a TV show and, representing the category vegetables, participants of a protest action against meat-eating and animal cruelty. In Elva's drawing, the TV chef has some resemblance to herself, and might very well be a vision of her own future. So the reterritorialization that follows the breakdown of the territory of fishing, slaughter and meat-eating includes a restricted children's diet as well as a future TV career.

### Concluding discussion

The great variation in which the activity was carried out as well as the variation in the resulting drawings could be interpreted as the researchers being able to offer a rather smooth space for new foodscapes and various meanings of food and eating to emerge.

Deleuze's and Guattari's definition of structures as open-ended and unstable assemblages means that structures are leaking; 'there is always something that deviates and escapes a structure or a system' (Olsson 2009:24). Neither a child nor a foodscape has a predetermined form. Reterritorialization and deterritorialization forms a rhythmic act (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, Olsson 2009), where striated spaces are turned into smooth spaces and are then striated in new ways in the act of reterritorialization. The four examples of children's drawings and talking show how a multitude of foodscapes can be composed based on how foods affect and are affected (Dolphijn 2004:10), thereby also creating a multitude of opportunities for making sense of food consumption.

As Aitken (2008) stresses, change is possible within the doing, which opens the way to children's way of claiming identity through their material actions (Brembeck and Johansson 2010). This is the potential within the concept of becoming – the movement and trajectory out from the present (ibid.; Deleuze 1998; Lee 2001). Since the relationship between child and adult

is asymmetrical, the child is the one that continuously escapes from being organized according to the adult (Dolphijn 2004:62). In the above examples the children escaped in several ways, finding lines of flight out of established adult categorizations. They kept the eatables uncategorized, placing meatballs, ice-cream, pizza and apples side by side in a smooth space. They made new categorizations guided by enjoyment and pleasure, and by time, age, gender or nutrition. They transformed raw products into ingredients of luxury or exciting assemblages. They questioned generally held truths of what food is and showed that a foodscape can be striated in endless ways.

The examples show that a simple activity, such as producing drawings of food and eating in a research context, can allow for lines of flight that permit something new to appear. The children perform becomings that reach further than just escaping from rigid definitions of food and meals as well as of child and childhood. They also perform a way of flying, making their own striations, creating new territories for food and people to inhabit. Deleuze and Guattari regard the constant becoming as emanating from desire as a productive force, and this will positively affect the contexts where adults and children interact, as Olsson puts it: ‘When children’s desires are listened to and considered as productive, teachers can bring these into the planning of the activities in a way that make children part of producing new realities’ (Olsson 2009:99f). The children’s new striating of foodscapes can enrich adults’ understandings of the relationships between children and food, and show that foodscapes consist of many aspects: nutrition, pleasure, moral, imagination, commensality and humour. Changes emerge from the leakages and the cracks. If we just reiterate what is already established, movement, alteration – and life – cease to exist.

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## Temporalities of addiction

Minna Ruckenstein

Addictions can be viewed as compulsory involvements with various consumption-related activities including gambling, drinking, eating, exercise, internet use and shopping. They are a deeply-seated feature of consumer culture and its discourses concerning individual choices, but also the lack of choice accompanying various kinds of ‘addictive states’ that strip people of their consumer autonomy and freedom (Reith 2004). The aim of this chapter is to offer a framework for studying addictions that does not treat them primarily as psychological or physiological problems, but examines them as effects of temporalities that define and construct contemporary consumer societies. The study is part of a larger research project conducted at the National Consumer Research Centre in Helsinki (in collaboration with Veera Mustonen and Mika Pantzar), the aim of which is to rethink and recontextualize accounts of health and wellbeing. By exploring addiction, the goal is to create vocabulary for health and wellbeing that takes into account the centrality of temporalities for everyday practices and experiences.

Earlier research has recognized the importance of time to addiction (Hirschman 1992; Reith 1999). Gerda Reith (1999) describes addiction as a period of ‘lost time’ characterized by an inability to imagine the future. The articulation of time seems to be breaking down and time feels as if it were ‘lost’ (Reich 1999). Consequently, people suffering from addictions are unable to envision a better future that could alleviate bodily and social

suffering (Hirschman 1992). Reich terms drug addiction an ‘impenetrable state’ (1999: 103) and describes drug addicts living adrift from the regular rhythms of daily lives, caught up ‘in a morphine cycle’ in which all reactions and emotions are curtailed. Metaphorically, drug use is a way to stop or divert the conventional flow of life (see Reich 1999: 103-104). Addicts engage in repetitious activities that fail to reproduce much else besides the addiction. Experientially addictive behaviour offers security and control when other aspects of daily life seem unmanageable. A particular ‘addictive’ orientation to oneself and the world is confirmed through the reproduction of certain activities. In phenomenological terms, the repetitive nature of addiction could be seen as a retreat or an escape. (Hirschman 1992.)

The chapter builds on these earlier research findings in an attempt to demonstrate how compulsive involvements relate to, and are borne out of, temporalities that shape the ordering of everyday aims and practices. The main goal is to offer a theoretical framework for exploring addiction that is provocative enough to stimulate further investigation. The discussion first introduces the idea of short- and long-term temporal orders by relying on anthropological analyses of money (Bloch and Parry 1989; Ruckenstein 2010). Seeking evidence for theorizing addiction from studies on monetary exchanges might seem far-fetched, but I argue that temporal orders offer significant support for outlining a novel perspective for addiction. Temporal orders are also useful for demonstrating the normative underpinnings of notions of addiction. Not all addictive substances are seen as equally damaging to society or the individual. In Finland, for instance, drugs are treated as more addictive and dangerous to people’s wellbeing than alcohol. Similarly, compulsive behaviour is perceived differently depending on its imagined aims and outcomes. People who are said to be addicted to sports or work are often admired, even praised, in their work places. Dedication to work or exercise is seen as a sign of discipline and perseverance, characteristics that are seen as favourable in light of the reproduction of society. In other words, addictions perceived as ‘useful’ or ‘morally desirable’ do not interfere with or disturb societal aims, but rather support society’s reproductive cycles and long-term projections.

In addition to temporal orders, the framework introduced relies on a practice theoretical approach, outlined in consumer research, focusing on the daily rhythms of everyday practices (Pantzar and Shove 2010; Pantzar 2011). This kind of approach emphasizes the existence of practices through an integrative approach that focuses on how practices emerge and exist, what



elements they are made of and how they persist and are reproduced. Practice theory suggests that addictions are borne out of and remain closely related to daily rhythms, and the following discussion demonstrates how short- and long-term orders become manifest in everyday practices and rhythms and what this might mean in terms of addictive involvements. By combining the study of temporal orders with a focus on everyday rhythms, the chapter suggests that addictions can be defined through their own temporal identities, shaped by the inability or unwillingness of people to imagine the future and by disorders of their daily rhythms. Defining addictions through temporal aims and incompatibilities suggest diagnosing and handling addictions in a manner that does not focus on medical and personality aspects, but treats addictions as repeated practices, circuits of reproduction, that have damaging consequences in terms of health and wellbeing, including bodily and societal dynamics. Thus the challenge is to learn how individual health disturbances and failures and the reproduction of societal and individual temporalities co-create and co-constitute each other (see Pantzar and Shove 2010: 22).

### Addictions and temporal orders

In their seminal introductory article, Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (1989) outline the idea of different time scales according to which monetary transactions take place. Their discussion is founded on the deconstruction of Western folk theories of money. Money is customarily described as ‘the root of all evil’ and, with its ability to create abstractions, modern money is represented as being able to disrupt social and economic relations. The authors (1989: 17) pay attention to the manner in which scholars like Simmel treat money ‘as giving rise to a particular world view’ and to particular forms of sociality. They argue that instead of treating money as a fetish that has inherent power to alter social relations (1989: 3), it is much more fruitful to focus on how an existing world view gives rise to particular representations of money.

In order to focus on the culturally embedded negotiations that surround money, Bloch and Parry shift the focus onto broader patterning of monetary transactions that they refer to as ‘transactional orders’ (1989: 23). They identify two separate but relational orders – short- and long-term time cycles – that arrange conceptions and uses of money. A short-term cycle of exchange is characterized by ongoing transactions; the focus on individual gain and competition is accepted. In contrast, a long-term cycle of exchange reproduces

more long-standing aims and is concerned with the cosmological reproduction of the community. The authors discuss examples from Fiji to Madagascar and demonstrate how long-term cycles of exchange are preoccupied with cosmological goals, such as chiefdom and ancestral rulers, while short-term cycles of exchange are associated with 'individual appropriation, competition, sensuous enjoyment, luxury and youthful vitality' (Bloch and Parry, 1989: 24). Short-term gain and enjoyment are morally permissible and even encouraged as long as they do not disrupt the long-term stability of social reproduction of cosmological order. Thus there is an element of negotiation in the model of transactional orders; the two orders need to be constantly balanced in order for short-term gain not to threaten and interfere with the fulfilment of long-term goals.

Bloch and Parry fail to examine examples that would demonstrate how Western ideology and supporting daily practices deal with this balancing of time cycles. Instead, they argue (1989: 30) that Western ideology has emphasized the distinctiveness of short- and long-term cycles of exchange to the degree that it is 'unable to imagine the mechanisms by which they could be linked'. Representations of money suggest 'a radical divorce between the two cycles' by circulating disconnected discourses that describe money either 'as devilish acid' or 'as instrument and guarantor of liberty' (1989: 30). In other words, money is either 'the root of all evil' that is seen to destroy sociality or it guarantees the individual the freedom to extend his or her sphere of influence (Simmel 1990).

Research suggests, however, that the radical divorce between the two cycles is not as absolute as Bloch and Parry propose, and that the two cycles are in fact also a vital part of everyday negotiations in Western settings (Ruckenstein 2010). The study of compulsory behaviours further supports this argument by demonstrating how addictive involvements emerge in relation to, and are supported by, the two temporal orders. Addictions are typically associated with activities that Bloch and Parry's model would characterize as short-term. Impulsive shopping, drinking and gambling are seen as being driven by individual appropriation and enjoyment rather than long-term plans and projects. In addition, Bloch and Parry's model suggests that the short-term time cycle is constantly being evaluated in relation to longer-term goals of social reproduction. This implies that addictive involvements may not be addictive *per se*, but they are so in relation to competing aims and activities. The short-term temporal order is constantly being evaluated in light of longer-term plans and projects. In other words, long-term cultural orders

regulate individual aims by setting social boundaries to individual enjoyment and gratification.

Based on these ideas, I argue that addictions are shaped by and emerge in relation to balancing processes involving the two time cycles. Indirectly, this idea is supported by consumer research that demonstrates how consumer practices comprise, and are reproduced through, a constant negotiation between short- and long-term aims. Consumption can be studied in relation to various kinds of balancing acts: consumer hedonism and asceticism, for example, deny and feed each other (e.g. Autio 2006; Campbell 1987). Competition, sensuous enjoyment and luxury are socially accepted and encouraged aims of consumption, as long as they do not interrupt the long-term stability of social reproduction. People can shop with pleasure as long as this does not lead to credit card abuse and an unmanageable amount of debt. Consequently, the balancing of short- and longer-term orders is a constant project, an ongoing effort to maintain a morally and economically viable society. The negotiation of moderation not only entails consumer practices, but also illustrates more general principles of organizing life: a tidy home with a decent number of consumer objects demonstrates that people have found a good balance between short-term and long-term time cycles. In contrast, a messy and dirty home with an overwhelming amount of stuff suggests that the short-term cycle is interfering with the long-term stability of an enduring social order. (Ruckenstein 2010.)

In light of this discussion, temporalities of addiction imply that when the balancing of short- and long-term time cycles fails, addictive involvements emerge. In other words, addictions are culturally supported by non-moderation and they become visible to outsiders and experts as repeated practices that more permanently damage the reproduction of the long-term order. Naturally, this can happen in a wide variety of ways. In general, however, addictions can be treated as imbalances of shared time cycles. Addicts are said to have lost a grip on their lives; they are represented as being led by the wrong kinds of powers that become tangible in involvements with money, sex, the internet, alcohol or drugs. In short, compulsory involvements interfere with longer-term goals of reproduction; they emphasize the present tense and short-term goals.

## Addictions and everyday rhythms

Before offering findings from empirical studies, I briefly outline the practice-theoretical approach to temporal ordering of social life that supports the idea that addictions have a particular kind of temporal identity. Short- and long-term temporal orders become manifest as everyday practices and their daily ordering. From this perspective, the analysis of everyday rhythms (Pantzar and Shove 2010; Pantzar 2011) offers methodological support for uncovering how addictions are borne out of, and continue to relate to, daily rhythms. Mika Pantzar and Elizabeth Shove (2010) outline ways in which daily practices condition – and are conditioned by – temporal orders of everyday life. For instance, most Europeans follow a daily rhythm that makes them more likely to eat, work or sleep at a certain time. In other words, everyday lives are constituted of predictable combinations and sequences of events. Empirical evidence of the rhythmic order of weekly events can be found in people's participation in online sites, or in the ways they socialize. Saturday night in particular is dedicated to meeting friends. (See Pantzar and Shove 2010: 20–21.) Despite detailed time-use studies, relatively little is known of the rhythmic ordering of people's lives, and from this perspective it is also instructive to look more closely at the temporality of addiction.

The analysis of everyday rhythms suggests that short- and long-term orders and negotiations around them can be dismantled from the perspective of everyday practices that maintain and reproduce the sequential ordering of daily lives. In other words, the investigation of sequences of daily practices and their relationships to other practices open up for scrutiny the ways in which mundane activities, which also feed addictive involvements, are linked to patterns of time-use. Most addictions develop from practices that time-use studies locate as taking place in leisure time. Leisure time is often devoted to entertainment that forgets the long term and focuses on more instant gratification; individual entertainment is customarily perceived as being a central element of time without work. Activities such as drinking, leisure shopping or gambling are significant for the everyday balancing of time cycles. Entertainment produces separations between work and play; it defines and supports time horizons that define the rhythmic ordering of the week. One deserves to open a bottle of wine after a long week at work. Thus addictive involvements are rooted in everyday divisions and orders of time, a point that I will discuss in the following in more detail.

## Orders and disorders of everyday rhythms

The discussion so far has emphasized that short- and long-term time cycles need to be treated as relational. Short- and long-term goals are not absolute, but rather defined and pursued contextually. This means that people's ideas of how to negotiate and balance between short- and long-term temporal orders might follow a different logic than that promulgated by mainstream society. A widening range of leisure activities and services intensifies experiences of the short term, and people are seduced by activities that might develop into addictions. Earlier research suggests that people typically deny any harmful consequences that such seductions might have (e.g. Hirschman 1992: 155); definitions of addiction promoted by health discourses might fit poorly with notions of what people think they are doing and aiming for. Alternative ways of making sense of addictive involvements emerge from the ways in which people talk about their doings and the rhythmic ordering of daily lives. For instance, studies of gambling that focus on everyday experiences and practices offer some evidence of what such alternative or complementary ways of making sense of addictive behaviours might mean in light of everyday practices (Casey 2003; Jouhki 2011). As part of the entertainment industry, gambling takes advantage of and intensifies experiences that Bloch and Parry define as characteristic of the short-term time cycle. The gaming industry promotes and intensifies short-term goals, including individual enjoyment and competition. Games and related materials are designed to push forward desires, fantasies and intense experiences; advertisements for gambling companies typically focus on success stories of jackpot winners (Binde 2007: 214).

From the perspective of temporal orders, gambling is ideally a short-term activity; it is not supposed to be too time or attention consuming. In Finland, for example, an alternative term used for a slot machine is a 'time spending machine' (*ajanvietteautomaatti*), thereby underlining the fact that playing slot machines should be a 'spare time' occupation. Ideally, a recreational poker player should be like a movie goer, with the monetary investment in both cases constituting the purchase of entertainment (Jouhki 2011: 79). People who regularly play might, however, stress the fact that gambling is an everyday routine. For instance, they perceive their participation in the weekly lottery as a repetitive attempt to alleviate a difficult financial situation. By emphasizing the everyday nature of their playing, players resist traditional critiques of gambling as an addictive activity and rather underline their ability to negotiate a morally and socially appropriate gambling space that sits comfortably within

their everyday routines and rhythms. Players that could easily be defined as addicts in terms of the time spent daily in front of slot machines avoid being seen or treated as addicts by stressing the fact that their playing is responsible and under control. Among other things, this might mean that they carefully earmark their money so that they never spend money that is not 'spare' and specifically intended for playing. (Casey 2003; Zelizer 1994.)

While studies of gambling practices describe ways in which people actively manage their playing, they also suggest that players are aware of, or even concerned about, the possibility that their playing might develop into an addiction (Casey 2003). In such cases, the possibility of addictive involvement, of becoming 'an addict', may be recognized and actively controlled in order to prevent its materializing in daily practices. From the perspective of temporalities of addiction, gambling becomes more compulsive and less successfully moderated when playing starts to obstruct the balancing of time cycles, when addictive involvements interfere with the negotiation of morally and socially appropriate spaces for playing, the earmarking of money is no longer successful and the controlling mechanisms of the player start to break down. In this way, addictive involvements inevitably disturb societal time cycles as a range of activities that are supposed to entertain in the short term and in spare time typically take over longer-term plans in the daily lives of addicts: drinking becomes daily, shopping becomes obligatory, or gambling encroaches on studies and work.

### **Circuits of reproduction**

I have argued that one way to approach addictions is to see them as an outcome from a failed negotiation of temporal orders; this kind of perspective proposes that addiction can be defined as an inability to alternate between short- and long-term goals. People who suffer from addictions tend to have less and less to do with everyday rhythms of the mainstream society. They no longer recognize, value, or are able to comply with shared everyday routines. Addicts fail to participate in the reproduction of future horizons: the short term and the present tense dominate their everyday desires and aims. Consequently, compulsive behaviour becomes visible and identifiable through repetition; everyday practices start to centre and focus on certain substances or activities. In the light of practice theoretical notions of temporal orders, addictions become manifest as 'circuits of reproduction' (Pantzar and Shove 2010: 27) that are characterized by mutually constituted relations between

practices and complexes of practice. Pantzar and Shove (2010: 27) describe circuits of reproduction as co-dependent practices; preparation of a meal, or putting children to bed, can be treated as a circuit of reproduction. Addictive involvements are more involving and demanding circuits of reproduction that tend to also cause various kinds of health disturbances. Consequently, addictive involvements become self-generative practice complexes that are supported by recurring relations. The unsuccessful balancing of temporal orders is not a cause or effect of individual health disturbances, but rather these two aspects co-create and support each other.

Empirical studies offer support for treating addictions as circuits of reproduction by presenting narratives of addicts or former addicts that describe how compulsive behaviours create a self-contained and enclosed 'world'. In describing the consciousness of drug addiction, Elizabeth Hirschman (1992: 177) states that people who suffer from addictions actually reside someplace else, where their 'minds and lives have been controlled for various periods of time'. Testimonials of addiction replicate notions of circularity and lost time horizons. People experience and suffer from co-dependent practices that appear to participate in their own regeneration; the linearity of time – a normative Western notion – is damaged when long-term goals disappear from sight.

When addictive involvements transform into self-generative practice complexes, they construct their own recurring relations and temporal identities. Drug use becomes defined by a circuit of reproduction when it starts to eliminate the user's long-term projects and plans. Gerda Reich describes how drug addiction forces people to concentrate on the short term, on how to get the next fix. The daily lives of drug addicts are characterized by mutually constituted and replicated practices that revolve around acquiring and using drugs (Reich 1999: 104, 106). Thus the circuit of reproduction, supported by a certain kind of temporal ordering of daily practices, promotes an 'addictive worldview' (Reich 1999: 105) that excludes the consideration of other notions of time.

### Concluding note

Contemporary discourses on addictive behaviour would look quite different if their aim was to critically engage with and rethink customary notions of addiction. This chapter has argued for a theoretical framework that focuses on time cycles and everyday practices for contextualizing addictive behaviours

within temporalities characteristic of contemporary societies. Treating addictions as circuits of reproduction advocate important consequences in terms of health and wellbeing. Various health complaints, including stress, anxiety, sleep deprivation, depression or substance abuse, are connected to compulsive behaviours and emphasized by them. Such psychological and physical complaints and disorders generate, support and co-construct experiences that break down the idea of time as linear, sequential, and moving forward. The self-generating or self-propagating nature of addiction throws further light on the fact that people suffering from compulsive behaviours are often perceived as having lost control over their own lives. The unsuccessful balancing of time cycles feeds bodily and social disturbances and vice versa. Consequently, failed negotiation of short- and long-term time cycles and everyday rhythms is both a cause and an effect of problems.

Customary discourses on addiction focus on the individual, but they fail to seriously engage with the all-encompassing nature of co-dependent practices that define addictions. As circuits of reproduction, addictions further social and moral disappointments, replicating failures and experiences of inadequacy. Addictions settle into everyday lives that have a place and need for them. On the other hand, compulsive behaviours also take time and make room for them. From this perspective, it is to be expected that people who suffer from addictions will have escalating problems with the ways in which time cycles reproduce and condition the sequential order of everyday practices.

Defining addiction as a self-generating circuit of reproduction offers a complementary way to diagnose and treat addiction that does not solely seek its roots in individual psychologies or physiologies, but considers it as unsuccessful balancing of time cycles and everyday rhythms. Temporalities of addiction suggest that addicts, for whatever reason, do not reproduce societal time frames, but rather tend to construct alternative, idiosyncratic and disruptive temporal identities. Consequently, lives with an addiction are characterized by disorders of normative daily rhythms, observable to an outsider as noncompliance with routines and schedules: punctuality for work and family commitments is compromised, appointments are broken, night may become day. Such failed balancing of temporalities constructs and feeds bodily and mental disturbances and vice versa.

The focus on temporalities of addiction indicates that exploring health and wellbeing from the perspective of everyday practices and rhythms opens up a noteworthy way to avoid trivializing and medicalizing people's experiences. Addicts are typically caught up in co-dependent practices that



participate in their own regeneration; they are unable to imagine and generate practices oriented towards the long term. It is common knowledge that lives without jobs, money, family and friends are more likely to generate addictive involvements. Addictions are borne out of isolation, but also out of the search for likeminded people who feel similarly isolated and distanced from mainstream society. This suggests that the analysis of ways in which long- and short-term temporal orders – materialized as everyday practices and rhythms, daily activities and passivities – are culturally understood and organized proposes important ways forward in thinking about health and wellbeing. When the balancing of time cycles and everyday rhythms fails, bodily reactions are inevitable: people feel stressed, they lose sleep, suffer from high blood pressure, or start to engage in a compulsive manner with some activity. People respond to, and are shaped by, daily practices and rhythms. They physically connect and react to temporalities that arrange courses of action in both the long and short terms. The unsuccessful balancing of temporal orders is not a cause or effect of individual health disturbances, but rather the two co-create and support each other. By arguing that addiction is constructed in disruptions and failed negotiations of everyday practices and rhythms, a more mediated and socially responsive definition of addiction emerges. Addiction develops as a by-product of temporalities that shape knowledge and understanding about the production of human beings as persons in today's world.

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## Easy eating? Negotiating convenience food in media food practices

Bente Halkier

Convenience food is a fast-growing and differentiating consumption style (Jabs & Devine 2006; Olsen et al. 2009; Warde et al. 2007). At the same time, convenience food is a contested category in society due to its normative connotations with fast food and industrialised food (Bugge & Almås 2006; Cairns et al. 2010; Hand & Shove 2007; Prim et al. 2007). Hence, mediated public information and behaviour change campaigns in media on food quality, nutrition and health tend to question the appropriateness of convenience food (Halkier 2010). However, other mediated types of communication on food, cooking and eating – e.g. lifestyle magazines, commercials, television shows, websites and new social media – tend to include convenience food products and meals as a “normal” part of modern social life. This apparent multifaceted character of the uses and the mediated representations of convenience food make for an interesting type of consumption to study empirically. It is quite possible that food practitioners make other kinds of sense of their convenience food consumption than producers of public information campaigns do.

Food is one of the consumption areas where the intersecting and mixing between and across different kinds of media forms and genres is particularly high both in the mediated representations (Lüders 2008:686-88; Reilly 2006; Tulloch and Lupton 2003) and presumably in their uses in everyday life. Thus, mediated communication about food – for example a change behaviour initiative on healthy food for the primary school – often draws upon

several different media genres such as public information, entertainment, practical resources, aesthetic display, commercial marketing, and normative argumentation, and relies upon the use of several different types of media, such as leaflets, paper forms to fill out, board games, websites and mobile phones. However, existing research in food consumption has been slow to pick up on the potential significance of this media development in empirical research. Convenience food can be seen as an example of food consumption which apparently invites multiple interpretations and uses, and hence is well suited for investigation as an object of cross-genre media food uses as well as an object of provisioning, cooking and eating.

Convenience food consumption has of course been researched before, often as part of broader studies on food culture, food practices, family relations and domestic work, both qualitatively and quantitatively (Beagan et al. 2008; Bugge & Almås 2006; Cairns et al. 2010; Hand & Shove 2007; Mäkelä et al., 2011; Marshall & Bell 2003; Moisio et al. 2004; Olsen et al. 2009; Prim et al. 2007; Warde et al. 2007). My approach to convenience food consumption belongs theoretically to that part of the current literature which sees consumption within the broader context of everyday life conditions.

This chapter forms part of the production of a theoretical framework for an empirical qualitative investigation of how food consumers use different material and mediated genres of convenience food for navigating and negotiating normatively appropriate food practice in their social networks. To attempt to make analytical sense of consumption implies discussions of basic theoretical assumptions about how to conceptualise and how to investigate consumers, consumption and consumer culture. On the basis of previous research on contested food consumption types (Halkier 2010), I suggest that the following theoretical elements be combined: A practice theoretical perspective (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 2002), media use analysis (Couldry 2004; Hjarvard 2008), interaction analysis (Goffman 1967; Harré & Langenhove 1999), and qualitative social network analysis (Heath et al. 2009). The purpose of this chapter is to unfold a first attempt to make this theoretical combination, and to discuss it in relation to the planned empirical study, “Easy eating? Negotiating convenience food in media food practices”.

First, the existing studies on convenience food consumption will be presented in slightly more detail, and second, the context of media food, mediatization and food issue contestation will be discussed. Third, an attempt is made to combine the four theoretical elements, and fourth, the methodological and empirical project design for the project “Easy eating?” is presented.

## Convenience food consumption

The supply and consumption of convenience food seems to be growing as well as becoming more differentiated in recent years in Western societies (Jabs & Devine 2007; Lyon et al. 2003; Olsen et al. 2009; Warde et al. 2007). Such analysis, of course, depends crucially upon what is defined as convenience food, e.g. whether only whole ready meals and take-away meals are included, or whether ready-made food products and food elements such as semi-processed products are also included. If we choose the broad definition and include both whole meals and single food products, the distinction between convenience food and raw materials in home-made food becomes relatively blurred. Are chopped meat, canned tomatoes, frozen peas and fresh pasta from the supermarket, for example, raw materials or semi-processed convenience food products? How far back in the food chain does the consumer have to go in order for food not to be convenience food? In this way, convenience food consumption displays the same type of definitional issue as its alleged flip-side category, “cooking from scratch”. There is no social scientific agreement on a definition of what cooking from scratch and a homemade meal consist of (Moisio et al. 2004:372; Short 2006:7,88-89). In the empirical studies of cooking, an even greater variety of understandings of cooking from scratch and convenience food emerge (Bugge & Almås 2006:219-22; Halkier 2010:118-25; Moisio et al. 2004:372-77; Short 2006:105-11). I use the broad definition, knowing that it implies problems of distinction, but at the same time thinking it is the definition which comes closest to ordinary use of convenience food among food practitioners in their everyday lives.

In Denmark, apart from the measuring difficulties, the number of consumers using convenience food on a regular basis has not been registered in general, and only a few studies give hints about the diffusion of convenience food consumption. A quantitative study of food habits among children and young people suggests that convenience food consumption has grown for these age groups. The study shows among other things that the use of fast food products and meals has increased by one-third compared with ten years earlier among children and young food consumers (Fagt et al. 2008). A survey conducted for the Danish Agriculture & Food Council (Aarup et al. 2010) shows that consumption of convenience products is relatively wide-spread, particularly for everyday food (Grunert 2012).

Existing empirical studies of food practices and representations of “proper” food include convenience food, although convenience food itself is not necessarily placed at the centre of the research. The current literature roughly falls into three types of research about convenience food consumption.

In the *first type*, convenience food consumption is primarily understood as a result of *individual choice-making*. Marshall & Bell (2003), for example, have investigated quantitatively the relationships between eating events and understandings of meals when consumers are constrained in meal construction by being bound to particular locations, e.g. workplace or educational institution. They studied and compared eating patterns among British and Australian students, and conclude that meals and eating are closely linked with detailed food choice decisions by the individual. A Nordic example is Ahlgren et al. (2005), who studied quantitatively when and how Swedish consumers use ready meals in cooking and eating, and they conclude that the choice of food type such as convenience food depends on the eating situation. Another Nordic example is a quantitative mapping of three consumer segments in Norway, distinguishing between consumers who embrace convenience food as convenient, consumers who are ambivalent towards convenience food, and consumers who are dissatisfied with convenience food (Olsen et al. 2009). The strength of this type of research is its capacity to map quantitatively and provide an overview of a diffusion of patterns among food consumers. One particularly interesting result in relation to this chapter about convenience food is e.g. that Marshall & Bell (2003:62) find that the understanding of what a meal consist of is much broader than often anticipated, which supports the argument above about the convenience food and homemade food belonging to a continuum rather than being two separate categories. However, the problem with the food choice type of studies is that they tend to overrate the importance of individual consumer choice and underestimate the significance of social contexts.

In the *second type*, convenience food use is seen as related to *life-historical experiences*, signalling a more socio-cultural type of approach than in the first type. Moio et al. (2004) studied qualitatively how American consumers from three generations construct their family identity and the social reproduction and transformation of cooking practices through homemade food. The main result is that the uses and understandings of convenience food are distinctly different across generations: Participants in the study from the oldest generation understand market-provided meals as inferior meals, and the use of convenience food is seen as “cheating” and the antithesis of good food. Participants from the middle-aged generation see convenience food as necessary and that there are different kinds of convenience food, some better and more “homey” than others. Participants from the younger generation understand some types of market-provided meals and convenience food as

superior to homemade food. Beagan et al. (2008) did a qualitative study of family division of food work among three different ethnic groups in Canada. The main result is a typology of rationalisations of the gendered division of food work in the families that women give when talking about providing for meals. Parts of these different rationalisations are also about the use of convenience food, mainly positioning themselves as using less convenience food than their husbands and positioning children as family members who would argue strongly in favour of convenience food. This type of research places consumption of convenience food sensibly in experiences with shopping, cooking and eating that are shaped by specific social dynamics such as generation and gender, but convenience food itself is not at the centre of the research, instead cropping up on the side as a point of interest.

In the *third type* of research, convenience food consumption is understood as part of *socio-material conditions in everyday life*. In a comparative quantified study of patterns of cooking and eating across the USA and four European countries (Warde et al. 2007), a decline in the amount of time spent on food preparation in households was found between data patterns from the early 1970's and data patterns from the late 1990's. The authors themselves cautiously interpret this result as related, among other things, to the availability and use of convenience food (Ibid:380). Hand & Shove (2007) investigated qualitatively how ordinary British food consumers use their freezers in organising their provision of food and meals. One of the main results of this study is a variety and negotiability in the understandings and uses of convenience foods among the participants. Convenience food is not associated exclusively with fast food, readymade frozen meals from the supermarket and inferior food quality, but is also understood as freezing homemade food, organising food work more effectively by storing foodstuffs in the freezer, and making it possible to obtain variety in cooking and eating. Thus, convenience food is a part of the continuous accomplishment of organising food provisioning, while at the same time the use of convenience food is socially negotiated between e.g. something practical, something that improves meals and something that endangers the quality of food (ibid:96).

Theoretically, the empirical project "Easy eating?" subscribes to an approach to studying convenience food that belongs to the third type of research. Convenience food is a particular – growing and differentiating – part of food practice in everyday life. Thus, the use of convenience food is embedded in the complex practices, processes and conditions of the organisation of everyday life. One of the under-researched conditions of the

organisation of food and eating in everyday life is the consequences of the mediatisation of food consumption, and this is addressed in the next section of the chapter, before arriving at a suggestion for the theoretical framework for the project “Easy eating?”.

### **Media food and food issue contestation**

There is much different theorising about the potential consequences of the current media development for societal relations in general, and for everyday life in particular (e.g. Bell and Hollows 2005; Dahlgren 2006; Hjarvard 2008; Krotz 2007; Jensen 2002; Livingstone 2009; Schröder 2011; Thompson 1995). The approach labelled “mediatisation of society” catches the general media development as an interplay between media practices such as producing and using mediated communication and the institutionalised conditions for such media practices (Hjarvard 2008). Mediatisation covers the processes whereby media and mediated communication have become integrated in other institutions in society to such a degree that media and mediated communication influences the form, content and organisation of the core activities of these other institutions, for example everyday life as an institution and food consumption as a core activity. Hjarvard draws upon Giddens’ structuration theory (Giddens 1984) approach to agency and structure and to institutions and society (Hjarvard 2008:113, 116), hereby achieving an interdependent and productive relationship between media activities and conditions. In relation to everyday life, Hjarvard makes a useful distinction between direct mediatisation and indirect (Ibid:114-15). Direct mediatisation occurs when activities change from non-mediated to mediated. Examples in food consumption are on-line shopping for foodstuffs, the use of websites for recipes and sharing restaurant experiences with friends via film clips on mobile phones. Indirect mediatisation occurs when activities are distinctively influenced regarding their content, form or organisation by mediated texts (in the broadest sense, including visual, audio, virtual etc. elements) or media formats and genres. Examples in food consumption include shopping for food at a farm owned by a television celebrity chef, collecting figurines from children’s films while eating at a fast food outlet, and negotiating the content of a mediated public healthy food campaign while cooking at home.

Mediatisation of everyday life is thus linked with what, for the lack of better terms, could be called media food and material food. Media food comes in many different media forms and genres, and only a few distinct examples



which have been researched will be mentioned here. Media food can take the genre of a practical resource from which food consumers can draw what they need in terms of e.g. information, opinion and organising device. This has of course been one of the characteristics of traditional cookbooks and women's magazines for many years (Floyd & Forster 2003; Hermes 1995; Martens & Scott 2005; Warde 1997:59-67). Media food can also take the genre of discourses and aesthetics for social identification processes, which is particularly distinctive in relation to lifestyle magazines (Halkier 2010: 118-25; Povlsen 2007) but is also the case for particular coffee-table cookbooks (Hollows 2003), television shows (Ashley et al. 2004:171-85), websites etc. Media food can take the genre of entertainment in many different media forms such as magazines (Hermes 1995), television programmes (O'Sullivan 2005) and blogs (Lützhøft and Saeed 2010). Media food has for a long time taken the genre of marketing via commercials (Peattie and Peattie 2009), and this genre of media food now tends to diffuse into new social media forms such as apps for mobile phones and Facebook (Montgomery & Chester 2009).

There is a particular genre of media food that has tended to address convenience food explicitly, and this is planned public communication and change behaviour campaigns on health, nutrition, food quality, food risks and food skills. Such campaigns and other planned mediated communications tend to question the appropriateness of convenience food, frame convenience food as inferior food and place the consumption of too much convenience food as part of the societal problems with health, nutrition, food quality, food risks and food skills (Caraher et al. 2004; Jabs & Devine 2006; Lyon et al. 2003; Short 2006:4-10). Such mediated change communication questions the consequences of ordinary food routines, and if consumers pay attention to such discourses unnoticed routines may become noticed and potentially become an object of reflection, negotiation and explicit social regulation. Everyday life food consumption activities become contested through the indirect mediatisation of food activities, where the genre of change communication places discourses that problematise convenience food as symbolic resources for many different societal actors, including consumers themselves (Halkier 2010:1-5).

One of the apparent consequences of this contestation seems to be an ambivalent construction in everyday understandings about the use of convenience food as either "doing inappropriate cooking" or as "doing do-able cooking" (Beagan et al. 2008:661-4; Bugge & Almås 2006:219-22; Halkier 2009:370-73). However, taking the latest media development into account,

the hypothesis could be put forward that convenience food consumption and media convenience food and their relationships are more diverse and complicated. Change communication campaigns are only one media food genre being used in relation to food provision, cooking and eating, and the increased interactivity, mobility and personalisation of media pro-sumption in everyday life (Lüders 2008:686-90) could increase the crossing and mixing of media forms and media food genres among food practitioners. This makes the issue of how convenience food consumption is used, appropriated and made sense of in everyday life an open question.

### **Theoretical framework on mediatised food consumption**

By understanding convenience food consumption as part of food practices and media food practices in everyday life, this chapter and the empirical project “Easy eating?” are positioned within the so-called fourth wave of social scientific consumption research. Here, consumption is precisely understood as an ordinary everyday life phenomenon (Gronow and Warde 2001), and this fourth wave understanding of consumption comes after the first three waves of seeing consumption as a function of economic dynamics, seeing consumption as a function of culture, and seeing consumption as a creative activity (Featherstone 1990; Sassatelli 2007). There are a variety of theoretical approaches that have been used as part of the fourth wave of consumption research, such as phenomenological approaches (e.g. Dant 2008) and symbolic interaction approaches (e.g. Chaney 2002). However, practice theories (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 2002), how practice theories can be used and their potential usefulness in making analytical sense of consumption processes have received particular attention the last seven years among European researchers on consumption and consumer culture (Halkier et al. 2011; Shove et al. 2012; Warde 2005).

This attention to practice theories seems to be related to the way in which practice theoretical approaches challenge one of the basic assumptions in much of consumption and consumer culture research about motivations driving individual consumer choice. Alan Warde defines consumption activities as moments in or consequences of a multiplicity of routinised, socially organised and intersecting practices in everyday life (Warde 2005:137). Thus, in a practice theoretical perspective on consumption, the performance of the multiple ordinary practices comes first, and consumption is an integrated aspect of these practices.

Practice theories revolve around the concept of social practices, which are then defined slightly differently in different versions of the uses of practice theories (Gram-Hanssen 2011:64). Elizabeth Shove defines practices as socially organised by competences, meanings and products (Shove and Pantzar 2005:45), and Alan Warde defines practices closer to Schatzki's definition as organised by understandings, procedures and engagements, adding items of consumption (Warde 2005:134). However, regardless of the use of slightly different sub-concepts or other theoretical differences, most practice theories focus on the processes of carrying out social life. It is the details and conditions of how ordinary activities are carried out socially that practice theories are intended to conceptualise. For the research project on mediatised convenience food consumption, drawing upon a practice theoretical perspective gives two analytical capacities.

*First*, because of the analytical privileging of the details and conditions of carrying out a multiplicity of socially organised and intersecting practices, a practice theoretical perspective enables the researcher to analyse a variety of ways of consuming and to see how these ways of consuming are entangled in webs of social change and reproduction in everyday life. Thus, a practice theoretical perspective strengthens the opportunities to see empirically and reflect analytically upon a variability of convenience food consumption, and a chance to question the existing empirical results and analytical assumptions about convenience food as either inappropriate cooking and eating or necessary cooking and eating. *Second*, my take on practice theories in relation to consumption focuses on the enacting and performing of daily life and is particularly inspired by Butler's (1990) intersectionality and early Giddens' (1984) concept of agency, as well as Bourdieu's (1990) concept of practical sense. Thus, ways of consuming are understood as continuous relational accomplishments of social conduct in everyday life, both embodied and discursive. This strengthens the opportunities to see empirically and analyse adaptations, navigations and negotiations of convenience food consumption in relation to social acceptability and normative expectations of proper practical food conduct. The ability to analyse normative adaptations and negotiations is particularly important when studying a contested and mediatised kind of consumption, such as convenience food. Thus, a practice theoretical approach to everyday life and consumption is the overall theoretical framework for analysing material and media convenience food.

In communication and media research, the analysis of and discussions about media use have arrived at parallel discussions and concepts as sociology of

consumption about the active and conditioned everyday life co-construction of activities and interpretations (Dahlgren 2006; Hjarvard 2008; Livingstone 2009), expressed in the concept of “the prosumer” (e.g. Lüders 2008). Media use seems quite often to be referred to in terms of media consumption (e.g. Couldry et al. 2010). Taking this theoretical route would imply treating media use and communication like consumption: As aspects or moments of other practices, and not as a practice in itself.

Media researcher Nick Couldry (2004) suggests that a practice theoretical perspective on media use makes more sense analytically in what he calls media-saturated contexts than to apply approaches which regard media use or audience practices as something discrete that can be separated out from the complexities of such contexts. Media-saturated contexts come close to Hjarvard's understanding of mediated institutions. Couldry's main point is that what people do with media and how they interpret what they do can in many cases only be analysed by seeing media consumption or audiencing as part of other practices (Couldry 2004:125). For example, combining the information on a sushi restaurant from a website about take-away restaurants in the neighbourhood with recommendations via a mobile phone from an app with customers' restaurant reviews and browsing the commentary in the newspaper on the healthy aspects of fish are not necessarily about media, and nor do they add up to some specific media use. But the three activities could easily be part of food practices and seem to be related to convenience food consumption. The three activities could also easily and at the same time be part of parenting practices, transportation practices, socialising practices, relationship practices, and health practices.

The question is whether it is fruitful to see communication and media use as a moment in most practices – like consumption – due to the mediated character of today's everyday lives? Or whether it makes better sense to see media use as yet another routinised, socially organised practice that intersects interestingly with other practices in everyday lives? It is difficult to figure out Couldry's exact position on this conceptual dilemma. On the one hand, he underlines the importance of the first view because of the difficulties of separating media use from other activities, both for researchers and for how everyday practitioners perform and recognise their lives. On the other hand, he holds on to a concept of media practices and media-oriented practices, discussing whether media practices perhaps order or at least anchor other types of practices because of the media's alleged privileged power of representation (Bird 2010:87), which could suggest the second view.

For the time being, I will suggest a middle position where we can see media use as media-oriented practices intersecting with other practices in everyday life, but where communication processes constitute moments in all practices, like consumption, and not a practice in themselves. The important analytical issue is not to overestimate the importance of any particular kind of practice or aspect in the theoretical assumptions. From a practice theoretical perspective, what people do and how they perform in everyday life is organised by a configuration of analytically equally important and interconnected dynamics (Reckwitz 2002:249-50). The specific blend of such dynamics – for example in which ways which types of media pro-use is a part of convenience food consumption and food practices – is an open empirical question.

There is however one element of practice theories that seems to be slightly under-developed, namely the conceptualisation of social interaction. On the one hand, there is no doubt that practice theories and their uses in consumption research presuppose social interaction as a part of the collective organisation of practices (Warde 2005:133-35). Practices are coordinated as well as performed, and both these characteristics presuppose social interaction among the practitioners. That practices are performed means, for example, that they come into being in processes of activities carried out in front of, together with and in relation to others. This way, people can learn and recognise particular practices, how the practices are done and which performances of them constitute more or less acceptable conduct. On the other hand, social interaction is never explicitly attempted to be conceptualised in the practice theoretical literature on consumption (Hargreaves 2011; Røpke 2009), which perhaps can be traced back to Reckwitz (2002:249). In his overview article, he discards social interaction as part of one of the three positions in cultural theory that practice theories are different from, namely theoretical intersubjectivism.

In my view, practitioner interactions are the practical playing out of the relational character of consumption. Given that the social and symbolic relations of consumption are important in a broad range of approaches to consumption, social interaction has to be explicitly conceptualised when practice theoretical approaches are used to try to move away from the understanding of consumption as individual choice. Such conceptualisation of social interaction can be achieved without resorting to theoretical intersubjectivism. *One way* of doing this is to come up with a definition that fits into a practice theoretical approach. My own suggestion would be to understand social interaction as open-ended embodied and discursive exchanges, performed in networks, and enabled and conditioned by intersecting practical and

social do-abilities. Do-abilities refer to what it is possible to do and how it is possible to perform in the carrying out of practices. (Halkier 2010:36). Such a definition would fit well with some of the current communication and media research on everyday life (Couldry et al. 2010; Lüders 2008). *Another way* of doing this is to combine a practice theoretical perspective with inspiration from other approaches which focus specifically on social interaction, such as Goffman-inspired approaches (Goffman 1967) or positioning theory (Harré and Langenhove 1999).

Goffman-inspired approaches share some of the assumptions of practice theory about the performative character of social life and the social regulation of everyday life activities via practical knowledge about how to act and what to say. Goffman's writings contain a large number of specific concepts for different kinds of social interaction as well as more general analytical points on social interaction. Two of these points are particularly relevant for a potential combination with a practice theoretical approach to contested consumption. The first point is that practitioners constantly participate in producing, negotiating and performing themselves (and their practices, I would add) in relation to different others (Goffman 1959), and newer Goffman interpreters argue that none of these performances is more authentic than the others (Branaman 1997; Tseñlon 1992). Rather, these performances all contribute to the intersected social organisation of people's shared activities. The second point is to see interaction as social rituals, dependent upon tacit knowledge about how to behave, which then forms a contextual frame of understanding for organising activities in everyday life (Goffman 1974). Changing such frames through interaction is possible, but more demanding than reproducing them.

Positioning theory shares some assumptions with Goffman-inspired approaches to interaction, such as the performative character of social life and a focus on shared frames as conditions for – as well as products of – social interaction. Positioning is a particular kind of social interaction where the exchanges between practitioners are understood as negotiations and accomplishments of linking oneself or others with different normative social categories (Davies and Harré 1999), for example “healthy food” or “bad cooking”. Positioning concepts for social interaction can be particularly useful in the analysis of contested consumption, because cultural contestation processes tend to spur uses of normative categories and negotiations about expectable and acceptable social conduct. Positioning theory applies a concept of agency fairly similar to a practice theoretical one, and although positioning theory as a starting point focuses on the discursive dimensions of social interaction, the embodied dimension can of course be developed.

I have experience in combining positioning theory with a practice theoretical approach in empirical data analysis of other types of contested consumption (Halkier 2010), so I will include positioning concepts in the framework for the research on convenience consumption. But in order to capture some of the more mundane and less contested interaction processes, I will include some Goffman-inspired applied concepts as well.

Furthermore, I will combine these understandings of social interaction with concrete concepts on social networking from qualitative social network analysis (Heath et al. 2009). Qualitative social network analysis focuses on the context-specific and informal dynamics of social networking as a process, rather than looking at numbers of network relationships as quantitative network analysis does (Scott, 2000), or using general and firm assumptions about characteristics of social networks as network communication analysis (Rogers 1995) and the discussions about social capital (Putnam 2000) tend to do. The inclusion of a process-oriented approach to networking hopefully brings the theoretical framework closer to current media practice analysis, considering the growing importance of the interactive and mobile media forms and user-generated or co-created media content (Lüders 2008).

*To sum up*, the theoretical approach suggested for the empirical research project on convenience food consists of three interconnected parts: An overall practice theoretical perspective on consumption and media use, combined with concepts for social interaction from positioning theory and inspired by Goffman, and concepts from qualitative social network analysis.

### **Empirical design for “Easy eating?”**

The empirical study on convenience food consumption, “Easy eating? Negotiating convenience food in media food practices” is a qualitative in-depth study of the food habits and the media food habits of young Danish consumers. The overall methodological design is abductive (Blaikie 1993), and the production of data rests on a combination of individual interviewing (Holstein and Gubrium 2003), qualitative social networking mapping (Heath et al. 2009), and social network-based focus groups (Barbour 2007). The individual interviewing is meant to contribute material about their food routines in everyday life, their media food uses in everyday life, and the similarities and differences between their own food and media food consumption and those in their social network, with a focus on convenience food. The social networking mapping is meant to contribute material about communication patterns in relation to food and media food, again with a



focus on convenience food. The focus groups are meant to contribute material about processes of negotiation surrounding social norms in relation to convenience food and media convenience food.

Sampling of participants will be based on a maximum variation strategy (Silverman 2006) among young food consumers, aged 20 to 25 years. The analysis of data patterns will be based on qualitative coding and categorisation (Coffey and Atkinson 1996), combined with operative concepts from the theoretical framework.

### Concluding remarks

This chapter argues that the empirical study of convenience food consumption could benefit from including a mediatisation perspective, because such a perspective enables the analysis to cover the crossings of media forms and media genres apparent in relation to media food consumption, and thus also significant for material food consumption. Hopefully, this could contribute to making more analytical sense of actual consumption processes. The chapter suggests a theoretical combination of an overall practice theoretical approach to consumption and media use, combined with interaction analysis and qualitative social network analysis. The framework is to be used in the empirical research project on convenience food consumption among young Danes, “Easy eating?”.

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**Part II**  
**Marketplace actors**



## **“Looks great, feels amazing”: The tactile dimension of packaging**

Karin Wagner

Packages are material artefacts that play an important role in everyday consumption. Food packaging design is usually aimed at appealing to the sense of vision, being seen and breaking through the clutter on the shelves in the supermarket. Increasingly, marketers and designers are coming to realize the importance of other senses, especially the sense of touch, to attract the attention of consumers and increase brand recognition (Jansson-Boyd 2011; Spence and Gallace 2011).

The research for this chapter has been carried out within the project *The (Un)sustainable Package*, a cross-disciplinary project encompassing several perspectives: design history, gender studies, visual communication and logistics, aiming at filling the void that exists within cultural history on the subject of packaging. My background is in art history and visual studies, and although visual communication has been my point of departure, awareness of the interrelatedness of the senses is a prerequisite for understanding the materiality of packaging. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the experience of the senses must be seen as a totality: “[T]here is not in the normal subject a tactile experience and also a visual one, but an integrated experience to which it is impossible to gauge the contribution of each sense.” (2002 p. 137) The separation of the senses is usually done for analytical reasons. I have chosen to focus on touch and tactility here, and at the same time take the relationship between touch and vision, sound and taste into account.

The aim of the chapter is to analyse different types of tactile qualities used in packaging. How are these qualities implemented? How do packages address the consumer and establish interaction with her through tactility? How do consumers make sense of consumption through packages? The theoretical approach will be social semiotics, especially the concepts *interpersonal function* and *offer/demand*, which are used in visual communication, for example to describe how a depicted person communicates with the viewer of an image. A person in a photograph who faces the camera and thus turns towards the viewer enters into a relationship with the viewer, while a person turning away does not. In the first case, the person in the image *demand*s the viewer to interact with her, while in the second case the depicted person offers himself to be looked at, but in a detached way, without establishing contact (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Similarly, a product can demand a consumer to interact with it, through both visual and tactile means. The semiotic approach presupposes that products can be seen as representations and as signs. Previous research in this field has been done by the Finnish design semiotician Susann Vihma (1995), who has studied the interaction between persons and products.

Tactile qualities of packages can also be seen as *affordances*, a concept originally created by James Gibson (1977) and adapted by Donald Norman in his book *The Design of Everyday Things* (2002). An affordance, according to Norman, guides the consumer to a specific kind of action, without being the equivalent to an objective quality of an artefact; the concept includes the users' perception of how an object can be used. A stair can be seen to afford stepping, but also sitting.

The methods used in the chapter are visual and tactile analysis of artefacts (van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2002). Out of a larger collection of packages that have been gathered during the research project, four different packages have been selected that represent different approaches to the use of tactility in marketing: a beer can, a yoghurt bucket, a vodka bottle and a baby food pouch. These cases are all within the food sector, but represent diverse target groups, product types and contexts; everyday as well as luxury consumption. The selected packages can be divided into two categories: those that are characterized by anthropomorphism and those that facilitate gripping. When studying the material qualities of artefacts like packages, visual representations are not sufficient, and a collection is a prerequisite for obtaining "connoisseurship", similar to that of an art collector, beyond the familiarity that the average consumer acquires in everyday consumption. The collection has allowed me to make comparisons, by arranging and rearranging



the packages in different constellations – a work that is best done with access to the physical artefacts.

Blogs and other Internet resources can be a valuable source in consumer research (Kozinets 2010). Many private bloggers write about their everyday consumption (Wagner 2011), not least Swedish parents who blog about their daily life with their children. They share tips and experiences with other parents, and feeding and food is a common topic, which is why I decided to look for comments and reviews on the baby food pouch. How do the parents describe their child's perception of and engagement with the package? A search on "Ella's Kitchen" and "förpackning" (the Swedish word for package) rendered only a few hits, but one of the blogs, *Fam Andersson Prenta* (2011), run by the mother of a small child, contains a whole story illustrated with images of the child and the pouch. Such stories offer a rich source of material for understanding how these children and their parents make meaning of the package. Blogs as source material have the advantage of not being initiated by the researchers, and – in comparison to interviews and surveys – are not biased by consumers' willingness to oblige the researchers. However, a certain vigilance is called for concerning the validity of product reviews. What appears to be a candid statement can in fact be hidden promotion, paid for by the company.

Some consumers have a greater need for touching products than others. Peck and Wiggins (2006) distinguish between *autotelic* need for touch and *instrumental*. The first approach is used by consumers who enjoy touching products, and the second approach is used by those who primarily touch products in order to obtain information about them. While previous research has been concerned with touch as a means to obtaining information about a product, Peck has taken the autotelic stance as a point of departure for a number of studies. The results show that tactile qualities make a message more persuasive, regardless of the informative aspects. "A product package that is interesting to touch may increase sales of the product even if the opportunity to touch does not provide additional product information." (Peck and Wiggins 2006 p. 67) Later studies by Peck and Shu (2009) reveal that touching a product increases the feeling of ownership. One could regard autotelic and instrumental need for touch as two different ways for consumers to make sense of consumption. The outline of this chapter consists of four sections where each package is analysed, followed by two sections where the categories mentioned above are discussed.

## Heineken beer can

The original Coca-Cola bottle is the most famous example of tactile branding in the beverage industry. The bottle, with its characteristic curves, was designed to be recognizable in the dark and even when broken (Lindstrom 2005).



In 2010, Heineken redesigned its packaging and added tactile features to cans, bottles and glasses. The normally smooth aluminium can was furnished with an embossment-like texture, made possible by a new kind of printing ink (fig 1).

Figure 1. Detail of Heineken beer can. ©Heineken Brouwerijen B.V., Amsterdam, 2012

At the launch event for the can in Singapore, visitors were invited to feel their way in the dark through a maze until they reached the bar at the exit. This exploratory tour can be seen as a reference to the genesis story of the Coca-Cola bottle. Signs on the outside of the maze read “Please do touch”. Cans and other promotional material were distributed to the visitors, but the main attraction of the event was the maze that stressed the sense of touch. A common marketing device is to build a giant version of the package for use during events like this one, but Heineken did not opt for this solution, probably because a change in scale would not have attained the desired effect of calling attention to the tactile qualities of the new design.



Figure 2. Heineken print advertisement. ©Heineken Brouwerijen B.V., Amsterdam, 2012

In an advertisement, the copy reads: “The new Heineken can. Looks great, feels amazing.” (Fig 2) Neither the ad nor the can provide any information about the taste of the beer. The new design is clearly directed towards the consumer with an autotelic approach to touch. The tactile features may affect not just the purchase decision but also extend to the actual drinking of the beer. The can is often used as a drinking vessel, which means that the

consumer will not experience the drink separately from the package, but that the can will be part of the total experience of the beer. While you drink a beer, the can fulfils the function of occupying your hand for a while, similar to a cigarette or a mobile phone. This moment is usually long enough for the consumer to obtain familiarity and establish a relationship with the can, which means that the package fulfils an interpersonal function. The bodily memory of holding a can should preferably include the specific texture of the Heineken can, and distinguish it from other beer brands that use smooth vessels. Texture and shape can, in addition to providing hedonistic aspects to a package, also fulfil a practical function, providing a firmer grip.

A bottle has a neck and a mouth, which allows for drinking, whereas the can has no affordances of this kind. The opening of a can is efficient from a production and logistical point of view, but is not pleasant to the mouth, which is the most sensitive part of the body (Weinstein 1968). The new texture can perhaps compensate for this lack. The can might also find a place in a collection, since beer cans are popular collectibles. The tactile qualities of the Heineken can can be a decisive factor for inclusion in a beer can collection.

### Lindahls yoghurt bucket

Another type of package that can achieve a kind of interpersonal function is the plastic bucket with a handle. The tactile experience offered by such a bucket is different from the previous example of the beer can that is more associated with pleasure, while the bucket is rather associated with the function of carrying. The handle signals how the package can be handled and invites the consumer to hold it, and can thus be seen as an affordance. It can also be seen as demanding that the consumer enters into a relationship with it, corresponding to the logic of the interpersonal function. In recent years some yoghurt brands, for instance Lindahls (fig 3), have been sold in buckets that stand out from the mass of rectangular carton packages at Swedish dairy counters.



Figure 3. Lindahls yoghurt bucket

According to Gestalt psychology, the human perception favours simple shapes (Arnheim 1974), which explains why a different geometrical shape of a package can increase its shelf impact. The bucket is a traditional type of package that carries nostalgic connotations to a time before the industrial era in food production, when buckets were used for carrying water or milking. They were made of wood or later of zinc, whereas the material used nowadays is mainly plastic. Other contemporary packages try to allude to nostalgia by their material, for instance glass, and by their closure, for instance by adding a paper or textile cover fastened by a piece of hemp string over the lid of a honey jar. The nostalgic connotations of the plastic bucket rely entirely on its type, not its material.

Are there any practical reasons that speak for the bucket as a yoghurt package? Traditional buckets were mostly used to carry larger volumes than one litre, which is the normal volume for dairy products in Sweden. Such a small volume can easily be carried in one hand, even in rectangular packages without handles, such as the Tetra Brik. From a logistical point of view, round packages are less efficient than rectangular, and from a production perspective, the bucket is more complicated to manufacture, with the handle that has to be fitted separately. For the consumer, the bucket has some advantages: the wide opening allows for inspection of the content, the lid makes the package easily resealable, and above all, in comparison to the carton packages, the bucket can be completely emptied. It is also a steady container that can be reused as a toy or for storing for instance food or paint. Furthermore, it is easy for the consumer to understand how the bucket should be recycled; compared to packages that consist of several materials it is obvious that it belongs in the plastic recycling bin.

The tactile quality of the plastic bucket is not based on a pleasant texture, but on a recognizable and secure mode of handling the container. Grasping the curved, stiff handle of a bucket is a gesture that we learnt as children when we were playing in the sandpit. Like the door handles that Donald Norman explores to show the pitfalls of design of deceptively simple devices, handles for bags and packages come in many shapes and sizes. Due to logistics, in many cases the handles of packages are flat and have to be unfolded before use, as in the bag-in-box. The bucket is more intuitive and needs no directions for use. The bucket could even be seen as an extension of the hand. In the cupped hand, we can carry a small volume of liquid, for example when drinking water from a creek, but we have developed tools such as the spoon, the ladle, the cup and the bucket in order to expand this capability.

## Ella's Kitchen's baby food pouch

Ella's Kitchen is a baby food brand that has become synonymous with its package, a stand up pouch made from plastic laminated aluminium foil. Unlike the rigid aluminium can, the pouch is soft and has an irregular and flexible shape. It has a spout, by which the food can be consumed, and a relatively big hat-like lid, which facilitates the opening of the package (fig 4).



Figure 4. Ella's Kitchen pouch

The seams, especially at the upper part, are broad and give the package a winged appearance. When touched, the pouch feels somewhat chilly and it makes a faint rustling sound when handled. How the sound emerges as a result of the touch is a good example of the interrelatedness of touch and sound. The pouch feels like a hybrid between the metal and the plastic toothpaste tube. The pouch's flexible form makes it interesting to handle for small children, who primarily use the sense of touch to examine the world (Piaget 1952). This is the only package in the study that yields some information about the content when touched, and can consequently appeal not only to children and to consumers with an autotelic need for touch, but also to consumers who have an instrumental need for touch. The interpersonal function is partly fulfilled by the copy on the package, which speaks to the consumer with this concise direction for use: "Shake me, squeeze me + slurp me". The childish style of the writing and graphic design of the package indicates that it is directed at the child, albeit indirectly.

The package has the appearance of a toy with anthropomorphic traits. Above, I described the baby food pouch by using words like "hat" and "wings". One could go even further and describe the pouch itself as a body with shoulders, and the spout as a neck and the lid as a head. Both visual and linguistic means contribute to the anthropomorphic character of the pouch.

Compared to the traditional glass jar, the pouch has several advantages. The child can hold the package and eat out of it on his own, without having to be spoon fed. The package frees the hands of parents and keeps the hands of the child busy, and in this respect, it functions like a feeding bottle. The spout is an affordance within the cognitive reach of a child who is used to sucking the breast or the feeding bottle. In addition, the package is safer because it does not break like a glass jar.

From a branding point of view, the main advantage is that the child interacts directly with the package, something the glass jar did not allow for.

In this way, the child becomes familiar with the brand, and demands it, as the following quote from the blog *Fam Andersson Prenta* reveals:

*Same thing every time it is finished = tears. When I go shopping in the company of Ella, I have to slip them below the baby carriage so she does not see them, otherwise she wants one immediately. (Fam Andersson Prenta 2011)*

Several senses are involved in this interaction: vision, sound, touch and taste. The child recognizes the package through its appearance, how it feels to hold in the hand, the sound that it makes when handled, and the taste and feel of the spout in the mouth. Just as with the beer can, the package is part of the total experience of the product.

### Żubrówka vodka bottle

Similar to Ella's Kitchen, the Żubrówka vodka bottle dressed in a green quilted down jacket with a zipper and a fur collar can be perceived as a human figure. The glass bottle is a common package type for liquor, and the jacket is a promotional addition, issued in a "limited edition". It is an example of the conspicuous use of tactility in the luxury market. The terminology of the bottle echoes of the connection to the human body: a bottle has a shoulder, a neck, a lip and a mouth. The fact that the bottle is dressed emphasizes these anthropomorphic traits. The collar frames the neck and the cap that appears like a small head of a figure (fig 5).



Figure 5. Żubrówka vodka bottle

A round bottle has no natural front – it is the label that designates one side as the front. The jacket works as a reinforced label and tells us how to hold the bottle, in order to meet it face to face, which creates an interpersonal connection. The zipper of the jacket is an affordance that is hard to resist trying out. It is a sophisticated package with "real" clothes that can be put on and taken off, similar to when playing with dolls. The bottle has a screw cap, which makes the opening procedure simple, in comparison to a wine bottle with a cork. Unzipping the jacket adds excitement to and prolongs the opening of the vodka bottle. The materials are conspicuous, soft fur and green shimmering fabric on the outside and a water resistant lining, which certainly invite touching and appeal to consumers who are high in autotelic

need for touch. However, the jacket also has a functional purpose: to keep the drink cold. Similar coolers in the liquor market include the Lanson Rose Champagne pink neoprene cooler with a zipper. In spite of the zipper, this cooler looks more like a cover than a piece of clothing, and consequently is not perceived as anthropomorphic to the same extent as the Żubrówka jacket. However, the neoprene material appeals strongly to the sense of touch, although the Lanson cooler does not offer a variety of materials and details as the Żubrówka jacket does.

Another segment of the luxury market that makes ample use of anthropomorphic connotations and tactile qualities is the perfume industry. Shocking, a perfume launched in 1937 by Elsa Schiaparelli, was packed in a glass bottles formed like a female torso. This motif has been developed by Jean Paul Gaultier in his series *Classique* from 1993 and followed up by *Le Mâle*, which comes in a bottle in the shape of a male torso. Many of the *Classique* bottles are dressed in seductive lingerie, and although these patterns are part of the texture of the glass surface and normally not removable “real” fabric clothes; they are designed to appeal to the sense of touch, and open up the imaginative realm of dressing and undressing. Other brands have chosen to dress a non-anthropomorphic bottle in textile, like Diesel’s series *Fuel for Life*. The flask-like bottle dressed in a worn, brownish fabric with military connotations that agree with form of the bottle are meant for male consumers. The same bottle clad in white or black lace is addressed to a female audience. There is also a more gender neutral variety with a denim cover.

A luxury package like the Żubrówka cooler is expensive to produce. It is decorative to put on the table at parties, and can function as a conversation piece, something the guests can both behold and hold. The jacket is not just a package, rather a hybrid object, an ornament or a decoration, which is not likely to be discarded directly after use.

### **Anthropomorphism and facilitated gripping**

All four packages strive to fill an interpersonal function with the help of tactility and establish a relationship with the consumer. Two categories for this process can be discerned: anthropomorphism and facilitated gripping. These categories are different in kind – anthropomorphism is a wide and complex concept that involves much more than tactility, while facilitated gripping is a more narrow and functional concept. Anthropomorphism both encourages touch and is constructed with the help of tactility, as in the case



of the Żubrówka bottle, where the textile cooler can be construed as clothing and make a bottle appear like a human body.

To show how the chosen packages fit into these categories, a table and a scale have been constructed. The baby food pouch and the vodka bottle both have anthropomorphic features while the other two do not, which is summarized in table 1:

A	≠ A
Bottle with cooler	Beer can
Stand up pouch	Bucket

Table 1. A = anthropomorphic, ≠ A = not anthropomorphic

The same binary logic does not apply to the category facilitated gripping; all four packages facilitate gripping to varying degrees. I have ranked the packages in table 2 as follows: The bucket facilitates gripping the most, because of the handle. Next comes the pouch, which is small and flexible and fits into the hand. Then the can, which is round and textured and has a circumference that fits the hand, and last comes the bottle, which is round but somewhat bigger in size.

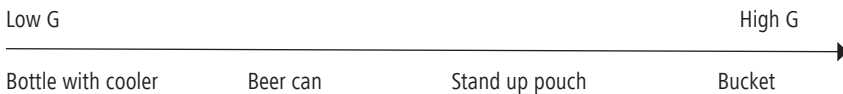


Table 2. Continuous scale for facilitated gripping

All packages in the consumer market need to allow for gripping and holding, otherwise they will make it difficult for a product to be sold. What the anthropomorphic package does is that it demands to become a partner; it looks at the consumer and says “see me, hold me, buy me”, to parody the slogan on the Ella’s Kitchen pouch.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the tables is that the beer can is the package that is most in need of some extra feature, such as the dotted texture, to make it more appealing, since it is neither anthropomorphic nor facilitates gripping to a high degree. The tactile anonymity of the round, smooth beverage container has been remedied by a sophisticated dress for the luxury product and by raised dots for the everyday product. Before the tactile qualities can be explored, however, they have to be seen. In the next section, the relationship between tactility and vision will be discussed.



## Tactility and vision

There is no sharp dividing line between visual and tactile perception. The Heineken event could make use of a physical structure like the maze, but to reach a large audience the printed ad is still the main medium. The Heineken ad (fig 2) shows that a translation is needed in order to represent tactile qualities visually. In the ad, the texture is depicted as even dots. On the can, the pattern is more varied – the dots are of different sizes, resembling a halftone screen, and the medallions that are part of the graphic design are also included as embossed elements.

We often examine tactile qualities through vision, instead of or before actually touching an object. This tension between the tactile and the visual has been explored by artists during various eras. The Spanish seventeenth century painters Francisco de Zurbarán and Juan Sánchez Cotán painted still lifes of everyday, tangible objects such as fruit and vegetables, but the artists have made them appear immaterial. “[Vision] is divorced from tactile space and sensuality: food enters the eye, but must not pass through touch or taste.” (Bryson 1990, 88) The Futurists’ endeavour to create art that was in pace with the developing modern society at the beginning of the twentieth century included painting, performance and poetry. Sound and noise were frequent components of their artworks, which often engaged several senses at once (Bacci 2010). One of the prominent figures, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, wrote the Manifesto of Tactilism in 1921, in which he suggested the creation of tactile boards, offering different kinds of tactile experiences. “It will be difficult for painters and sculptors, who tend naturally to subordinate tactile values to visual values, to create significant tactile boards.” (Marinetti 1921) Instead, he suggested that poets, pianists and typists were more likely to be able to contribute to the development of this new art medium.

In the 1960s, many artists were concerned with mass production and consumption, which was manifested in works where the material played an important role. The Swedish-American artist Claes Oldenburg estranged us from everyday objects like sandwiches and electrical switches by making giant, soft representations of them which make us reconsider their tactile qualities. An artist known for her sculptural assemblages is the German-American artist Eva Hesse, who worked in materials such as fibreglass, polyester resin and latex, giving her abstract works an often elusive tactile quality: “Such surfaces feel so sensuous because of visual effects that could never literally be felt and which make the surfaces almost seem to disappear as tangible things” (Potts 2004 p. 292).

Accordingly, some works in art museums look like they can be touched, although they cannot, while most works in museums can indeed be touched, but must not. The text “Please do touch” written on the Heineken maze refers to the ubiquitous “Do not touch” sign in art museums (Classen 2005). The shop is normally an environment where you are encouraged to touch, but new electronic gadgets with tactile interfaces are sometimes guarded like museum artefacts (fig 6).



Figure 6. Sign in electronics store

## Conclusion and further research

This study has endeavoured to show the importance of tactility for making sense of consumption through packaging. Tactile qualities are used by marketers and packaging designers to increase brand recognition and loyalty. If consumers associate a product with positive tactile qualities it will strengthen the brand. The study has further shown that touch cannot be regarded in isolation, but must be connected to other qualities such as anthropomorphism, and other senses, such as vision. Our hands as well as our mouth provide us with tactile information, as is evident from the case of the beer can and the baby food pouch, where the senses of touch and taste work in consort.

Some themes have been brought up that would merit further research, such as tactile qualities in relation to opening procedures. The aluminium can may be awkward to drink from, but the sound of the tab being pulled is sweet music to many ears and could perhaps be explored in conjunction with tactility to create a unique brand feature. Pulling the cork out of a wine or champagne bottle creates a sound that is intimately connected to the feeling

of luxury of consuming such beverages. How are the positive connotations of this opening ritual going to be preserved when new packaging types are introduced, such as the bag-in-box or the PET bottle with a screw cap? Can the connotations be retained with the help of another sound, or will a tactile experience be a proper substitute?

Another theme for further research is the role of tactility during the different phases of consumption, first when the consumer reaches out for the product in the store, then when the package is handled during consumption, and lastly when the package is saved or discarded. Yet another theme is how tactility could be exploited to increase sustainability in packaging design. Consumer studies could address how consumers experience these aspects of packaging in everyday shopping contexts, using the multisensory approach suggested by Pink (2009) and Ingold (2011).

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## Feminine choice and masculine needs: gender in perfume packaging

Magdalena Petersson McIntyre

*Luxe Pack* is a trade fair for the luxury packaging industry held in Monaco in October each year. In 2009 I was there to make observations as fieldwork in a project on the cultural meanings of packaging, particularly gendered aspects of luxury packages. Hundreds of packaging manufacturers from all over the world had their latest and most prestigious packages on display for new possible clients to see and draw inspiration. Alcan Packaging occupied one of the biggest spots. They presented their latest innovation, a rolling applicator that they had developed for L'Oréal and that “will give a completely new result”. The product had been developed through listening to women through focus group interviews, and the company advised others to do the same if they want to be successful. While the importance of respecting women was brought up by several of the exhibitors, men were simultaneously described as a “problem” yet to be solved.

### Accentuating gender

One section at *Luxe Pack* was devoted to an exhibition on future trends in luxury packaging. Three different trends had been identified by a jury consisting of representatives from different universities as well as the industry. The

first was “Comble des genres/Accentuating Gender”, and was described as follows:

*Masculinity and femininity are taken to extremes, with brands exaggerating their respective portrayals. The world of male beauty is materialized by violence and primary urges, while female beauty takes refuge in the refinement of the boudoir, a bower of seduction and femininity.*

This trend was illustrated with different perfume packages. Femininity was staged with dreams of romantic and girly pleasures of consumption. One of the bottles had a cork made to look like a silver fairy with wings. Another bottle was covered in an over-dimensioned pink bow tie. Others still had caps made of huge plastic daisies and over-dimensioned fantasy flowers. One package was shaped like a music box where a perfume bottle had replaced the usual ballerina. Another carton was designed to look like a wardrobe. A golden diary accompanied one scent and some bottles and cartons were reminiscent of vintage face powder boxes and glass jars. Other bottles were shaped as flowers. Some of the packages were designed as accessories that could be worn, such as key rings and necklaces. One bottle was shaped like a stylized Japanese girl dressed in a sailor suit. White, gold, purple, red and other pastels were favoured colours. Some of these scents were *Féerie* by Van Cleef and Arpel, *Ricci Ricci* by Nina Ricci, *Daisy* and *Lola* by Marc Jacobs, *Music* by Harajuku Lovers, *Chez-moi* by Chantal Thomass and *Fancy Love* by Jessica Simpson.

Half the amount of shelf space was devoted to men's accentuated gender. Sport and expressive symbols of masculinity had inspired the package design, and bottles were shaped like and inspired by footballs, identity badges, fists, tennis rackets and sports cars. Eight scents were exhibited. Of these, five had a rectangular shape. Grey, black, white and silver were the only colours on all of the bottles. Of the three bottles that did not have a rectangular shape, one was in the shape of a football, one in the shape of a fist and one was shaped like an identity badge that could be worn around the neck. The men's scents were only displayed as bottles – no cartons or extra accessories were included. Diesel's *Fuel for Life*. Paul Smith's *Man*, Issey Miyake's *L'eau pour homme*, Cartier's *Roadster*, Offensive, Lacoste, JP Gaultier's *le Male* and Ungaro were some of the exhibited scents.

## Transmutation

Accentuated gender was, however, only described as one of several characteristic way of creating packages. Hence, this description did not claim to include all scents or all future trends. The next trend was called “transmutation”, and was described as follows:

*Consumers are individuals with multiple aspects. They reveal different facets of their personalities throughout a fragmented day: mother/father, work colleague, sensual lover... Packaging reflects this lifestyle evolution. It needs to be discovered from several angles before being fully understood and suggesting the appearance of a distinct shape and feeling. It has to go beyond that first glance to participate in the emergence of a different concept.*

In this trend, gender is not at all present, not even mentioned, except in mother/father, which appear to be equal and exchangeable concepts. It highlights a fragmented and genderless individual who plays different roles over the course of the day. This trend was illustrated by packages that looked different depending on what angle you choose to look at them from – packages that express transformation. For instance, a lipstick from Urban Decay with a picture of a man in the lid; if you twist it, the model gets undressed, if you touch it, it diffuses pheromones. Change, roles and comedy were emphasized. This is a different approach to gender than in the first trend. Identities are roles that individuals step into and out of. Different perfumes help us refine these identities. “All cultural identities are available for all” is the message. There was, however, yet another trend. The third trend was “Apaishment/Soothing”, and was described as follows:

## Soothing

*In these times of economic uncertainty, brands are opting for appeasement. Monochrome colours, rounded or oval shapes, the choice of sober materials, discreet décors and simple messages... Far from reflecting technical simplicity, appeasement allows the product to express itself with luxurious elegance and sobriety.*

This is yet another version where some known unisex scents were also placed. Perhaps this says that appeasement isn’t supposed to have any gender, or that it stands above gender. Gender is something you can choose to do in an exaggerated form and choose not to do in a neutral form.

## Perfume and dislocation of gender

This paper deliberates on meanings of gender in the perfume market, particularly perfume packaging. The observations from *Luxe Pack* pinpoint the ambivalence around which gender and cultural identities matter in this context. As pointed out by Partington (1996), perfume packages and the accompanying advertising campaigns show many different representations of women and men. Women can be sexy, fresh, classic, girly, romantic, sporty and seductive. Women may also be unisex and masculine. Men and masculinity also appear in many different versions, even if the variation is greater for women. Men are shown as sporty, as businessmen, as bad boys, as seductive, as players, as boyfriends and as school boys. Both men and women are shown as sexual and desirable objects of fantasy. Partington (ibid) interprets the diversity of gender in the perfume world as an expression of the inherent instability of gender constructions. Drawing on Judith Butler's theories on gender (1990), Partington sees the diversity of gender in perfume packaging as an illustration of gender as plural, as something that cannot be fixed. The lack of coherency in representations is an expression of a lack of coherency in cultural genders and a sign that gender is performative. The performativity of gender makes up the theoretical base of this chapter, which further elaborates on how the diversity of gender can be understood and what its significance is for interpretations of gender and consumption from a wider perspective in two ways. The first is empirical: The fact that the world of perfume presents a view of identities as unstable and under constant transformation does not necessarily mean that consumers interpret messages in this way or that it is consistent with their acts of consumption. The second relates to consumer choice. The variety of representations of men and women in the perfume world represents a vision of identity as something optional; of the consumer as an individual who chooses goods to express his or her identity.

The chapter revolves around people who, in their everyday profession, relate to the perfume market, its goods and its messages. The purpose is to examine how sense is made of gender, perfume and perfume packaging in this market context. Are fragrances and their packaging understood in terms of feminine and masculine, and if so how? Do the many versions of feminine and masculine have any effects on how people in the industry make sense of gender? The chapter thus aims to highlight ethnographic methods as a way to develop perspectives on consumption and marketing.



## Choice and gender in the perfume market

Through our clothes, perfumes and cars, we show who we are, or who we want to be. Such descriptions of consumption have been repeated numerous times by various market analysts and advertisers, and in turn create notions of consumption and variability, that we can (and will) change ourselves with the help of consumer goods. In these discursively mediated descriptions, gender works as organizing principles. As I will show, when it comes to perfume, choosing is understood as a feminine characteristic.

The quotes from *Luxe Pack* are symptomatic in the respect that they do not claim to say anything true about femininity or masculinity. Tomorrow you can choose to “do” your gender in a different way. Also in the interviews, “doing gender” was frequently understood as being structured by “choice”. Choice was at the same time interpreted as a particularly feminine way of relating to consumer goods; a personality characteristic, or perhaps consumer behaviour, associated with what it means to be a woman.

## Gender in conflict – performativity

According to the philosopher Judith Butler, gender is not expression of an inner identity, expressive but performative; an effect of gender performance. “Woman” cannot be understood outside the way it is staged or performed. Gender is not as an attribute or essential property of subjects but “a kind of becoming or activity... an incessant and repeated action of some sort” (Butler 1990, 112). Gender identity is not the result of physical differences, but of the complex discursive practices in which gender, sexuality and desires are co-produced. Building on speech act theory, Butler sees gender as performative citational practices. They reproduce discourse, but can also work subversively. Gender both enables and disciplines subjects and their performances.

Butler’s model of performativity can be used to understand the discussions of consumer choice in two different ways. Marketing messages can be understood as performative in themselves. According to Butler, there is no cut-out individual, or essence, which is expressed and communicated through consumption and performance practices. The self is constituted performatively in the act and conveyed discursively. Individuals are not predetermined entities but are shaped by the process in which they interact with culture or consumer society. Consumer society can, from this perspective, be seen as an area which people deal with and interpret in different ways. The interpretation process itself is performative. Such a view of the self implies

that consumer society cannot be understood as an arena from which identity is selected. On the contrary, discourses on choice, that identity is optional and a project that the individual works on in the interaction with consumer culture, are themselves performative.

A similar discussion can be found in Cronin (2000). “The individual” is a masculine and ethnically charged category that excludes a variety of people and experiences. The market’s production of choice and changeable identity positions are problematic because they build on notions of identity that are selectable in a process that is closely linked with the problematic discourse of the individual. Gender segmentation, the process where men and women are targeted with different consumer goods by market actors, is thus performative; a process that reinforces cultural beliefs that men and women choose different consumption goods. Gender segmentation does not simply reflect a reality that already exists.

A third way of understand performativity in relation to perfume packages is as material agency. This means that packages do something, make us do things, and that those things are intertwined with discursive constructions of gender. In the context of perfume and beauty care, gender plays a crucial role. Perfumes are marketed mostly to either men or women. There are some unisex scents, though not very many, and some where no gender is stated at all, mostly scents that are so exclusive that they wish to stand above such shallow categorizations. Whether a package says “for him”, “for her”, “unisex” or nothing at all does not necessarily mean that consumers interpret them in that way. Packages have performative agency in this sense. They speak. They tell us who the scent is intended for, “her”, and that “she” is a natural category. They also say that “she” can be enacted in very many different ways and that some of those ways can be masculine and unisex. They also say that those enactments are structured by choice and that “he” has far fewer options to choose from than “she” does.

### Capturing perfume packages

Drawing on observations from *Luxe Pack* and interviews with market actors, this chapter discusses how gender as a process is given meaning in the industry of luxury packaging. Ten semi-structured interviews have been conducted with shop assistants, shop managers, two perfume manufacturers and two buyers. We mostly met in or near their work place. We started with a sit-down interview where we discussed different scents, gender and packages,

and then we walked around in the shop where they worked and they showed me different scents and their packages and talked about what they thought about them and how they did or did not express different forms of gender. Two of the interviewees were men and the rest were women. The men owned a company for men's perfume and beauty products.

### For her and For him

The common sense descriptions of bottles were based on defining specific shapes and colours as masculine. The interviewees often showed a carton or a bottle, and said that this "feels typically manly". Katrin, who works as a sales assistant in a perfume store, says this when she shows me a bottle that is black, rectangular and tall. "I don't know how to explain it," she says. "Maybe it's the colours." The interviewees' difficulties in defining masculine bottles also relate to the way that masculinity refers to a form of absent décor. It is the absence of ornament that makes the bottles masculine, rather than particular details, or perhaps in combination with particular aesthetics. It is therefore more uncomplicated for them to speak of feminine bottles, cartons and packages. These are characterized by particular ornaments, such as little figures, glass beads, extravagant décor and elaborate caps. While masculinity is expressed through particular forms of absence, femininity is expressed with presence, at least on a simpler level.

The design of packages, bottles and cartons is, in this respect, also associated with how the interviewees think about gender and desire. When I ask Pernilla, who also works as a perfume sales clerk, to describe luxury in relation to the different categories of male, female and unisex, she says that luxury is something very different for men than for women. "For men it is not so different from the usual, the everyday," she says. Luxury for women, though, "is a whole different matter". She reconnects to the visual enticements of bottles, corks and ads to appeal to women and believes that it "does not reach the guys that way". Men buy a scent they have decided on and need. "Women think differently," she says. Katrin also thinks it is easier to express luxury in women's packages. "There you can have diamonds and play on bling bling," she says, "but it doesn't work for men".

Absence of décor is not the only convention that characterizes bottles and cartons in the male segment. As described above, package designers continuously try to identify a male visual expression, mostly through references to sports, cars and technology, such as stylized tennis rackets, piston engine

features and MP3 players. The interviewees generally like these visual and tactile styles, as long as they also express a certain “class”. Class is secured through brand names such as Dior and Gucci, and with dark and drab colours. In combination these details express “luxury”. Masculine is thus the packaging that is angular, with straight lines, dark colours and either without any unnecessary decoration or with symbols that refer to masculine culture such as sports or cars. They should be in heavy, thick glass and feel expensive but not flashy. Expressions that, on the women’s side, were seen to attract “desire” such as tinsel, ornaments, bright colours and round shapes, were described as tasteless on the men’s side. Also, forms that were seen as masculine were rarely described as seductive, even when they were found in the women’s side.

### Sliding genders

The masculine shapes could, however, often be found on the women’s side, too. Katrin shows me during the interview a couple of women’s fragrances in packages that fit the descriptions of “very masculine” packages above. These could be square bottles with details of wood or leather and she uses the term “very masculine” to describe them even if they are, to use perfume language, “pour femme”. She tells me that she “isn’t really a girly girl”. She prefers more masculine packaging. However, this year the new packages have been so girlishly adorable and she hasn’t been able to resist them, she says. “Masculine” is, in this sense, a term that can be used to signify an expression associated with women. “Masculine” was also often used to describe unisex. Male, female and unisex do not therefore correspond with men, women and cross- or inter-gender in any simple way. Rather, “neutral” and “masculine” were perceived to be close to each other, while “feminine” was perceived as different and more distinct.

If femininity and masculinity were difficult to characterize, unisex was even more so. Lisa tells me that “unisex is something you rarely mention to consumers. If anything, it is when women ask if they also can use the products.” John and Eric, who run a store together which sells men’s beauty products, give a similar opinion. “Never present anything as unisex,” they advise. “If you have a scent that really is intended for women, but you want to try to sell it to men, you need to do it discretely. Never bring attention to it by presenting it as unisex.” They prefer to “refuse” categorization, they say, but find it difficult since there is no other word than unisex to describe this with:

“This is a scent for both men and women!” (Sales assistant)

“Is it unisex?” (Customer)

“Eh no!” (laughs) (Sales assistant)

This quote was taken from the interview with John where he staged a possible conversation with customers to illustrate the difficulties of unisex.

## Feminine choice

The shapes and styles of bottles were given meanings in relation to what the interviewees thought of as men’s and women’s consumption practices. During the interviews, the interviewed women presented clear views on what they thought of as differences between these. Women, they thought, enjoy their goods, while men buy and use things that they need. These patterns were tied to the package design conventions. Packages look the way they do in order to capture differences in gendered consumption practices, they thought.

The women used themselves as well as customers as evidence of this. An idea of abundance was also related to feminine consumption practices. Women want to have many different products, while men were considered to be happy with one at a time. Suzette, a perfume shop manager, tells me how she is constantly tempted by new scents and products, and buys much more than she can use. She often has to give things away to other family members. She also talks about her desire for different new scents and packages as opportunities, as a bank of femininities that she can choose from. If she is going to a formal dinner party she wants to be “Marilyn Monroe” and puts on *Chanel No 5*. The next day she might want to be a sporty girl and wears a fresh citrus scent. There was no hierarchy placed between the different versions of femininity.

Pernilla expresses something similar. “It is us women who want to have seven different scents in our bags and change every day.” She also tells me how exciting she finds this and how she likes being seduced by new and different goods. “Next year something else comes along and then I will fall for that,” she says. “As a woman you do. We [i.e. staff] fall and so do customers.”

Suzette’s and Pernilla’s stories can also be observed in marketing. The cosmetic brand Make Up Store, for instance, has a “fragrance library”; a series of eleven different scents all described as different women’s personality types such as the romantic *Your Valentine*, the sporty *Champion the Luxe* or the

confident *Gold Digger*. These descriptions build on discourses about “who we are” as something optional that we can choose to change by means of the consumer goods we buy. They also reinforce this as particular feminine ways of relating to these goods.

### Masculine needs

Conversely, masculinity was given meaning in terms of needs. During the interview with Katrin, she guides me around the store where she works and tells me that they have chosen not to take in too many different brands for men because it becomes confusing. “Men cannot cope with the choices that arise when the range is too wide,” she explains. The store has tried, she says, but it failed. Moni, who works as a sales assistant in a duty free store, takes up a similar theme. She shows me the area with skin care products for men in the shop where she works. Clarins and Biotherm are the two leading brands, and can be seen at most cosmetics departments. Clarins has developed a symbolic language for its men’s packaging, and Moni tells me about a course she attended where the symbols were introduced and explained. A drinking glass on the package shows that it is a moisturizer; a battery shows that is revitalizing; “0%” printed on the package tells us that the product does not contain alcohol. For Moni this makes complete sense. She and the other girls on the course did not understand the symbols, but “the guys did immediately”. In the shop they work well too, she says, because male customers see what the jars contain and understand their function.

### Choosing genders

Lena, who is retail coordinator at a major Swedish cosmetics and perfume retailer for duty free goods, also gives me a similar description during the interview when I ask her to describe the perfume market. “It is different nowadays. People don’t just have ‘their scent’, buy it and stay happy,” she says. “Men” are a growing market, she continues, but adds that this year there actually hadn’t been many new products for men. Not compared to for women. Just like at *Luxe Pack*, Lena describes future trends as on one hand “exaggerating femininity” and on the other as “extremely neutral”. You can be “clean” today and a seductive Lolita tomorrow. Genders, feminine and masculine are presented as choices that can be chosen or discarded.

Lena shares the view of men's and women's consumption practices described earlier, and from that perspective is happy to tell me about an episode where she had observed a change in this. At a time when she was walking around in a department store she noticed all the men in the perfume section that seemed to be "just standing there, looking and smelling their scent samples". She was surprised to see this, she tells me, because she had yet not realized that men had become so independent, sure of their own taste and capable of making their own consumption choices. "Wow, these men are really making choices," she said to herself. "Really, 'women' are more interested in new products. Guys keep to the things they know work. But it has become more accepted to be straight and interested in grooming," she adds.

At *Luxe Pack*, the concept "Fragrance wardrobe" was discussed as something that helped launch the idea to consumers that you can have many fragrances at the same time, not just one. Lena says this about "fragrance wardrobes":

*I thought of it myself. Made it up (laughs). Then I read about it. You choose. Today I'm black. Tomorrow I'm blue. No one should tell me who I am. Here is the wardrobe. Who do you want to be today? We offer you a wardrobe of scents. Wardrobe is a good description. You wear it like a piece of clothing. More and more people are starting to realize the potential of having many fragrances. You become curious. Who would I like to be today and who could I be today?*

Lena describes unisex, too, as a possibility or a choice; you don't need to feel confined to defined genders, you can choose what you like. Nothing is a given.

Anna, who is a buyer at a major Swedish department store, tells me something very similar. You should choose a scent that you like and not worry too much about whether it is for men or for women. Scent is personal and changeable, and we should have a wardrobe of them. Buy many different fragrances and choose the one that suits you today, she advises.

### Consuming stable masculinity

Lisa, who runs a shop where she sells beauty products for men, felt that "guys needed an environment where they feel comfortable and at home in order to take the first step to start shopping". Men's beauty is an exciting market, she thinks, since it deals with what she calls "breaking taboos; what you may and may not do". "It is not really about male beauty. You don't sell

to make them better looking. It's more a case of problem-solving, health and a holistic concept. Not about looking good or young, but about getting a good shave, looking and feeling fresh." For Lisa it is important that beauty and skin care "make you feel masculine", and she uses needs and functionality as values to prove that practices and products are for men. She talks about shaving as "a way in". It is easier to show a product if it is connected with shaving, she says. She shows me some "classic razor knives" that have just arrived. "That's what's coming now. Old, primitive and classic, it's traditional and for many it is very masculine," she says. For Lisa, it is important to point out that beauty practices vary culturally and historically, and that masculinity and beauty have been understood in different ways throughout history. She wants to challenge stereotyped genders and does this by highlighting needs that remain unacknowledged because of cultural definitions of masculinity, and thereby illustrates an understanding of masculinity as a feeling that consumer goods help to bring out; bodies and minds become masculine with the help of objects and scents. It is a view that defines masculinity as a project of consumption, but anchors it by referring to more stable definitions of masculinity such as needs and function.

John and Eric, who have also developed their own brand of fragrance, also point out the culturally specific aspects of scents and gender, and emphasize that the way in which fragrances are received varies around the world – male here, female there, and vice versa. They also talked about the difficulties involved in trying to break free from the conventions of perfume packaging. They didn't want to reproduce what they thought was sexist picture conventions, but at the same time found it difficult to know what was right or wrong when it comes to gender equality. The references used in the world of perfumes such as beauty, desire, passion and luxury cannot easily be transformed into new expressions that communicate to the world of perfume without using the same meaning-making. One aspect that was considered particularly difficult was how to portray the male body: "It is really difficult to use male nudity if you want to reach a 'straight' clientele," one of them thought.

## Conclusion

During my fieldwork, I repeatedly encountered descriptions of women as beings in constant search of new consumer goods and of men as rational consumers who buy and use the things they need. Perfume packages marketed to men were interpreted by the interviewees as expressions of functionality



and rationality. Packages marketed to women were described as desirable, fashionable and changeable. In line with this, women – both the interviewees themselves and other consumers – were described as being driven by desire and a pursuit of novelties, and men as more rational consumers that buy and use scents in order to satisfy particular needs.

Masculine consumption was, in the interviews, understood in terms of needs, while feminine consumption was understood in terms of choice. At the same time, cultural identities, such as gender, were presented as choices, too. But it was feminine gender more than masculine gender that was described in this way. However, while on the one hand masculine consumption was defined as based on needs, on the other hand men are increasingly included in – and both addressed by and through – the pleasures of consumer society (Mort 1995, Nixon 1997). There was a certain ambivalence around this development. Masculine consumption was not always understood or represented as being based in needs in the perfume world, but in my findings masculinity seemed never to be based in choice. This means that men and masculinity on one hand are increasingly included in the desires of consumption. On the other, need and function continuously structure the sense-making processes around masculinity, perfume and consumption.

To dream of goods is not just about having them on the bathroom -shelf, but of the possibility to temporarily be that woman that the product relies on, play with identities and not be stuck in something that others have decided. The fact that abundance and choice are associated with femininity also says something about the cultural perceptions of gender. The superfluity of femininities in turn makes masculinity seem more coherent. While different forms of femininity or different female subject positions seemed non-hierarchical and like a selection of choices on the market, masculinity emerged as more hierarchically structured.

When gender is presented as a “choice”, it is interpreted as a game. Anyone can choose a feminine scent with a pink fairytale creature on the cork, a man, a woman or someone who doesn’t conform to gender norms at all. This also sheds some light on the descriptions of “exaggerated gender” by *Luxe Pack*. “Extremely girly” becomes possible, desirable and meaningful when it is not seen as the only choice, but as a temporary one. It resists saying anything true about feminine essence, and claims that tomorrow you can choose to “do” your gender in a different way. It also follows that “exaggerated gender” is not questioned, but seen as something to indulge in, temporarily. While the interviewees on one hand said that you can choose whatever you like, they

also gave clear interpretations of what constitutes femininity and masculinity or unisex, and in what ways they themselves – as well as customers – made sense of this.

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## Sex and the City – Eyes on consumption aesthetics

Jenniina Halkoaho

*Sex and the City* is a sitcom/comedy series based on the novels of the American writer Candace Bushnell. The first episode was aired on TV in the United States in 1998. It soon achieved worldwide success and was nominated for more than 50 Emmy awards and 24 Golden Globe awards. TV viewers in the Nordic countries also started following the series (e.g. in Finland and Sweden in 1999). After six seasons and a total of 94 episodes, the series continued in the form of two feature films: *Sex and the City* in 2008 and *Sex and the City 2* in 2010. Basically, *Sex and the City* (hereafter SATC) is about a middle-aged columnist named Carrie and her three female friends. The storylines focus on their urban and stylish lives in New York. Over the years, the series has evoked both popular and academic interest with its outspokenness when it comes to sexuality and culturally expected gender roles of women. It has also offered an illuminating picture of contemporary consumption culture in wealthy western societies.

This chapter concerns *Sex and the City 2*, which sends the four friends on a holiday to sunny Abu Dhabi. In this chapter I will elaborate the nature of consumption experiences aroused by this movie among female moviegoers in Finland. Rather than adopting a postfeminist perspective or that of media discourses in popular culture, this chapter focuses on how consumers experience and reflect on the movie.

In prior consumption studies, movie consumption has been approached as a collective phenomenon, such as in terms of the formation of fan culture (e.g. Kozinets 2001). It has also been recognized as a form of experiential, hedonic and aesthetic consumption with a focus on individuals' subjective experiences (e.g. Batat and Wohlfeil 2009; Cooper-Martin 1991; Eliashberg and Sawney 1994). The analysis is based on a phenomenological-hermeneutical research approach, delving into subjective consumption experiences and meanings. It is particularly relevant for media marketers to understand the different ways in which consumers relate to and experience media products, because on the one hand the media are significant objects of consumption and on the other hand they mediate marketing messages. This chapter illustrates how movie consumption provides intrinsic and extrinsic value for its consumers and how it extends from the viewing situation into their daily lives. In the spirit of postmodern view to consumer behavior, the consumer is seen as an active meaning-maker, indicating that the consumer buys a ticket to the movies not only to entertain herself, but also in search of a certain lifestyle, life stories, peak experiences and feelings (Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver 2004).

The purpose of this chapter is to discover how *Sex and the City 2* -movie is consumed and experienced, more specifically, what kind of value does it give to the female viewers. The first aim is to analyze what characterizes this movie as an experiential object of consumption. The second aim seeks to identify the meanings that consumers connect with the movie, especially how women consumers interpret it in the context of their life-worlds. Finally, I will discuss how the production decisions giving greater role for the consumption aesthetics in the movie are reflected and realized in the consumption experiences of the movie.

### **The Sex and the City series as a mirror of contemporary consumption culture**

As a cultural phenomenon, SATC has attracted academic interest, especially among media, culture, and feminist researchers. (Post)feminist research (Brasfield 2006; Moseley and Read 2002; Gerhard 2005) has focused on its woman-centred drama and discourses of female sexuality and independence. To my knowledge, SATC-related studies in the field of consumer research are still lacking, although prior studies have identified some interesting characteristics of contemporary consumption culture in the series.

Media researcher Jane Arthurs (2003) has pointed out that the SATC series is part of a wider cultural trend, postmodernism, as the lifestyles of its main characters successfully combine bourgeois and bohemian values. Moreover, in the spirit of postmodern consumption culture, the main characters entwine leisure-time and work in their lives, harnessing both for the individualistic purposes of self-fulfilment and expression. Media researcher Helen Richards (2003) points out another postmodern characteristic of the series: the urbanized way of life.

The series captures the essence of luxurious life in New York City by staging realistic scenes of Manhattan streets, coffee shops, bars, and art galleries. The main characters dine in the trendiest and finest restaurants and go shopping in designer boutiques. New York thus becomes an intrinsic part of the lives of the main characters. Also, Handyside (2007) has argued that the city plays a major role in SATC, being described as a magical place to which the main characters become strongly attached. Carrie's voiceover directs our view of Manhattan as if it were being promoted as a tourist destination.

According to Arthurs (2003: 83, 90), SATC joins together the styles of a sitcom and a glamorous women's magazine, presenting the view that consumption is about lifestyle and identity construction, rather than purchasing daily commodities. In this spirit, the choices of clothes and shoes become a means of expressing moods and personalities. Kuruc (2008) has semiotically analyzed the role of fashion in SATC, describing the series as a kind of 'urban fashion show' since fashion greatly contributes to the characterization of the main characters. Kuruc (Ibid. 192) also states that SATC "reinforces gender-based stereotypes with the use of fashion". Consumption is connected with both pleasure and obsessions since the women in the series are pictured as compulsive shoppers who are dedicated to fashion. The series not only draws from the world of fashion, but also contributes to it. SATC has inspired many fashion bloggers, and its actors, such as Sarah Jessica Parker, have become style icons for fashion magazines and been clothed by top designers.

The notion of the connection between womanhood and consumerism has been discussed in prior movie and TV studies. Nikunen (2005: 238–239) has noted that especially melodrama and soap opera have been approached as genres that speak to women as consumers and enforce their social identities as the primary decision-makers when it comes to consumption choices in their home territory. For its part, the study at hand continues this line of thought, while adopting the theoretical frame of consumption studies. SATC mirrors postmodern consumer culture and exemplifies how a media product can entwine aesthetics in women's consumption experiences.

## Production aspects of *Sex and the City*

*Sex and the City 2* was filmed in New York and Morocco in 2009. The budget of the movie was approximately 70 million dollars. Because the main characters wear brands such as Dior, Alexander McQueen and Pucci, and walk in shoes by Christian Louboutin and Manolo Blahnik, the budget for clothing and accessories was around 10 million dollars (Murray 2010). This shows that the movie placed a special emphasis on consumption aesthetics. Costume designer Patricia Field and production designer Jeremy Conway were given major roles in the production and visualization of both the series and movies. Michael Patrick King, executive producer and screenwriter, even let costume designer Patricia Field give her input on the script for the show – such as devoting screentime to a Parisian haute couture dress even though it did not have a reason for being featured in the episode.

Furthermore, the production team of the movie has revealed that a special emphasis was placed on the visual design of the apartments of the main characters, right down to the smallest details. Every visual choice, what everything should look like, was carefully considered during the production team's roundtable discussions. Jeremy Conway stated that his central goal as the visual designer of SATC was to make a viewer who does not already live in New York wish that she would get a chance to go there because it looks so great. New York plays a noticeable role in the scripts of the series. The main characters feel free and at home only in Manhattan “because they love New York and New York loves them” (Handyside 2007: 417). Sohn (2004: 101 in Handyside 2007: 407) feels that the SATC production succeeds in creating a feeling of a New York that is both realistic and aesthetically stylized. In production terms, this meant that approximately 40% of SATC was filmed on actual locations in New York rather than in the studio.

SATC embodies a specific consumption ideology. One of the dialogues between the main characters serves as an illuminating example of how it puts across this ideology. When considering whether to buy a luxury bag, the main characters conclude that it does not matter whether the bag fits one's own style as long as others can tell that the owner is wealthy and has a high status. Shoes provide another example. They have been given a special role in the scripts of the series and movies. Shoes are a passion for Carrie, which becomes evident both visually and verbally. The production team has set out to ensure that Carrie's love for shoes is believable for the viewer even though the viewer herself might not share this passion. It is thus evident that the role of consumption aesthetics and luxurious lifestyle in SATC is not

a coincidence but driven by production decisions. The great care put into clothing and set design, both in the series and in the follow-up movies, further highlights the role of aesthetics in the production.

### **Gaining insights into the movie experiences of *Sex and the City***

Video-recorded theme interviews with moviegoers constitute the main empirical data in this chapter. The interviewees were all women who attended a sneak preview of *Sex and the City 2* a week before its premiere. The interviews were conducted in the summer of 2010 at a movie theatre in Vaasa, Finland. The interviews were conducted immediately before and after the screening, thereby shedding light on spontaneous movie experiences. In a holistic sense, a movie experience begins when preparing for the movie and continues after it ends, such as when discussing it later. However, in order to examine the deepest meanings and long-term experiences of the moviegoers, an in-depth interview or narrative collection method would be required.

Altogether, seven theme interviews were conducted with 15 women in groups of 2-3 persons. The interviewees were each assigned a code – N1-N15 – for the purposes of analysis. Due to the nature of the situation, the interviews were short, about 5 to 10 minutes. The interviewees differed somewhat in terms of their age and life stage, ranging from young students to middle-aged workers. Most of the women lived in Vaasa, as the preview tickets were sold only to members of a women's fitness club in that city. The tickets were in the same price range (10 euros) as ordinary tickets. Thus, those who came to the sneak preview were not motivated by the desire to take advantage of a discount.

The themes of the interviews covered different dimensions of a consumer's relationship with SATC. In practice, the interviewees were asked about their motivation for seeing the movie and what in particular interested them in it. The interviewees had a chance to talk about their experiences regarding the SATC series, how they prepared for the movie, and their further plans for the night. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked to think if they could find concrete examples of how SATC extends to their daily lives, such as in the form of merchandise and coffee table discussions with friends about the show. The interviewees were asked whether they can identify with the main characters and whether the lifestyle described in SATC fits their own lives.

Secondary data for this chapter was taken from the Home Box Office (HBO) site, which provides SATC-related information such as interviews and

video material (HBO 2010). I collected data from ten short video clips and six photo galleries showcasing the styles of the main characters. This material gives a good reflection point to the empirical findings on the consumption experience of the movie.

A phenomenological-hermeneutical approach is adopted in analyzing consumption experiences. Accordingly, the focus is on emotions, thoughts and activities that relate to movie consumption from a consumer's perspective. My interest in the empirical data lies in the broad range of the experiences and their depth and intensity. In this task, Holt's (1995) typology provides an analytical tool that sheds light on the movie's autotelic and instrumental value for a consumer as well as subjective and social facets of movie consumption.

### **A movie as an experiential object of consumption**

A movie is a typical example of an experiential product. Watching a movie is a leisure-time activity in which the underlying reason for consuming is to experience and enjoy (Cooper-Martin 1991). The experiential view of consumption sees consumption as a phenomenon that is about having fun, experiencing heightened emotions and dreaming (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). The hedonistic, emotional, aesthetic and symbolic features of consumption are emphasized. Holistically, Schmitt (1999) has recognized that in addition to the senses, emotions, thoughts, physical action and social context play a role in consumers' experiences. A movie theatre can be seen as an experiential stage; the big screen and sound system heighten the senses of consumers (Pine and Gilmore 1998: 102).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) have recognized that the quality and intensity of a consumption experience depend on the level of the consumer's participation and immersion in the consumption situation. The authors (*ibid*) name four kinds of experiences based on these dimensions: 1) aesthetic, 2) entertainment, 3) escapist, and 4) educational experience. We can consider watching SATC to be an entertainment experience, since it involves passive participation, where a consumer adopts the role of a follower – someone seeking to be entertained. However, as all movies are visual, there is also an aspect of aesthetics involved. Moreover, we may state that the consumer's decision to head to a movie theatre instead of staying at home is a sign of active participation in the experiential stage. Also, the presence of other people in a movie theatre makes a difference to how the movie is experienced, much in the same way as spectators do to a sports event. Furthermore, Thompson



(1995) reminds us that consumption of a media product always requires an act of interpretation. In the same spirit, Hirschman and Thompson (1997) recognize that consumers have different interpretive strategies for media products: identification, inspiring, and rejecting. In this regard, an experiential product relates to discussions on symbolic consumption – “what does this movie mean?” Accordingly, a media product may well provide very different kinds of value to different consumers.

### **Intrinsic and extrinsic value of a movie experience**

The discussion above points out that a movie experience does not typically provide clear functional value for a consumer. Instead, it is generally valuable for its intrinsic qualities as a pleasurable experience (Holbrook 1980). However, the consumption experience may relate to a consumer’s aim to learn about his/her culture or get ideas for how to live his/her life. In this way, movie consumption may provide extrinsic value for a consumer (Venkatesh and Meamber 2008: 45). Holt (1995) has built on this idea by outlining acts of consumption in terms of their structure and purpose. With regard to *structure*, Holt distinguishes between acts that relate to the object of consumption (object actions) and acts that happen between consumers during consumption (interpersonal actions). The *purpose* of consumption is divided into autotelic and instrumental goals of consumption. On the basis of these dimensions, Holt (1995) identifies four different metaphors of consumption. 1) Consuming as experience and 2) consuming as play are of autotelic value for a consumer, whereas 3) consuming as integration and 4) consuming as classification manifest extrinsic value, which refers to symbolic meaning-making and thereby contributes to the formation of the consumer’s individual and social identity.

*Consuming as experience* highlights the hedonic, aesthetic, and emotional aspects of consumption that are experienced subjectively. We may notice that this metaphor resembles the entertainment and aesthetic experience types identified by Pine and Gilmore (1998). Holt (1995) further states that ‘accounting’, ‘evaluating’ and ‘appreciating’ are key cognitive tasks of a consumer in terms of this metaphor. In essence, we may see that consuming as experience is motivated by the aim of ‘gratifying the self’ (cf. Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006). *Consuming as play* refers to communing and socializing in the typology of Holt (1995). The consumption situation itself is entertaining because it involves sharing an experience with others and discussing it

together. In this sense we may consider that social interaction enriches the consumption experience. *Consuming as integration* is a metaphor that relates to the formation of a personal relationship with an object of consumption or the consumption situation. In this case, consumers ‘assimilate’, ‘produce’ and ‘personalize’ the meanings carried by the consumption, that is, its symbolic properties. In terms of this metaphor, consumers both make and modify meanings. We may also see that a consumption experience provides a practical resource for a consumer when enabling and expressing self-identity (cf. Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006). *Consuming as classification* refers to a consumption experience that involves using an object of consumption as a means of grouping and sharing meanings socially. Certain consumption acts and objects can unite consumers but also differentiate between them. This kind of consumption experience helps a consumer to make sense of his/her self and others in social encounters.

Holt’s (1995) typology is based on empirical examination of the consumption of a baseball game. It is interesting to see whether *Sex and the City 2* shares anything in common with this different kind of spectator event. In fact, the scriptwriter and director of the movie, Michael Patrick King, claims that the success of the movie lies in its nature as a women’s party, which is likely to have a similar meaning to women as Super Bowl (final in American football) has to male spectators.

### Characteristics of *Sex and the City* – movie experiences

In general, the interviewees felt that *Sex and the City 2* was appealing and highly entertaining. Almost all of the fifteen women interviewed said that they had been very interested in the SATC TV series and thought that the movie continued the story of the series and the first movie. In this spirit, one of the interviewees (N4) said, “The first movie was so good that I wanted to come and see the second one too.” Also, one of the women (N12) interviewed right after the movie said that she had high expectations after seeing the first movie, and fortunately she was not disappointed. On the other hand, not all of the interviewed women, such as N5, had high expectations for the movie; some, for example, had read negative reviews. This comment also highlights the fact that preconceptions and expectations have an impact on experiences.

The emotions evoked by the movie appeared to be primarily very light-hearted and joyful. For example, woman N9, who was interviewed before the movie, expected that “There will be some laughs and maybe a touch of

romance.” The movie seemed to provide hedonic and entertainment value in particular for the women spectators. In the light of this, one of the interviewees, N14, described how she prepared for the movie night: “Party clothes on and off you go.” Moreover, the women, such as N3, pointed out that “they have come to spend time in fun company.” This notion highlights that moviegoing is a shared experience involving interaction with fellow spectators. One of the interviewees, N11, emphasized the communal aspect of the movie by arguing that “This movie has to be seen together with a group of female friends.” She thought that a movie night could not be a success without company. The movie itself might even be of secondary importance to the movie night, as woman N7 pointed out: “This movie is just one in a bunch of many.” This woman had a somewhat distant relationship with the movie; in fact she had come to the movie theatre more because of her friends, rather than for the sake of the movie.

The movie is one element within a more holistic experience. For example, one of the interviewees, N11, said that for her the evening at the movie theatre meant a fun time together with friends. She added that “A small-scale evening out together with friends means a ‘Sex and the City moment’ for them, after which it’s time to go back home where their men are waiting.” It appears that the movie became a kind of celebration of womanhood and female friendship. In this spirit, one of the women, N13, said that she was “really moved by all the female energy that filled the movie theatre.”

In addition to entertainment, the interviewees emphasized aesthetics in their *Sex and the City 2* movie experiences. Woman N12 stated that “There were many eye-catching moments in the movie.” Aesthetics impart pleasure to a movie experience; for instance, interviewee N9 commented that the movie was “upbeat and visually beautiful.” Both the characters and the scenery were sources of aesthetic pleasure. After seeing the movie, interviewee N11 concluded that “Women are gorgeous at any age.” The researcher noticed that the moviegoers had dressed up for the movie night. Many had shown up in high heels. Supporting this idea, one of the interviewees, N12, said that she appreciated her fellow moviegoers by stating, “It was great that everyone was dressed up. It added to the atmosphere.”

The abovementioned entertaining and aesthetic characteristics were not the only aspects of the movie experience. For many, the movie also provided meanings that integrate it into their daily lives as consumers. The interviewees said that the aesthetic surroundings presented in the movie inspired travel fever; they wanted to “just go somewhere.” Some of the interviewees (N4,

N14) were more specific: “I’m most interested in going to New York.” One of the interviewees, N12, stated that “The movie was pretty good PR for Abu Dhabi. I guess that many of those who have thought of heading to Dubai are now considering whether to travel to Abu Dhabi instead.”

In addition to travel fever, the women noted that the movie influences and inspires other consumption choices. In fact, one of the interviewees, N14, confessed that her primary motivation for watching the movie was to “see the fashion in it.” The movie gave the audience tips about clothing and knowledge about the trendiest brands in the markets. The interviewed friends N12 and N13 had sent SMS messages to each other about their choice of clothes for the movie night: “I’m sure you’ll put on those ‘Manolo Blahniks,’” referring to the brand of shoes that the Carrie character adores. However, these ladies had to admit that they unfortunately do not own these luxury shoes. Another pair of interviewees (N10 & N11) mentioned that they went to have ‘Cosmopolitans’ before the movie in preparation for it. Cosmopolitans tend to be the drink of choice for the main characters in SATC when they are going out. Some critical voices were also heard. N8 felt that the events in the movie were too outrageous and the clothes far too “high fashion” to suit her own life.

The movie also enabled responding to the social and cultural encounters of the audience and provided them with food for thought because it “was about topics that are not typically discussed aloud” (N13). SATC has, for example, shed light on some taboos on sexuality and evoked discussions on the roles of women in culture. Interviewee N7 said that she is interested in the “hype around the movie.” She thought that *Sex and the City 2* was less interesting as a movie than as a topic of discussion. In particular, the movie highlighted differences between eastern and western cultures. In fact, one of the interviewees, N14, said that she would protest against women’s subordination, just like Samantha did in the movie.

The interviewees felt that they could connect well with the movie as women and related to the characters’ struggles in managing relationships. SATC seems to be able to unite women with its topics. One of the women, N13, was convinced that “every woman should come and see this movie.” The personal relationship with the movie also has an aspect of identification. The interviewees said that the main characters possess some personality traits that one can easily identify with, and that the main characters’ thoughts about love affairs resemble their own. For example, woman N12 asserted that “one can well identify with the movie since it has something to offer for every

woman in different life situations.” One of the youngest interviewees, N9, said that she could not identify with the lifestyle of the older ladies in the movie, but felt that some of their personality traits resembled hers. However, in general, the interviewees recognized that no single character was exactly like themselves; they had to mix the personality traits of many characters in order to be able to identify with them. Identification with the movie characters also occurred at a broader group level in terms of being a woman from a western culture. For example, woman N13 said: “It was great that it tackled cultural issues, showing how different the status of women is around there [in Abu Dhabi].” Consumers also made classifications in the sense that they rejected some of the characterizations of lifestyles put forward in the movie as being unrealistic. Woman N11 said that the movie “just depicts a kind of dream life that a middle-aged working woman from Vaasa like myself cannot really relate to.” In the same spirit N10 said, “Sure it would be nice to wear ‘Manolos’, but I don’t have any in the closet now – and it’s unlikely I will in the future, either.” Notably, the women did not judge the luxurious lifestyle shown in the movie; it just did not fit well with their own life. As a consumption spectacle, *Sex and the City 2* revolves around the idea that everyone is entitled to everyday luxury and a hedonistic lifestyle.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to discover the nature of women’s consumption experiences related to a *Sex and the City 2* movie night. The movie was approached as an experiential object of consumption that not only entertains and is a source of consumption aesthetics, but also has instrumental value in consumers’ daily lives and carries symbolic meanings for the purposes of integrating and classifying at the individual and group levels. These movie consumption experiences are outlined in Figure 1. As was expected based on previous literature, the aspect of ‘movie consumption as experience’ became evident since watching a movie is a specific leisure-time activity. The interviewees considered the movie entertaining and noticed the special emphasis put on visual aesthetics in the production design. As a result, they experienced the movie metaphorically as ‘*aesthetic fireworks*’. ‘Movie consumption as play’ attaches to the idea of having a fun night together with friends and especially to dressing accordingly for the evening. This brings us to realize that a movie might become a ‘*women’s party*’, which also inspires discussions after the movie is over. ‘Movie consumption as integration’ becomes apparent when considering

the highlighted gender aspect, which is a result of the great number of female moviegoers and the ‘team spirit’ among them. It also appeared that movie consumption gives the viewers the possibility to personally identify with the movie characters’ personality traits and relationship issues. The movie also gave inspiration for clothing choices and travel. That is why we may metaphorically characterize the movie also as a *‘fashion show and a travel guide’*. The fourth metaphor, consuming as classification, becomes apparent when the moviegoers compare the lifestyles and stories of the main characters to their own lives. On one hand, the movie serves as a manifestation of a dream life, and on the other hand as a means of reflecting one’s own life. As a result, the movie experience becomes a *‘mirror of one’s own womanhood’*.

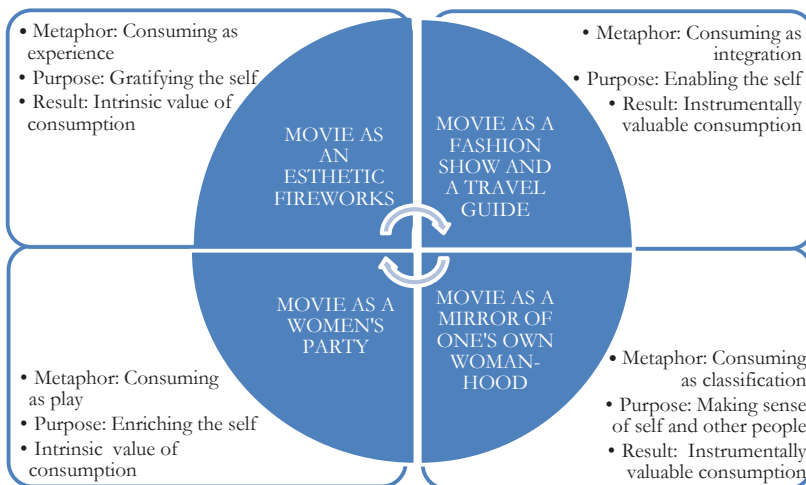


Figure 1. Sex and the City 2 movie experiences

In conclusion, this chapter supports the findings of prior studies on SATC as a cultural phenomenon, in which womanhood, a luxurious lifestyle and consumption aesthetics are among the striking themes that come up. As a whole, *Sex and the City 2* can be seen as a versatile object of consumption. Primarily, it is about an experience that is appreciated for its qualities, since it entertains and is a pleasure to watch. However, it also has characteristics other than aesthetic and hedonic characteristics. It involves personal meaning-making, serves as an inspiration for consumption choices, enables classifications of lifestyles and cultures, and has a power to unite people. A

movie experience can be emphasized by any of these aspects rather than by a single, exclusive means of consumption. The respondents' relationships with the movie varied from distant to close. This can be explained by consumers' different life stages, interpretive strategies, and motivations for viewing the movie. The high degree of care put into the production of the movie does not directly define the interpretations made or how the movie is experienced, but it does seem to play a major role. Therefore, we may see that the focal task for the production team of a movie is to facilitate the kinds of consumption experiences that strengthen a consumer's relationship with the movie product. Pine and Gilmore (1998) remind us that the best experiences combine different types of experiences. As in this case, consumers would not experience their SATC moment as just a collage of beautiful clothes; they can also identify with what they see, recognize different lifestyle choices, and recognize the characterizations of their own consumer culture and share a fun night together with their friends. In the light of this, the *Sex and the City 2* movie was a success.

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## Imagining economy and consumption in Finnish newsreels in the 1950s and early 1960s

Minna Lammi & Päivi Timonen

The modern Finnish market and consumer society was not born out of a void. It required a change in economic activities for the transition from an agrarian society to an urbanized industrial and service society to take place. Changes also occurred in people's attitudes towards the new economic system and their role in it. Finns were advised and educated to operate in a complex industrial society and take the initiative for their own wealth.

The advent of Finnish consumerism can be traced to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the liberalization of the retail trade into rural areas in 1859 resulted in a manifold increase in the number of shops. The first rural shops were modest establishments, selling mostly groceries and clothes (Hentilä 1999, 27-29, 100; Hoffman 2004, 23). But the birth of consumer society, as it is understood today, is considered not to have taken place in Finland until the 1960s (Heinonen 1998), when the country had recovered from wartime shortages and regulation.

Internationally, newsreels were typical documentary films in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until television replaced film as the dominant medium. They were born during the silent film era, and were especially popular during the world wars. Shown in movie theatres, they were part of the entertainment business, but also an important means for propaganda, particularly during the war years. The propaganda perspective is also well represented in research literature about newsreels (e.g. Atkinson 2011; Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 2004).

In the Finnish field of media in the 1950s and 1960s, short films played an important part in public outreach and educating the public towards a new kind of economic thinking (Lammi 2006; Lammi & Pantzar 2010). The 1950s in particular were a golden age for both feature and short film production. There were two big companies producing feature films in the country, Suomi-Filmi and Suomen Filmitoimisto (SF), which ensured competition as well as continuity in the field (Laine 1995, 74-75). Short films sold well because movie theatres had an interest in showing tax reduction films before the main feature of the evening.

The system of giving short films a tax reduction status, which began in 1933 and was created to invigorate the film industry, established this exceptional type of film for the following three decades. Since short films portraying business and industry qualified as tax reduction films, an active market for commissioned films was also born. Besides commissioned films, newsreels were a significant genre of short film, starting from the years of war. The tax reduction practice kept the volume of produced short films high all the way up until 1964, when the system was abandoned (Uusitalo 1981, 283).

Newsreels, just like other tax reduction films, were shown in movie theatres as a “prelude” to the main feature, which meant that they received large numbers of viewers. They became common practice in Finland in the late 1940s. A law enacted in 1948 required that in newsreels with a length of 200 meters or more, at least 100 meters of the footage had to be shot in Finland. In many of the newsreels, the foreign material was usually featured at the end, as a “kicker”. Films with tax reduction status were required to be screened in conjunction with a particular feature film. The objective was to keep movie theatres from running the same old tax reduction films week after week (Laki leimaverolain muuttamisesta 1948; Uusitalo 1965, 73-77; Uusitalo 1977, 171-179). The subjects of the newsreels were usually entertaining, and in the domestic material the share of sports, recreation, consumption and entertainment was high. The newsreels reached larger audiences than newspapers and radio (Ristimäki 1996).

There were various companies in Finland that produced newsreels, but many of them did not stay in business for long. Finlandia-Kuva, which was initially owned by Aseveliliitto, an association supporting soldiers on the front and their families, was established to produce newsreels on the war, but as the military operations turned into trench war, more was required than mere footage from the front. Aseveliliitto sold Finlandia-Kuva to Suomi-

Filmi in 1945, which continued producing Finlandia newsreels up until the tax reduction law was repealed in 1964. The Finlandia newsreels were one of the most longstanding and significant newsreel series ever produced in Finland (Harrivirta 1983, 108–115; Ristimäki 1996, 257–259; Uusitalo 1965, 76; Uusitalo 1977, 173, 201, 203). It is for this reason that we chose as the focus of our study the Finlandia newsreels, which despite their popularity have not been researched to any larger extent before.

The arrival of television in the late 1950s in Finnish homes rendered the movie theatre newsreels redundant. Along with the end of the tax reduction system, newsreels and documentaries moved over almost entirely to television in the late 1960s, and the filmmakers had no market for much more than advertisement and commissioned films (Toiviainen 1983, 115; Uusitalo 1984, 222–226).

This chapter proceeds from the perception that films are products of culture which are influenced both by the prevailing production structure and by the audiences. By shaping worldviews, general opinions, values, attitudes and behaviour, films are an important forum for exercising societal power (Kellner 1998, 46–47). We emphasize equal attention to discontinuities and insignificant-looking developments as to continuities or impressive changes. We are interested in both the apparent and the hidden meanings of films, and in their relationships to the times when they were born.

We pay special attention to how economy and consumption were portrayed in Finnish newsreels and what the activities shown in the 1950s and early 1960s were during the five sample years of our study. We perceive ‘economy’ as a special sort of entity that is metaphorical by nature. It is visualized in activities and can therefore be brought under empirical work. We interpret ‘consumption’ as part of the economical system focusing on increasing private wealth.

This chapter is a part of the research project *Imagining Economy in Finnish Advertising and Journalism*, which studies cultural representations of economy in the Finnish public sphere from the early 1950s to the new millennium. During the time period under study, the intensification of economic exchange turned the largely agrarian Finns into modern economic actors, resulting in new modes of economic discourse that proliferated in the Finnish media.

## Sample years, research data and method

In this article we examine Finlandia newsreels (in Finnish Finlandia-Katsaus, later FK) from 1954, 1956, 1957, 1961 and 1962. The last Finlandia newsreels were made in 1964. The sample is based on a principle applied in the research project of choosing the sample years based on the occurrence of important events. We have chosen 1954 as our first sample year, when even the last rationed foodstuffs became available on the open market (Pihkala 1982, 453–455). From the 1950s we have also picked out the year 1956, when Urho Kekkonen was elected President, the country drifted into a general strike and Finland joined the UN, and the parliament no longer regulated the prices of, for example, agricultural products or rents. In 1957, the economic crisis in Finland was resolved through devaluation of the Finnish mark and foreign trade was deregulated (Jussila et al. 2006, 260-261, 265; Pihkala & Soikkanen 1982, 363–364).

At that time, the weakening international economic trends started to affect Finland, too, and the growth of production was stalled. Sawn timber, pulp and paper still brought in the largest part of the export revenues. The economic crisis of 1957 was triggered in the autumn of that year with a devaluation of the Finnish mark, combined with measures to deregulate foreign trade. Through the freeing of trade, the country shifted towards a new era of international integration (Jussila et al. 2006, 276-277; Kuisma 2009, 197-199; Pihkala 1982, 370; Pihkala and Soikkanen 1982, 364).

As our sample years from the early 1960s we chose 1961, when Finland joined the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and 1962, when discussion on consumer policies started to gain momentum both internationally and in Finland. In the early years of the decade, relations with western Europe were negotiated from the framework of maintaining the special status of the Soviet Union. In their discussions in September 1960, the leader of the Soviet Union after Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, and Urho Kekkonen reached an agreement on how Finland could look after its important markets in an integrating Europe without endangering its relations with the Soviet Union. In 1961 Finland became an associate member of EFTA, which was formed by the countries that remained outside the European Economic Community (EEC). Around the same time, Finland entered similar agreements on trade relations with the Soviet Union as with the EFTA countries (Jussila et al. 2006, 279).

In 1961, private incomes were quite high, allowing Finns to consume more than ever before. In the following year, 1962, US President John F. Kennedy

delivered a speech on consumer rights. Subsequently, the construction of consumer policies, in their modern form, began also in Europe, with the objective of increasing consumer safety and legal protection and ensuring the rights of consumers to information and being heard as a market participant. The first Finnish consumer policy body in state government was Kuluttajain neuvottelukunta (Consumer Advisory Committee), founded in 1962.

The data were chosen from the sample years by picking out from the newsreel content listings material dealing with money, businesses, trade, consumption, production, and the national and private sector economy. On the basis of the data, we have listed the dates according to their original classification dates. A random sampling was taken of the dates so that one half of the dates fell into the sample. With this technique, a total of 81 Finlandia newsreels were selected for the data.

Ever since the 1970s, the emphasis of film research has increasingly shifted towards popular films and films have been studied more as systems of symbols and meanings than as art (Hietala 1996, 43–44). In our reading of the data, we drew from the tradition of social science film research, where media material and especially moving images are examined as a historical phenomenon. It places emphasis on how films are made under specific circumstances and how they serve specific purposes (for example Bordwell 1985, 2005, 2006; Bordwell, Thompson 1986, 1994; Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson [1985] 1996). In viewing the data, we focused on how economy and consumption were featured in the newsreels.

The newsreels were magazine-type by structure: One 7/8-minute reel included several topics. Sports, arts and exhibitions were common subjects. The foreign sequences could deal with, for example, scientific discoveries or the conquest of space. Our sample of 81 newsreels contained around two hundred inserts that dealt with economic issues.

The Finlandia newsreels were mostly black and white, and they did not include authentic sound, such as interviews or music. The soundtrack was made up of background music and the narrator's speech. The amount of narration was usually very limited; the narrator would, for example, explain who was speaking at an event but not comment on the content of the speech. The narrative lines usually consisted only of a few sentences, even if the visual material went on for two or three minutes. This expanded the significance and role of the visual material in the newsreels. After the narration, music started to play in the background. The style is reminiscent of the era of silent films when live music was played in theatres in the background of films.

In the following, we will examine the newsreels in two specific aspects. First, we will look at how production was featured in films. Second, we will show how ceremonious events were important for building up trust in the economic system. However, our data do not display the historical changes in economy and consumption that were the starting point in choosing our sample years. On the contrary, the newsreels appear fairly similar throughout the period of scrutiny.

### **Production-centered films carrying on tradition**

The inserts in the newsreels introducing production processes were backed by a longer tradition of production-centered films. Factories and their production processes were actively introduced in Finnish short films as early as the 1920s and especially the 1930s. The main emphasis in these films is on the machinery. The films mostly focus on what the machines do and how effective they are. The workers just stand by the machines, nameless, and usually faceless, too. The film serves as an eye through which people get to see for themselves that an industrial product is usable, hygienically manufactured and safe. The camera brings into the consumers' view the preciseness and high level of hygiene of the processes, which would otherwise remain invisible (Lammi 2006; Lammi and Pantzar 2010).



Minister Eeli Erkkilä takes an automatic long-distance telephone call from Jyväskylä in 1962. National audiovisual archive.



The method of filming machines was similar in both the newsreels and the other short films of that time. The machines were usually shown in effective close-ups, with glimmering cogs, wheels and other moving parts featured in rhythmic and fast motion. Technological development was often associated with national identity and new technology also made the rebuilt, renewed country stronger on this front. The idea of increased welfare through machines, familiar from the first decades of the century, was perhaps no longer connected with just the machines but, more so, with industrialization as a whole (see e.g. Kettunen 1994, 210).

Ilkka Mäyrä compares a human being, as a molder of nature, to a magician. Even the word for machine in Finnish, 'kone', has in the etymology of the Finnish language referred, besides tools, to a 'trick', 'prank' or 'plot', and the corresponding verb, to 'conjuring'. In this view, technological man rules over nature, like a magician at his best (Mäyrä 1997, 229-232).

In addition to the effectiveness of industrial production, the camera also reveals problems that are invisible to an uninformed outsider, and how they are dealt with. The viewers get to see, for example, an electric eye which in a coffee roastery separates the "rogue beans" from the good beans (FK 506), or the camera focuses on modern scales where a policeman is weighing trucks on their way to a flimsy and weight-restricted bridge (FK 512). The markets do their business and the viewers can rest assured and go on with their lives.

In the period between the world wars, the idealization of machines still kept the workers in the background. The machines did all the work, with practically no need for human intervention. But the labor shortage during the Second World War changed people's attitudes: The belief that machines could do everything was abandoned. Of course, a large part of the production still took place without machines. The newsreels show, for example, sites where power plants (FK 554), bridges (FK 553) and schools (FK 229) are constructed without the aid of machines. This, while tracing the market journey of Bulgarian strawberries from the fields to the dining tables of gourmands in Berlin and Moscow (FK 538).

The change in the traditional lifestyle set off by industrialism and a consumption-based social structure gave rise to various questions of trust as the public found itself making new kinds of choices and facing new kinds of risks. In capitalist market economies, the distribution system is one central factor that structures society and where trust is constantly measured. According to Zygmund Bauman (2001), in the modern world people are con-

stantly seeking equilibrium between safety and freedom. This kind of modern lifestyle also lays emphasis on trust in various actors and institutions.

Educating the public to adopt new practices and skills also played its own part in the building of trust. At the opening of Finland's first motorway, the public is told that the left lane is meant for overtaking and the road is not meant for pedestrian use (FK 538). The reels introducing equipment for digging ditches (FK 571), earthmoving (FK 553) or the industrial production of foodstuffs (FK 506) remembered to mention that human labour is still indispensable in their operation. The movement of products to markets outside Finland was also an important theme. The newsreels served to build understanding of the way in which markets operated in terms of, for example, the global movement of raw materials, product quality factors, novelties and acceptability. The role of public authority and professions is also strongly visible in the newsreels (e.g. FK 505, FK 524, FK 580 and FK 596).

In daily life, trust is one of the key elements of interaction. For exchange to take place in the markets, the market participants must have sufficiently similar views on the nature of their actions. In economic research, trust is given a crucial role, as it increases the predictability of how people act, makes them adjust to changes faster and enhances strategic flexibility. Trust has been recognized as a significant aspect in, for example, the trade of investment commodities, client relationship management-led marketing and other forms of production and marketing based on cooperation (see Blomqvist 1997; Seppänen et al. 2005).

### **High points build trust in the economy**

Economy and consumption are featured in the newsreels in the form of ceremonious events and state visits. This is the key difference when compared to other tax reduction films of that time, which usually centered on introducing new, commendable practices and industrial production (Lammi 2006). Two thirds of the inserts in the Finlandia newsreels deal with exhibitions, official visits and other ceremonious events. Less than a third of the content deals with introducing new products and devices, or other novelties.

Industrial high points featured strongly in the content of the Finlandia newsreels, such as the completion of the construction of a tricot factory (FK 253), the launch of an ice-breaker (e.g. FK 228) or the roofing ceremony for the construction of the new Otava publishing house building (e.g. FK 238). In the other short films, the emphasis was usually on industrial processes, while

the newsreels preferred to highlight ceremonious events. It was important to also show that the events were attended by prestigious guests. The aspects of ‘attendance’, making appearances or achieving something new, were given more importance in the newsreels than the production processes.

The importance of public appearances was especially recognized in the context of international policy and contacts between states (e.g. Koski 2005). The newsreels strongly highlighted the trade relations between Finland and the Soviet Union and the mediating role of President Kekkonen. In the 1950s and 1960s, the idea of President Kekkonen watching over the nation’s interests, his ‘gaze’, played an important role in assuring the public. The President’s visits to trade fairs and factories were staple material in the *Finlandia* newsreels. In different shots, his enthusiastic eye looks at Polish, Hungarian or Czech products on display in the Helsinki Trade Center (e.g. FK 512) or assesses a cow while exploring agricultural research and its results in Canada (FK 572).

The newsreels also show President Kekkonen building trust in and demand for the products of Finnish industries. The wide range of production and industrial know-how is presented to state guests in production plants and at testing grounds (e.g. FK 536, FK 544). High-ranking government officials from the Soviet Union in particular were taken on tours that lasted several days, showcasing the Finnish metal, wood processing and textile industries (e.g. the newsreels on Nikita Khrushchev’s visit from 1957 FK 333-335, or the newsreels on Leonid Brezhnev’s visit from 1961 FK 560-562). Trade with the Soviet Union played an important part in the Finnish economy for several decades.



Leonid Brezhnev’s visit to Finland in 1961. President Kekkonen in left. FK 560. National audiovisual archive.

President Kekkonen was the nation's number one trade negotiator and, for example, the signings of trade agreements (e.g. signing of trade agreement between Finland and Soviet Union/FK 631, or the handing over of ice-breakers/FK 351) were ceremonious moments that were also popular subjects for the newsreels. In the newsreels, technology was strongly highlighted and linked to the economy through employment opportunities.

The portrayal of President Kekkonen as a constructor of Finnish industry, on the one hand, and of Finland's success in trade and politics, on the other, is typical of the prevailing time. It should be noted that in a traditional agrarian society people were used to co-operating at a personal level, and trust tied into this level was therefore central. However, modernization processes, industrialism and nation building shifted the co-operation from personal to an institutional and system-based level, where trust is tied to societal structures (trust production – see Zucker 1986). In the newsreels, Kekkonen served as a personal builder of trust and as a mediator of trust both domestically and internationally, especially in the direction of the Soviet Union.

During the period under study, Finland was taking its first steps from an agrarian society towards market economy and liberalization of foreign trade. Along with the reparations following the Second World War, the national income declined and was, at its worst, only 5-6 percent of the GDP. The war reparations directed capital and labour into the metals industry (Pihkala 1982, 342). After the war reparations programme ended in 1952, economic development was steered by the expansion of international markets and scientific/technological progress.

In Finland, the state assumed the task of determining and controlling the quality of the products that entered the markets, perhaps partly by chance. The strong role of the state was connected with the volatility and essential role of foreign trade in the construction of welfare.

## Conclusions

In this chapter we have looked at Finnish newsreels and how economy and consumption were featured in them. The data especially highlight economic structures and public appearances. Although ceremonious events can be interpreted as “news”, they were more entertainment than journalism. Shown in cinema theatres before feature films, the newsreels were part of the entertainment business as well as a continuum to the tradition of propaganda films during the Second World War.

When looking at the 1950s and 1960s, the role of the state in overall trust in the economy becomes increasingly strong. The state, and especially its leadership, took an active part in the construction of trust in the economy. As Jens Beckert (2009) has pointed out, markets can operate only if three inevitable coordination problems are resolved: the value problem, the problem of competition and the problem of cooperation. The notion of trust is central in the cooperation problem. If the trust is questioned, the stability of economic, political and social systems is threatened (Sztompka 1999). Trust is central to all transactions. Our view is that in post-war Finland the participation of the state in value formation took place especially in the context of trust building.

Trust can be regarded as a response to expected future behaviour (Lundvall 1996, 14). According to Kirsi-Marja Blomqvist (1997, 277), there is some empirical evidence of positive functions of trust in relationship development and cooperation. Blomqvist (1997, 282-283) stresses the importance of trust in the construction of partnerships and in cooperation. Insecurities, vulnerabilities and risks connected with economy create a need to build trust.

Finnish newsreels actively visualized cooperation between government and the private sector. With potential buyers, trust in products manufactured in Finland was forged through showy events. In a social structure where the role of the state leader was constitutionally constructed to be exceptionally strong, the president became not only the leader of foreign and domestic policies but also the leader in market building. President Kekkonen assured buyers in the newsreels, usually state leaders of other countries, that Finnish production was reliable and of high quality.

As the state forged trust in production, it involved itself not only with the principal theme on the markets, decreasing the asymmetry between sellers and buyers, but also with price formation, where the participation of the state produced markers of quality and thus had an impact on the valuation of products.

In the newsreels, ordinary citizens were featured as both workers and consumers. Even though workers were usually mentioned in speech only referentially, in the visual material they are present, primarily, doing work, while consumption plays only a subsidiary part. The national post-war ethos was, first and foremost, to reach full employment and ensure economic growth and wealth. Daily life meant working on construction sites and in offices and factories. Consumption, in turn, meant a state of exception, such as Christmas with its festivities and presents.

President Kekkonen came to build a self-image among Finns as good producers and sellers rather than consumers. Finns were assured of the effective functioning of the market by the buyers' interested eyes and contract signatures. In his speeches and writings, Kekkonen (e.g. Kekkonen 1952) emphasized investments, not consumption. Still, he took part in the building of trust in creating cooperation opportunities for export, but also, by the same token, for domestic consumption. This imbalance is visible in the newsreels, where the importance of export and its possibility to build wealth for Finland and Finns was emphasized.

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## Second-hand values and the making of a green fashion eco-market

Cecilia Fredriksson

### Alternative consumption practices

In the years before and after 2010, Sweden's charity chains had their best years on record. Sweden's oldest and largest charity organisation, *Myrorna*, which is run by the Salvation Army, made a profit of around SEK 30 M in 2009. The Head of Development at the head office of *Myrorna* told *Göteborgsposten* that there was "enormous growth" and identified several explanations for the success of *Myrorna*:

*Consumers are showing great interest in second-hand bargains and finding unique things, coupled with a rising commitment to the environment and an awareness of recycling. But I also think it's down to several years' hard, long-term work. At Myrorna, we have worked hard at developing our stores, and at training our staff and management. (Göteborgsposten 2010-02-28)*

Following in welfare's footsteps are a number of alternative consumption practices that can be interpreted in different ways, such as consumption as a process of reflexivity and subjectivity constitution (Lury 2011). Even though the most prominent expressions of welfare are no longer physical products (Du Gay & Pryke 2002, Amin & Thrift 2003), consumption practices are intimately linked to materiality (Campbell 2005, Miller 2005) and modernity (Slater 1997). Today, quality often means that goods or services have been

produced and handled in accordance with certain ethical norms (Moisander 2008). We are seeing a growing interest in ethics, the environment and social responsibility, while the individual is being expected to realise himself or herself through creative and sustainable consumption. This coincides with the establishment of more and more markets for recycled, second-hand and used goods. In fashion and retail, “vintage” has become an aesthetic expression; in design and in arts and crafts, different techniques of “Do Redo” are being used. Flea markets and second-hand stores are informal economies constituting increasingly larger recycling practices (Gregson & Crewe 2003). The Western recycling culture of the 2000s is a complex phenomenon in between vision and daily life. Here, networks of actors, markets and services arise which handle our abundance in various ways. Which recycling practices are evolving in different markets and how can we study these? In what way are different recycling economies being organised, and how are value and sensemaking expressed?

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and analyse some of the value creating processes in phenomena such as second-hand, recycling and eco-fashion. The empirical departure point of the study is the charity organisation *Myrorna*, which runs thirty or so second-hand stores in Sweden. The study is part of an ongoing research project investigating how different types of “green stores” create successful sustainability strategies in different ways through interacting with their customers.

### Stores in the green marketplace

Stores play a key role in contemporary consumer culture and constitute a significant arena for business and pleasure, as well as for social and cultural reproduction (Falk & Campbell 1997). Stores selling second-hand items, and carrying out recycling, have their specific historiographies. Recycling can be regarded as a deeply culturally-rooted universal phenomenon (Gregson & Crewe 2003). In the Western welfare context, however, recycling takes on a specific significance through the transformation of used goods that has occurred during the post-war period and subsequently. Second-hand stores and flea markets are today well-established phenomena associated with both rational need-based consumption and hedonistic enjoyment shopping. Taking a departure point in how the second-hand store *Myrorna*, as a concept and an experience, forms part of various sensemaking practices, I investigate how a specific form of “green value” (Moisander & Pesonen 2002) is constructed.

I approach value creation as a transformative process performed through a nexus of practices (Shove et al. 2012). To understand the multi-dimensional character of value creation, we must then understand how different practices are interconnected into a value creating process. One ongoing trend is “green fashion”, with all that this entails. In the sustainability trend’s fashion media expressions, terms such as “slow-fashion” and “eco-fashion” are well-established concepts in the market for fashion (Blanchard 2007, Fletcher 2007, Black 2008). The study focuses, from an overarching perspective, on market practices in terms of how these are expressed through the actors’ interactions with each other and the market as an organisation in a broad sense (Warde 2005, Callon & Muniesa 2007, Ingram & Shove et al. 2007), taking its methodological departure point in a culturally-analytical perspective (Sunderland & Denny 2007). By investigating how recycling practices interact, cultural contexts and structures significant to sustainability issues on a more general level can be made visible.

A fundamental departure point is focusing on markets where recycling is integrated on an everyday level. By studying how contemporary recycling practices are expressed in a day-to-day media context, specific norm and value systems are made visible. Here, the empirical grounding becomes an import gateway for creating an understanding of individual sustainability strategies’ specific conditions and, by means of refining a number of significant themes, “the generally recognised statements” characterising our shared conceptions of, for instance, ecology and sustainability are laid bare.

## Approach

My methodology for this part of the study is based on an inventory and analysis of a number of cultural themes within the field of *fashion*, *ecology* and *sustainability* in terms of how these were given shape in the Swedish press during the early 2000s. These phenomena have for a time been current public topics of conversation in Sweden. In various media, there are constant discussions and negotiations concerning both fashion and sustainability, and the empirical material for this study is made up of how the link between a second-hand store like *Myrorna* and phenomena like ecology and sustainability is expressed between 2000 and 2010 in the Swedish press.

The purpose of this broad approach is to obtain an understanding of how *Myrorna* is portrayed in the public media daily press debate during a certain period. The intention has not been to measure occurrences in the

media material but rather to gain an insight into *how, in which way* and in *which context* *Myrorna* is written and talked about. In total, 83 Swedish articles have been gone through over a ten-year period where the search term *Myrorna* has been linked to different combinations of the terms ecology, fashion and sustainability. Departing from this broad empirical material, the focus has subsequently been on social media with the aim of creating a limited and surveyable body of material for further thematisation of *Myrorna's* link to the identified consumption practice which, in a broad sense, can be designated *green consumption* (Connolly & Prothero 2008, Moisander 2008, Fuentes 2011).

The approach of this study is based on the classical cultural analysis and takes its point of departure in the cultural themes constituting the significant component parts of a culture or phenomenon (Boje 2001, Czarniawska 2007, Sunderland & Denny 2007). Meeting the obligations of the consumer society is an ambivalent practice with moral implications that contain strong elements of both freedom of choice and regulation (Bauman 1998).

### Myrorna as a subject for research

By way of introduction, an example of a common media representation of the second-hand stores' growing popularity during the 2000s was given. Frequently, the increasing level of recycling is explained (as it was quoted in the introduction) as a practice in between identity-creating fashion consumption and ethical sustainability thinking: *Consumers are showing great interest in second-hand bargains and finding unique things, coupled with an increasing commitment to the environment and recycling.*

In the same way, descriptions of a charity organisation like *Myrorna* swing between similar poles. In 2010, *Myrorna* was nominated "Green Capitalist of the year" by *Veckans Affärer*, garnering praise for collecting 10,000 tonnes of textiles annually; something which, according to the magazine, entails a "real saving of natural resources compared to if these had been newly produced". When the newly-hired business developer took office in 2008, she expressed a strong need to break the polarisation between the idealistic and the commercial attitude towards recycling, but promises, naturally, that she "is fervently for idealism" (*Dagens Nyheter* 2008-08-18). When a new MD was to be appointed later on, the Chairman of *Myrorna*, who himself works completely idealistically, tells us that the search went on for a long time as many declined the post due to the wages: when you take a job with *Myrorna*, you have an objective other than the wages themselves. This operation, which

is over one hundred years old, has established a high level of trust among both donors and customers and, according to its own calculations, each SEK 100 note that ends up in the cash register provides a societal profit of SEK 300. It is felt that the price tag is calculated using factors such as reduced resource consumption and increased employment for people finding it difficult to get back into working life. When in 2010 the magazine *Market* listed the trademarks that had increased most during the year, *Myrorna* was in the list of the 10 highest ranking, and when *Myrorna*, during the same year, enlisted the help of graphic designers to create carrier bags that were nice enough to charge for, it was “with the intention of sending out a signal that this is a modern organisation that loves recycling”, wrote *Göteborgsposten* the same year.

*Myrorna* is a phenomenon which is typical of the times and which has a long history in Sweden (Nilsson 2012). The historical link is also something that can become a part of the personal life history, and it is not uncommon for consumer careers or style histories to be described by means of relating them to *Myrorna*:

*My mum and grandma always had nice clothes. And I was allowed to visit Myrorna myself and buy stuff when I was 11, it was then that my collecting began. I still have fun stuff that I bought back then, like old bags with crocodile heads. (Dagens Nyheter 2007-12-30)*

This is how one of Sweden’s style icons describes her life of fashion in a newspaper interview entitled “I was ahead of Madonna”. The title signals the fact that corsets were being bought from *Myrorna* a long time before Madonna started this trend in the fashion world. Buying used goods has, in different ways, become a leading trend and the importance of communicating with the consumer is crucial to non-profit and commercial operations alike. Today, personal, unique and aesthetic fashion is often in demand. The low-budget trend in retail does not, however, offer many channels for innovative Swedish design. The fashion scene is dominated by a few major actors and the large chains most frequently become the employers of newly-qualified fashion designers. The majority of these reject the possibility of starting up businesses of their own. In the Swedish fashion world, the retail side is often seen as a problematic bottleneck which new design work seldom succeeds in getting past (Fredriksson 2011). On the other hand, both designers and the retail trade have made use of the opportunity to collaborate with a non-profit operation like *Myrorna*.

## From alternative consumption to green collaborations

In the spring of 2009, department store group Åhléns announced that it was considering not burning discarded and unsalable clothes. These would instead be donated to charity organisations who in turn would sell these discarded clothes. On its website, this collaboration was made public with the following statement:

*Åhléns values relationships and collaborations. We're taking part in several collaboration projects with actors whom we consider to be making a significant and important contribution to society. We support the relief work done by Myrorna and the City Mission by handing over items which we can't sell, thus extending the lives of these goods. ([www.ahlens.se](http://www.ahlens.se))*

An organised collaboration around recycling is initiated and the department store group's initiative is debated spiritedly for a few days on the net when opinions swing between rational and ethical themes. The collaboration between Myrorna and the retail trade would be followed by several more examples. The collaboration between clothing chain Lindex and Myrorna is described as a "formula for success" whereby customers are urged to hand in their old garments to a Lindex store, which in turn passes them on to Myrorna, and the customer gets a gift coupon as a reward. The green collaboration practices mentioned in the material are often described as examples of, or as being connected with, terms such as "sustainable", "recycled" and "ecological". A fashion chain such as MQ is also initiating similar collaborations with Myrorna. A further example is 700 employees of Coca-Cola Sweden helping Myrorna for a day to repaint premises, collect goods and coach sales staff from Myrorna, while insurer Trygg-Hansa's staff are having a volunteer week working for Myrorna at a number of locations in Sweden. (Svenska Dagbladet 2010-07-07)

Even though several different operations in the Swedish market are linked to green collaboration practices with *Myrorna*, collaborations with the fashion companies are the most frequent. The recycling of clothes is the thing most strongly linked to these collaborations, and it is clear that this practice has become a business concept which has garnered many positive opinions. Collaborations like these must be interpreted against the backdrop of a recurrent criticism of consumption which today is largely about "the dirty fashion industry" becoming a key symbol for unsustainable affluence consumption. When IKEA, for instance, held a seminar in connection with

the much debated IKEA exhibition at Liljevalchs in Stockholm, there was criticism of, among other things, the furniture seldom meeting the standard for the second-hand market:

*In the fifties, you could put an equal sign between quality and variety. But the world is changing and today we should be buying furniture from Myrorna. (Dagens Nyheter 2009-08-28)*

Linking quality to recycling is a value that can be related to the increasingly close relationship between fashion, design and recycling. If the world's largest furniture store sells products that cannot cope with being upgraded in the second-hand market, there are instead plenty of other actors who are willing to recycle.

## Recycling becomes fashion and design

*Susanne Beskow gives textile refuse a new lease of life. This Swedish fashion designer has taken on stained and tattered shawls from Myrorna and transformed them into luxurious pleated handbags using old necklaces as glittering shoulder straps. (Sydsvenskan 2009-11-08)*

Transforming used goods through design is a well-established phenomenon today. The practice of re-sewing, making new from old and making use of what was on offer was once a necessity, but has now become a creative practice for both the everyday consumer and the established designer. This is how designer Susanne Beskow explains the process underpinning the *Van Deurs* brand in an interview:

*I wanted to do something about the mountain of refuse. From something that was chafed and worn, a new product has arisen with a twinkle in its eye, almost like a pastiche. Many of the bags were sewn together from tourist shawls from Rome and Venice, for example. (ibid)*

Collaboration with *Myrorna* resulted in a collection of bags that were put on display and commanded a price of SEK 2,200. The designer also explains that this high price is due to all the work that went into each bag; these are unique and are made in the Swedish textile town of Borås. *Myrorna*, too, has a business concept that is a clearly pronounced philosophy of making a profit. The organisation explains that it is open to both e-commerce in second-hand books and auctioning expensive antiques via an auction site

like Bukowskis. When *Myrorna* staged its spring show in 2003, a team of experts consisting of designers, stylists, makeup artists and fashion designers of different kinds showed what could be done with second-hand clothes and other things that had been donated to the organisation. In a hall of mirrors at the celebrated Grand Hotel in the university city of Lund, the theme of the season, “vintage”, was interpreted on the basis of fashion icons such as Vivienne Westwood, Comme des Garçons and Yves Saint Laurent.

“It was a long time ago that YSL ladies came across the catwalk so self-evidently and elegantly,” commented journalist Katarina Tornborg on the event in *Sydsvenskan*:

*God knows from which epoch the frilly skirt and its associated corset comes, but does it matter? The shawl and the shoes alone show the desire to have fun with the 60s... This is the big colour this spring, in any case. Tulle, frills and knitwear in soft apricot and orange tones. Note the footless stocking. This is guaranteed to be a hit this year. This is how you can combine all-wool and knife-pleated with an extravagant waistcoat. Why would a jacket not be festooned with flowers? This is the audacious thing about Myrorna's display. A “why not” characterises the entire style... Silk, velvet, rags. (ibid 2003-02-11)*

A common explanatory model for the growing interest in the second-hand clothes of *Myrorna* and other similar operations is the frequent fashion shows and events that are held. By staging and dramatising used goods together with reliable fashion icons and a lavish catwalk, the old goods are transformed into something modern that lacks the “poverty marker”. However, approaching the fashion world also means that the boundaries between the exaggerated consumption of luxury goods and ethical recycling have to be managed, renegotiated and restored.

### **When recycling becomes luxury fashion: the green eco-paradox**

When second-hand fashion becomes too first-rate, something important risks being lost. “Used clothes, irrespective of age, should have a relatively low price,” is the opinion of Swedish designer and style icon Camilla Thulin. She makes it clear that the basic idea behind the second-hand culture is that it represents an “alternative way of dressing – and living” (*Göteborgsposten*). In *Borlänge Tidning*, journalist Pernilla Ohlin is of the opinion that “the poor look is expensive”, describing her experiences of vintage while recently visiting the Swedish capital as follows:



*A few weeks ago, I was strolling around the Söder district of Stockholm with a friend who was on the lookout for something “new” to wear. I was not having much fun but went along anyway. In one of the boutiques along Hornsgatan, I saw a beautiful shawl with roses on it. Made of a simple polyester material. Reasonably new. A hundred at the most I thought and turned the price tag over – they wanted 440 for this piece of cloth! With eyes wide open and an insulted expression, I hissed at my friend to come over. Were they completely mad in this boutique? Welcome to Stockholm, he grinned, and carried on picking his way through the clothes. (ibid 2009-07-03)*

Used goods stand out in certain contexts as “the status symbols of the new age”, and the author of the article above is also of the opinion that “you need both time and money to furnish your home with the right stuff from a bygone age”. We also expect old goods to be cheaper than new. The staging of a worn lifestyle demands a clarification that lays claim to a lot of time.

The defence of the worn and torn has often been described as a consumption-critical practice and an expression of an alternative and sustainable lifestyle. However, sustainable practices pre-require, in many ways, a specific lifestyle awareness. The history and power of attraction of the patinous is interestingly intertwined with the history of the consumer society. As Grant McCracken (1988) has described it, things with a patina were once important evidence that people were in a good position, both then and in the future. With consumption becoming individualised, fashion changed at an ever increasing pace due to choice increasing. It became important to put oneself on display as a well-to-do individual who could afford, and had the opportunity, to buy new things the whole time. The significance of patina disappeared and it became more difficult to differentiate between people. The historiography of the significance of the patinous is interesting and thought-provoking in relation to our own age. One can interpret it in terms of patina restoring a value which creates attraction. The link between patina, status and green second-hand eco-fashion is interesting in relation to the debate concerning recycling as luxury fashion.

A crucial debate concerning luxury fashion in Sweden’s media debate was started when the trendsetting researcher and author Nina Björk declared war on the hysterical home furnishing trend in national daily *Dagens Nyheter* and refused to “rebuild her kitchen”, instead declaring that she wanted it to be truly worn, torn and tattered. When “the world is on fire and the earth is overheated”, we must not, according to Björk, get hung up on “trivialities like

a new lamp”. In a similar way, author Sisela Lindblom went on the attack in her novel “The Shameless” against the female practice of carrying extremely expensive bags, thus starting the Swedish fashion criticism designated “the bag debate”. Criticism of luxury bags grew further when the editor-in-chief of Sweden’s biggest fashion journal *Damernas Värld*, Martina Bonnier (2008), published the book “Fashionista”, which showed bags from the major fashion houses costing hundreds of thousands of crowns.

The bag, specifically, is a complex and value-creating key symbol both in contemporary consumption culture and in alternative eco-fashion. Here, there is an interesting paradox between status-marking luxury and sustainable ethical quality-thinking which is materialised in various ways in the bag as a female practice (Fredriksson 2012). Style guru Camilla Thulin, mentioned previously, says that she is “ill at ease” every time she sees a person with a bag that is too expensive, warning, in a column in business weekly *Veckans Affärer*, about “bag fever” and focusing on this “illness” in the following way:

*I myself have been collecting those lousy things for 35 years, I’m sure. My collection is rather large and consists of all variations from the turn of the century and onwards. These purchases are sporadic, I can pounce on fine items at Myrorna, in the luxury second-hand sector, on the net, or in the sales. As I am a friend of used stuff, I have a lot of old original bags from Hermès, Gucci, Pucci and Roberta. They have a given and specific form, which you seldom see today as all brands copy each other’s best-sellers; naturally, snapped up for a few lousy crowns 20 years ago when interest in old ladies’ handbags was lukewarm. (Veckans Affärer 2007-01-24)*

The solution to the inflamed bag debate is, in this context, to head for the reliable second-hand market which vouches for quality and history as well as originality and multiplicity. The status-seeking linked to handbags can thus be mitigated through recycling and a historical connection. The ability of time to “cleanse” or empty things of undesirable values like dirt and intimacy can also encompass the ability to tone down luxury and status. In this way, the ecological value can be moved around between different epochs, but it also requires personal competence.

## Green value requires creativity: recycling as a creating practice

The transformation process that used goods requires in order to be able, in different ways, “to become new” and be filled with other (green) values entails a number of specific practices. These practices appear in the study’s empirical material as more or less advisory descriptions of various approaches regarding how to make use of second-hand goods:

*Do not mourn the dress that shrank in the wash, make a cap from it instead. The jeans that have so beautifully become worn out can make cute children’s slippers or a beautiful rag-mat, and the coffee cup a thirst-quencher in the flower bed. Old handles and fittings can be fitted to new doors and cutlery can become a beautiful mobile that moves when there is a draught. (FaluKuriren 2010-11-01)*

Techniques like “Do Redo” are taught at many ecological events and fashion fairs, and visitors learn how to wash cheap second-hand clothes “wrongly” so that they felt up and become possible to cut and turn into new things. Using “dexterous imagination”, a sweater becomes a pair of gloves, a brooch or a pair of wrist warmers. The concept is often expressed in terms of *recycling turns old into new*; at eco-bazaars and environmental events, it is a matter of providing the inspiration for an ecological lifestyle.

The creative transformation process requires both a specific knack and a specific disposition that has the desire to create. The aestheticisation practices surrounding the recycling culture build on a competence that has to be acquired in different ways. Being able to “see” the intrinsic value of used and faded goods is a technique to learn and one that can be acquired in arenas such as second-hand stores, ecological fashion events and eco fairs. When Stockholmsmässan’s Home Show opened in 2010, *Myrorna* were allowed to exhibit used furniture that had been given a new lease of life by, for example, fashion designers reworking a number of old bureaux into “different and fun furniture”. When *Dagens Nyheter* reported on the event, the headline was “Unbureaucratic bureau” (2010-10-02). The technique of transforming old into new is often represented by an informal attitude towards things; being able to see the unexpected, looking beyond the worn or antiquated surface. Used goods become, as in the example above, the opposite of the formal and bureaucratic. The technique of handling used goods is depicted as something pleasure-filled and creative. The trivial often becomes the target of attention and this is how *Borås Tidning*, during the early 2000s, begins a report from an exhibition by fashion students from the Beckmans College of Design:

*What is it that you find in every home, that you use for hours every day, but that you turn your back on most of the time?*

The everyday answer to this trivial riddle is the kitchen chair; a forgotten object that was deemed to be in need of emphasis. Under the theme of recycling, the fashion students created 16 works of art from discarded chairs donated to the school by *Myrorna*. Using their imagination and creativity, the chairs were transformed into “extremely personal” installations that were more “a sight for sore eyes” than something to sit on. *Borås Tidning* also urges those at home to emulate this good example:

*Most of us surely have, if we care to count, twenty or so chairs at home. Many of these are guaranteed to be mismatched and to have originated from such wildly differing places as IKEA, the flea market, or your granny's attic. Instead of chucking the entire kit and caboodle on a bonfire and buying new matching chairs, it could be worth your while to treat these old servants to a little bit of TLC. Because the ornate rococo chair with the finely chiselled pattern on its back and the lustrous brocade on its cushion has, in spite of everything, quite a lot in common with its country cousin, a good old Windsor-style chair. Both have to deal with being sat on. And preferably also looked at. (Borås Tidning 2001-03-06)*

It is interesting to note that this report, which was written more than ten years ago, does not have any direct link with themes such as ecology and sustainability. Rather, the relationship between everyday life and art is highlighted in a way that is typical of the aestheticisation processes which have aspired to dismantle cultural hierarchies. The link between the commonplace and the artistic is an important departure point for what we usually call the aestheticisation of everyday life (Featherstone 1991), and this competence becomes a technique necessary for the individual's green value-creation during the 2010s. Taking its point of departure in the late-modern consumer culture's intimate link with how we are expected to create and re-create ourselves, green eco-fashion stands out as a distinct action programme for contemporary identity work. Attaining the values that green consumption aspires to requires personal competence that involves learning the specific aestheticisation techniques that bring forth green value. The capacity to yearn, often described as one of modern consumer culture's most important ingredients (cf. Campbell 1987), should also incorporate, for the co-creating and creative consumer, the capacity – and driving force – to create.

*I'm completely OBSESSED by D&G's spring collection (and that blouse from Céline, still ...). Lisa is rolling her eyes at this, but what's not to like? If I were a bit more nifty, I'd run to Myrorna and buy a load of old shawls and patch them together to make mini-skirts and God knows what. Now I'm sitting here with my finger on the trigger at Luisaviaroma instead. Sigh. [www.rodeo.se](http://www.rodeo.se)*

The quote is an extract from a blog on the net magazine *Rodeo*, and a further departure point is that these learning processes today are largely taking place within the field of social media, an area which was initially populated by younger consumers as regards areas like fashion and buying second-hand. In the next part of the study, these practices will be analysed using elements of the comprehensive observations made here. The way of relating to green consumption creates, at various points in time, specific norms concerning what is sustainable, desirable and morally right. Consumption is an area which is constantly surrounded by moral mindsets and, when the citizen becomes a consumer, this will also incorporate personal identity. Ecological fashion will become a way of expressing taking care of oneself, but also an expectation of meeting requirements as regards caring for the environment and other people.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how different values linked to the phenomena second-hand, eco-fashion and recycling are represented in parts of the public media debate concerning the *Myrorna* example. We have seen how a second-hand store like *Myrorna* can become a part of people's own life histories, and we have seen how "green collaborations" can result in value-creating practices where traditional operations borrow "green value" from recycling stores. For the operation that *Myrorna* runs, a constant element of creativity is required whereby the swinging between fields such as fashion and the environment constitutes paradoxes which are linked together in different ways. The creativity stands out as a crucial ingredient for both competence and practical results. The creativity becomes a value-creating practice which also creates sense in the material transformation processes that handling used goods involves. Creative recycling is framed by eco-fashion's specific aesthetics, in turn meaning that new boundaries have to be set up and negotiated when fashion's own logic makes itself felt. The interplay between recycling, fashion and ecology appears unclear and, in some examples, far-fetched. However, the link between environment and motivation appears to be a driving force

behind many of the practices. The ecological element, on the other hand, becomes clear and is articulated as an important value when recycling runs the risk of being mixed with luxury and affluence consumption. Status-seeking can, as we have seen in the “bag debate”, be mitigated by means of creative recycling together with historical and ecological grounding. In the empirical material, the recycling culture appears to be dependent on certain aestheticisation practices which have to be acquired in different ways.

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# **Making sense of the retailer-consumer relationship – the case of Swedish food retailing and the promotion of sustainable consumption**

Matthias Lehner

Retailers' dominant position in the food supply chain, at the crossroads between producer and consumer, has caught the eye of policy-makers assessing ways to make food consumption in Europe more sustainable (Bonini and Oppenheim 2008; Jones, Comfort and Hillier 2009; Sustainable Development Commission 2007). Retailers have therefore become a target for those arguing for the necessity of changes in food consumption patterns. It is argued that they are in a crucial position between food production and consumption – they are the gatekeepers of the food supply chain (Dobson, Waterson and Davies 2003). The European Commission (2010, p. 13) attests to retailers 'enormous power to raise awareness and influence shopping choices'. As a result, governments and other stakeholders across Europe have initiated 'soft' approaches to influencing retail practices, such as initiating discussion forums with retailers (e.g. The EU's Retail Forum, the Nordic Council's Retail Forum on Sustainable Consumption and Production, or the 'Visioning sustainable retail' workshops in the UK) in order to better understand what role they could play in achieving sustainable food consumption.

That retailers, despite their strong position for influencing consumption patterns, have so far mostly concentrated their efforts to become more sustainable on their sourcing and distribution activities and on the physical operations of their stores while largely ignoring consumption issues (Jones et al. 2011) is, at least partly, the result of considerable uncertainty among re-

tailers as well as their stakeholders (including consumers and policy-makers) about the exact role of the retail industry in the promotion of sustainable consumption. While there is no doubt that retailers have a role to play in the attempt to make food consumption more sustainable, few would hold them solely responsible. One must not forget that retailers are not democratically legitimised institutions and thus lack the mandate (i.e. they have no ability to force consumers and are in permanent competition against other retailers) to interfere with their customers' consumption patterns.

Thus it remains unclear to what extent one can expect retailers to carry the sustainability debate into the consumers' shopping baskets and kitchens. With consumption moving into the spotlight of the sustainability debate (European Environment Agency 2010; Foley et al. 2011) and retailers being pointed out as 'agents of change', the specifics of the relationship between retailers and their customers become vital.

This chapter intends to take a closer look at how retailers perceive their role in the 'greening' of food consumption. Particular attention is paid to the retailer-consumer relationship. It presents empirical evidence of retailers' perception of their role in sustainable consumption. It will take a closer look at the Swedish example, in order to contribute to the understanding of the crucial but poorly understood relationship between retailers and their customers and to what extent retailers are acting as the gatekeepers they are claimed to be.

## Understanding the reality of retailing

The empirical work for this chapter was conducted in Sweden and covers all major Swedish retail chains. Between September 2011 and February 2012, 22 semi-structured interviews with retailers' CR managers and store employees (including storeowners and managers) were conducted (see Table 1).

Table 1: Interview partners

Interview partner	Organization	Position
Andreas Söderström; Daniel Faxing	ICA Maxi Östersund	Store Manager; Environment Representative
Anna Billing	ICA Malmborgs Tuna Lund	Store Owner
Annica Hansson-Borg	Bergendahls Food	Environment and Quality Manager
Janne Krantz	Willy's	Environment Manager

<b>Interview partner</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
Kent Nilsson	City Gross Rosengård Malmö	Store Manager
Magnus Jönsson	Hemköp Karhögstorg Lund	Store Manager
Maria Frelin	ICA Kvantum Södra Sandby	Employee
Maria Smith	ICA	Environment and Social Responsibility Manager
Mikael Robertsson	Coop	Environment Manager
Ola Hollerup	ICA Kvantum Malmborgs Clemenstorget Lund	Store Manager
Per Baumann	KF (Coop), Svensk Dagligvaruhandel	Former Quality Assurance and Environment Manager
Petra Flygare	ICA Torgkassen Uppsala	Store Manager
Peter Bengtsson	ICA Möllvången Malmö	Store Owner
Peter Åkesson	ICA Södra Malmö	Store Manager
Roger Höjendal	Netto	Quality Manager
Stefan Nordbladh	Hemköp Centrum Malmö	Store Manager
Susanne	Coop Konsum Erikslust Malmö	Store Manager
Åsa Domeij	Axfood	Environment and Social Responsibility Manager
Interviewee 1	Netto Centrum Malmö	Store Manager
Interviewee 2	Coop Forum Jägersro Malmö	Store Manager
Interviewee 3	Lidl Spångatan Malmö	Employee
Interviewees 4 and 5	Coop Forum Lund	Employees

To better grasp the assumed complexity of the topic, the interviews were conducted in a flexible manner, with divergences from pre-defined questions largely tolerated. While this approach is believed to allow for a richer understanding of the topic, it also means that the results presented in the following must be dealt with carefully. Keeping in mind the narrow focus on food retailing, the geographically restricted area under study and the qualitative interview-based approach to it, generalizations should be made with care. While some of the findings might be transferable to other contexts, whether the results remain valid outside of the Swedish context has yet to be studied.

This chapter will in the following offer a short discussion of the role of retailers in the food supply chain, as well as various theoretical ideas that circulate in science about the ‘green’ consumer and what these theories imply in respect to the functioning of the retailer-consumer relationship. It then presents empirical evidence from Sweden regarding retailers’ perception of their own role and that of their customers and other societal actors. Based on these findings, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the retailer-consumer relationship and how these findings are to be interpreted in respect to the existing body of theory.

### **Retail power in the food supply chain**

Retailers have moved up in the food supply chain hierarchy in the last 60 years or so to become the most powerful actor. This is particularly true for Northern Europe (Dobson and Waterson 1999; McGoldrick 2002). While, after the Second World War, manufacturers dominated the food supply chain, power has since shifted towards consumers and – even more so – the retail industry (Harris and Ogbonna 2001). Despite the existence of some powerful producers (e.g. Unilever, Nestlé, Kraft), the retailer-consumer relationship is increasingly shaping the food supply chain. Retailers are considered particularly powerful in this setting, with considerable influence over both producers and consumers (Jones, Hillier and Comfort 2011). This is the result of a market concentration process that has left most countries with an oligopolistic market structure (Dobson et al. 2001; Dobson and Waterson 1999) in which retailers have become *de facto* agents of the state, entrusted with the “management and policing of the food system and in the social structuring of consumption” (Wrigley 1993 In: Harris and Ogbonna 2001, p. 166). Despite sporadic public demands for the power of retailers to be curtailed, regulation has so far been rather loose on the industry and even changed in favour of their business model (for example with the abolishment of most price regulatory interventions since the 1970s [Harris and Ogbonna 2001]). As long as the regulatory environment remains benign, retailers continue to expand both in scale and in scope, and continue to put competitive pressure on suppliers and enhance their brand value (e.g. through the introduction of private brands) (*ibid*), thereby strengthening their dominant position in the food supply chain.

## The retailer-consumer relationship in theory

There are differing views in science regarding the retailer-consumer relationship. These views have implications for sustainable consumption and the role of retailers and consumers in achieving it.

Drawing from the classical economic view of the individual (i.e. ‘homo economicus’), consumer behaviour is guided by preferences, prices and income (Rischkowsky and Döring 2008). Consumers are in charge of sustainable consumption and are able to decide and express what sustainable food consumption should look like through their purchases. This view is prominently expressed in the ‘ethical consumer’ literature, which depicts the individual as a rational fusion of consumer and citizen. This ‘citizen-consumer’, it is claimed, consciously reacts to her declining power as citizen (due to reduced power of nation states in a globalized and market-dominated world [Cova 1997; Micheletti, Follesdal and Stolle 2003; Micheletti and Isenhour 2010]) and adapts to this reality by using purchasing power as ‘vote’ to shape society. Sustainable food consumption is thus the outcome of changed preferences (increased weight for ethical considerations) or changes in the income-price dimension (Brekke 2010). Changed preferences arguably being the preferable option (under normal circumstances neither governments nor retailers or consumers want prices to increase or income to fall), it is often claimed that knowledge, information and advice are the driving forces for more sustainable food consumption – in a belief that the exposure of consumers to scientific knowledge will trigger changes in personal preferences and consequently behaviour (Eden, Bear and Walker 2008).

The idea of cognitive limitations (cf. Rischkowsky and Döring 2008), the desire for social recognition (cf. Soron 2010) and socio-technical ‘lock-ins’ (cf. Shove 2003, 2010; Thøgersen 2010), on the other hand, shift the onus of action from the individual consumer to her surrounding and attributes greater importance and power to the retailer. Those arguing for one of the latter ideas of how consumption decisions are made often argue for solutions such as manipulating default options (e.g. ‘nudging’ [Thaler and Sunstein 2009]) the removal of certain products from the market (‘choice editing’ [Maniates 2010; Sustainable Development Commission 2007]) or the reframing of societal status and ‘the good life’ (i.e. ‘alternative hedonism’ [Soper 2007]), all of which point to a much greater role of the retailer in shifting consumption patterns towards more sustainability.

In a reaction to the prevailing confusion over the nature of the consumer and thus how companies should address the issue of sustainable consumption,

some researchers claim that the truth about the ethical consumer is to be found 'somewhere in the middle' of the above discussed views (Cialdini 2006; Hansen 2005). What they point out as being most important to understand in consumer behaviour is the context of a purchase (Devinney et al. 2010; McGoldrick 2002; Niva and Timonen 2001; Peattie 2001, 2010; Rischkowsky and Döring 2008). For a retailer to foster sustainable consumption, it is thus necessary to create the right 'habitat' in which sustainable consumption can thrive (Peattie 2001). Devinney et al. (2010) relate consumers' willingness to act sustainably to the degree of a company's displayed social and environmental responsibility. They describe the path to sustainable consumption as an evolutionary interplay between a company and its consumers. The more effort a retailer is prepared to invest, the higher the chances these efforts will be rewarded. The question to what extent retailers are able to influence consumers is thus a question of commitment. An uncommitted retailer will find its assumptions of an uninterested consumer confirmed, while an involved and pro-active retailer will experience the opposite.

Peattie (2001) also suggests that marketers should focus less on the consumer and instead turn their attention to the actual purchase in order to understand the premises of green consumption. He points out the importance trust and credibility play in this respect. This requires a redefinition of marketing, from identifying and attracting the ethical customer to integrating sustainability as a feature into many different consumption motives and purchase situations. Ottman, Stafford and Hartman (2006) support the idea that consumers are not indifferent to the sustainability debate, but that buying green is not necessarily an act of ethical consumerism. In the past, a narrow focus on the greenness of products has blinded companies from considering broader consumer and societal desires. Ottman et al. (2006) paint a picture of the future of marketing in which all marketing – out of necessity – will incorporate elements of green marketing and address various consumer segments by connecting sustainability to existing values such as efficiency, cost effectiveness, health and safety, performance, symbolism or convenience, rather than treating sustainability as a consumer value in itself. Retailers were thus wrong in the past to believe that the commitment to sustainability shown by a few consumers (the 'deep greens') could be carried into the mainstream market by addressing the average consumer with broad, unspecific and purely altruistic messages. Instead, they should acknowledge that most consumers will never become primarily driven by sustainability concerns (Ottman et al. 2006). For green marketing to be successful, it is therefore important for a

business to design green marketing efforts with the question ‘What is in it for the consumer?’ in mind (ibid). The success of organic food, for example, is, according to Ottman et al. (2006), as much the result of concerns for personal health as concerns for the environment. In a way, green marketing is not – as initially thought – so much about the promotion of environmental product characteristics as it is about the reframing of sustainable products in consumers’ heads so that sustainability becomes more and more associated with desirable attributes such as cheap, efficient, convenient, healthy, trendy or mainstream.

In order to promote more sustainable consumption, retailers cannot simply focus on meeting existing demand for sustainability; they must also engage in adjusting current demand to external constraints and societal concerns. According to Peattie and Crane (2005), green marketing has to become a bridge between consumers’ current lifestyles and one that meets the requirements of sustainable consumption. The closer a company is to these insights, the more likely it is that external pressures on the retailer to become sustainable can translate into profits and competitive advantage. In the eyes of Devinney et al. (2010), tomorrow’s business models will require an evolutionary interplay between a company and its customers to facilitate a long-term process with the creation of new demand and thus business possibilities as the ultimate goal, rather than a continuation of the ‘preference guessing’ game currently undertaken in marketing.

The above views can be complemented by Maignan et al.’s (2005) discussion of sustainability and business strategy. In their eyes, the integration of sustainability into business is a matter of stakeholder interests. They blame today’s unsuccessful attempt to integrate sustainability into core-business operations on a too narrow focus on customers (and owners). Maignan et al. emphasize the importance of identifying, understanding and valuing numerous stakeholder interests. For our question of the nature of the retailer-consumer relationship in respect to the promotion of sustainable consumption, Maignan et al.’s view gives the relationship between retailers and their customers yet another twist. It is given the character of a tool to adjust the market to external pressures weighing on both the retailer and the consumer (thus somewhat in line with the socio-technical view described above, but with a more positive perception of the retailer’s ability to influence and use these external forces) rather than adjusting supply and demand.

## How Swedish retailers perceive their role in sustainable consumption

In light of the above discussion, a central question in interviews with Swedish retailers was how they perceive their role in the promotion of sustainable consumption and thus how the mentioned theoretical views reflect in Swedish retailers' mind-set and practical experience. Unsurprisingly, there was no coherent picture the conducted interviews uncovered, but instead a multitude of views. Summing up these views, they can be grouped and categorized into different self-attributed roles of the retailer in promoting sustainable consumption:

- 1) the informer/facilitator (providing information and following customer preferences),
- 2) the influencer (steering customer behaviour with or without them noticing),
- 3) the responsible societal actor (fostering sustainable consumption because it is 'the right thing to do'),
- 4) the public servant (the retailer being at the mercy of policy-makers and the public), and
- 5) the innovator (developing solutions that create value for their customers and society alike).

Which of these roles retailers adopt appears to be the result of an assessment of the specificities of the case and the stakeholders involved. But retailers' owner structure, their history and their business model also seem to influence the role they adopt.

The informer/facilitator self-description that holds onto the belief that the consumer is in charge of how sustainable food consumption will develop and that retailers are powerless (but benevolent) servants to the sovereign consumer features prominently in interviews. On both central and store level and across the industry, this view was commonly the first to be expressed in the interviews. As mentioned, owner structure, historical factors and business model played a big role in how retailers described their role. The emphasis on consumer sovereignty was thus partly the result of the over-representation of ICA among interviewees. ICA's focus (both historically and in its business model) on consumer choice and entrepreneurship lends itself to the informer/facilitator role. Nevertheless, even representatives from other retailers emphasized the importance of consumers' freedom to choose. Given the strong market position of ICA in the Swedish market, one might



speculate that ICA's view of sustainable consumption and the consumer informs the entire sector.

Upon further inquiry, and despite this emphasis on consumer sovereignty, retailers, both on the central and the store level, admitted that they *are* a shaping and active force on consumption behaviour. It was also admitted that this power to influence consumption patterns was not primarily used to promote sustainability, but – first and foremost – to generate profits for the business and remain competitive. A more nuanced picture presented in interviews was thus the one of a retailer being able to influence consumer behaviour, but only to a limited degree, and with the risk of consumers reacting negatively. For retailers to be willing to take that risk, a realistic perspective for profits is required.

Interestingly, even though interviewees admitted to the profit motive being dominant in their operations, they also stressed the sometimes almost altruistic motivation behind a pro-sustainable action. Sustainability seems to have entered the mind-set of the retail industry on all levels, with managers, as well as store owners and employees, gradually buying into the idea that sustainability is a future necessity and – expressed particularly among independent store-owners – a moral obligation. In interviews, Swedish retailers seemed genuinely prepared to 'do their bit' to contribute to the ideal of sustainable consumption. Quotes like 'The driving force to work with sustainability is that something has to happen within 20 or 30 years' (CR manager) and '[We] do not sell everything one can earn money with' (different CR manager) underline an aspect of retailers' sustainability work that does not fit the description of profit-orientation. A prominent example is the (uncoordinated) renouncement of red-listed fish across the entire Swedish retail industry. Interviewees referred to the looming ecological catastrophe, the value of sustainable fish stocks, or it being simply 'the right thing to do'. Swedish retailers thus depict themselves as responsible societal actors. Assessed in the light of other interview answers, such displayed seeming social and environmental altruism likely relates to retailers' dependency on public opinion and any businesses' need to preserve its 'licence to exist'. In the interviews conducted for this study, meeting public expectations was related to the reputation and image of a retail chain, with (long-term) effects on brand value and ultimately business success. One CR manager described this reality pointedly. '[We] do have a certain internal motivation to work sustainably, even if this internal motivation is triggered by the world around us.'

In respect to this external influence, Swedish retailers showed a very ambivalent attitude. While it was acknowledged that for sustainable consum-

ption to be achieved external pressure is essential and regulatory intervention often necessary, many interviewees expressed fears over inefficient regulation harming their business or distorting competition. Overregulation would, in the eyes of some, hamper innovativeness and thus make it more difficult to identify business cases in sustainable consumption. To prevent this, an entrepreneurial approach to sustainable consumption was stressed as a practical and favoured solution. While this was also true for the store level, regulation or standardization of sustainable consumption was perceived as less harmful and often described as desirable. It was described as functioning as a facilitator to the necessary work with sustainable consumption, which was perceived as difficult and full of risks of doing wrong. For anyone not deeply involved with questions of sustainability and consumption, which was often the case at the store level, clear and sector-wide rules were described as reducing the risk of misjudgements and thereby upsetting either customers or stakeholders.

### **Retailers' perception of consumers**

Despite Swedish retailers being aware of the great influence of external forces upon consumer behaviour, the picture offered of the consumer was the one of the idea of the consumer as sovereign actor (i.e. an ethical version of the 'homo economicus'). This conviction prevailed even in light of the discussion about the attitude-behaviour gap. In interviews, the attitude-behaviour gap was explained away with, for example, a time gap between understanding and action (i.e. behaviour will follow attitudes, but with a time gap, as behaviour change simply takes time), or short-term "disturbances" such as the economic crisis. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that it would be unrealistic to expect a majority of consumers to actively engage in changing either their lifestyles or aspects of the socio-technical systems that influence their lifestyles. Consumers were depicted as showing short attention spans for environmental issues, as rather uncommitted to sustainability in general and as unwilling to 'go out of their way' to make their own consumption more sustainable. Still, it was generally argued that consumers have to be 'on board' for sustainable consumption to materialize and for it to be economically feasible and viable in the long term.

Society was described as an important factor, both as a facilitator and an inhibitor. Societal forces, such as the media (e.g. in the form of TV cookery programmes and celebrity cooks), were mentioned as influential 'game changers' that have had a strong influence on consumer behaviour in the past.

At the same time, consumers were described as being held back by socio-technical systems that encourage unsustainable consumption and discourage sustainable consumption. This view was often put in relation to the claim that sustainable products simply are more expensive on average and that most customers cannot afford to pay price premiums. What was interesting in respect to the costs associated with being a 'green' consumer was that opinions about price premiums differed. Some interviewees described price premiums as being a logical consequence of higher production costs and thus unavoidable. A solution proposed for the price discrepancy between sustainable and unsustainable products was then to increase prices for conventional products, with interviewees pointing at the system-induced discrepancy between production costs for unsustainable and sustainable food, often referring to taxes or regulation as inhibiting factors to sustainable consumption that create an artificial price discrepancy between unsustainable and sustainable food. A diverging view emerging from interviews was the one of retailers needing to divert the focus of the discussion away from price, and – rather than offering product alternatives with higher sustainable qualities – promote ways to change not only what consumers choose, but also how to satisfy consumer needs in different ways. The latter view clearly presents retailers in a more powerful position to overcome structural barriers.

### **The retailer-consumer relationship in sustainable consumption**

The above results provide a complex picture of the retailer-consumer relationship. Swedish retailers are clearly aware of the multi-faceted functioning of the market for sustainable products and services and distinguish between their role as an information provider, an influencer of consumption patterns, a struggling agent of public interest, and an entrepreneurial innovator. Which of the several roles Swedish retailers embrace seems to be context-dependent. Influencing factors are the product in question, the level of customer involvement, the level of public interest, and also the business model of the retailer and the owner structure. The latter is of particular interest for the Swedish case, as the dominant four actors in the Swedish market have different owner structures.

The findings present an overall picture of retailers believing in the sovereignty of their customers and a limited belief in their own ability to force sustainable consumption upon them. They largely disagree with the claim stated in the beginning of this chapter of them being the single most powerful

actor in the food supply chain. Instead, the consumer is described as a driving force and having responsibility for her consumption choices. As mentioned earlier, one might argue that the over-representation of ICA in the empirical data shines through in these findings. With its dominant market position and its focus on entrepreneurship and consumer choice, ICA might be defining this narrative for the entire industry.

Looking past the narrative of the sovereign consumer, the influence of retailers and society becomes more apparent. Swedish retailers attest considerable influence to society as a whole (particularly public opinion and opinion leaders) in relation to how consumers act in the store. They seem to believe that, over time, sustainable consumption is mostly a question of social trends and socio-technical structures, and they display awareness that sustainable consumption is not only a question of customer demand, but also the outcome of a multi-stakeholder process in which numerous stakeholder interests have to be considered.

One could thus argue that it is out of necessity that Swedish retailers cling to the idea of the sovereign (and ethical) consumer. Their emphasis on the possibility to inform and convince consumers of the necessity to consume more sustainably and thereby trigger changes in demand and additional sales seems to be an effort to protect business interests and to align with the dominant narrative. Concerning long-term changes, it showed that retailers put less faith in the consumers' agency, instead counting on societal trends and public pressure to change consumer demand and generally support the view that consumers are locked into a socio-technical system.

This has resulted in a two-way approach to dealing with consumers. On the one hand, Swedish retailers focus on satisfying short-term market demand and provide sustainable choices to consumers and encourage their purchase through marketing, putting a lot of emphasis on the responsibility of consumers. On the other hand, they support long-term societal trends and developments that change the prevalent socio-technical systems, be it through co-ordination and interaction with their stakeholders (e.g. through cooperation with NGOs and government agencies), or by adjusting their marketing activities to societal discussions and trends.

At the same time, Swedish retailers show little confidence in their ability to directly implement sustainability in the market and influence their consumers' behaviour. They also seem to oppose the idea that it is their responsibility to do so. The role of the retailer as pro-active actors in achieving sustainable consumption therefore appears to be limited and more complex than is often

claimed. Rather than leading the way, Swedish retailers appear to engage in a (somewhat unstructured) process of co-evolution between customers, societal stakeholders and themselves. The idea that sustainable consumption is a co-evolutionary process of retailers and their consumers is confirmed here. However, Swedish retailers do not appear to believe that they can lead this co-evolutionary process.

### **Gatekeeping and other ways to promote sustainable consumption**

The results presented in this chapter point towards Swedish retailers feeling uncomfortable with the role of gatekeepers of the food supply chain and the consequent responsibility to change their customers' consumption behaviour. As a result, retailers try to pass on some of that responsibility to consumers. The awareness of the limits to consumer agency in sustainable consumption leads retailers to denote societal stakeholders and the public debate as the strongest force in changing consumption patterns over time. Little support could be identified for the position that retailers themselves can adopt a proactive approach to sustainability and use their influence over the consumer to create more sustainable consumption patterns.

In light of these findings, it seems unlikely that Swedish retailers will use their powerful position in the food supply chain to significantly influence consumer behaviour directly. Fear of lost sales, combined with the belief that any action not in line with consumer demand will only lead to competitors gaining market share, will – at least in the short and medium term – keep Swedish retailers to a benevolent and supportive, but by no means pro-active approach to sustainable consumption. According to my findings, it appears unlikely that retailers (at least in Sweden) will become what policy-makers have imagined them to be any time soon; the gatekeepers of a more sustainable food system.

On the other hand, Swedish retailers seem to expect changes in food consumption in the future and appear prepared to support these changes. Growing societal interest and the increasing threat of regulatory intervention also appear to result in retailers becoming more engaged with the sustainable consumption ideal. Sustainability can in this respect be seen in analogy to quality management, which has seen a similar development path, from being on the periphery of business interests and regarded mostly as a cost factor, to becoming a core component of any business strategy with businesses now championing product and service quality and pushing it to higher levels,

almost unrelated to direct consumer demand or public pressure (Rainey 2006; Willard 2002). If sustainability remains of central interest to Swedish society, it can be concluded that retailers will intensify their search for ways to please consumers and stakeholders alike. This will not necessarily lead to them turning into actors that lead the market towards more sustainability (a role that seems to be that of society as a whole), but is likely to intensify their attempts to translate between stakeholder interests and market demand; e.g. through introducing innovative solutions. Support for this assumption can be found in Anselmsson and Johansson's (2007) study of CSR in Swedish food retailing. They compare Swedish retail with the UK. Anselmsson and Johansson (2007) argue that Swedish retailers' introduction of fourth generation private brands (i.e. not imitating existing products at lower prices but creating new value for the consumer) might be understood as a sign for the intensification of retailers efforts to introduce sustainability into their market reality.

If this is the case, failures along the way seem likely, though, and a trial-and-error process is probably inevitable. Future research should therefore be directed onto understanding the consumer's role in the co-evolving process of sustainable consumption. How consumers will react to a stronger retail focus on sustainability and which approaches will work best are highly relevant, yet difficult to answer questions. Cases from other countries (e.g. The Co-op in the UK), where retailers have adopted a more paternalistic approach to sustainable consumption than is the case in Sweden, might be worth studying for comparison.

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## **Attitude vs. action for farm animal welfare: What can we learn from natural field experiments?**

Alexander Schjøll, Frode Alfnes & Svein Ole Borgen

The discrepancy between consumers' attitudes and their actions is a well-known theoretical and methodological challenge in consumer studies (Greibitus et al. 2012). Surveys and focus groups can convincingly reveal consumers' stated preferences. However, consumers' stated preferences often turn out to correspond poorly with their actual behaviour in the market. The traditional methods in consumer research – like focus groups and surveys – measure attitudes, not actions. For ethical issues, such as fair trade, organic farming, sustainability, and animal welfare, the divergence between action and attitude is of special concern. Consumers may endorse high farm animal welfare standards, but nonetheless be unwilling to pay a premium price for farm animal welfare-friendly food. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how natural field experiments can contribute to more valid and reliable studies of consumer behaviour. First, we will briefly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the natural field experiment, as compared to methodological approaches that are delimited to mapping consumers' attitudes. Thereafter, we illustrate these characteristics of a natural field experiment by presenting results from an experiment conducted among consumers buying eggs in 2011. Finally, we present the learning content from our experiment.

## Characteristics of natural field experiments

Non-market evaluations of market behaviour are plagued with biases. One example is the social desirability bias, as discussed by Fisher (1993). Animal welfare is an ethical issue where respondents are more likely to make ethically 'correct' choices in an observed setting than in daily life. This is one of several biases that can be expected when people know they are being observed. In general, people tend to behave differently in situations with monitoring than in similar situations without monitoring. A classic example is the experiment conducted at the Hawthorne Works in 1927, in which factory workers improved their efficiency in spite of worse working conditions (Landsberger 1958). Some participants might also want to please the researcher and give answers that are in line with what they think the researcher would like them to do, and not according to their own convictions. The infamous electroshock experiments undertaken by Milgram (1974) revealed how far people are willing to go in order to please the researcher. The very presence of an authority figure (such as the researcher) made people behave differently from what they would otherwise do. They tend to choose the path of least resistance and stick to conformity.

Natural field experiment is oriented towards revealing the respondents' true behaviour; what people actually do is of more interest than what they say they do. Such experiments are conducted in the normal setting of the decision of interests. The consumers are usually in situations that are well-known to them, like for instance buying everyday food in a store or dining in a restaurant. The participants make their choices as they are used to in their daily life without trying to please a researcher or being worried about what someone might think about or infer from their actions. Consumers do not deviate from their normal behaviour due to a very simple fact: They are unaware of their participation in the experiment.

Levitt and List (2009: 9) define a natural field experiment as an experiment where the subjects naturally undertake the tasks given and where the subjects do not know they are part of an experiment. More specifically, Harrison and List (2004: 1012) propose six factors that can be used to determine the field context of an experiment: (1) The nature of the subject pool, (2) the nature of the information that the subjects bring to the task, (3) the nature of the commodity, (4) the nature of the task or trading rules applied, (5) the nature of the stakes, and (6) the nature of the environment that the subjects operate in. The appealing feature of a natural field experiment is that no systematic difference is expected between participants' behaviour in the experiment and

their behaviour in the real world, due to the simple fact that the experiment is conducted in the real world, as perceived by the participants.

The flip side of this coin is that natural field experiments are conducted in a 'non-sterile' environment. The acting experimenter cannot control and 'freeze' everything, contrary to what the researcher can do in the laboratory. As a result, a significant amount of noise can occur. The researcher must try to identify these distracting factors prior to the experiment, and take them into account when designing the experiment and interpreting the results. In practice, a pragmatic approach is inevitable in order to adjust data to the actual contextual setting of the data collection. Some rules of thumb apply for this pragmatic approach. First, the experiment needs to be relatively simple, implying that the manipulation is introduced into the environment without changing other important characteristics of the environment. Thereby, it will be easy to assess the impact of the manipulation. Second, other exogenous factors that may influence the dependent variable should be controlled, or at least recorded, to the largest possible extent and controlled statistically. For instance, if sales of organic eggs are measured in one grocery chain and a competitor cuts his egg prices during the experiment, the results will be flawed unless one includes control stores. In some instances, the experimenter is in a position to identify these external shocks. In other cases, shocks cannot possibly be identified. The experimenter therefore needs to set up a control sample as well as using design methods, like e.g. orthogonal arrays or Latin squares, in order to control for the effect of external factors. The full factorial design with repetition of the first profile and use of control stores – which we used in the case to be presented below – illustrates the point. To mitigate most of the effect of various types of noise, strict follow-up of the experiment is mandatory. Natural field experiments can therefore be a rather time-consuming exercise for the researcher.

Design of the sample can represent another challenge in natural field experiments. It is difficult to screen participants without revealing that an experiment is going on. Without screening, the researcher has limited control of who will constitute the sample. By choosing the location (store or restaurant, for example) in which to conduct the experiment, the researcher indirectly also chooses a population from which the sample will be drawn. However, since the researcher does not control who decides to enter the store or restaurant on the days of the experiment, the sample design is not controlled by the researcher. Subsequently, the sample properties can differ from treatment to treatment. The internal validity can thereby be reduced. Alternatively, the

sample might differ from the target population, which can lead to diminished external validity.

Another challenge is that the sample of buyers might differ from the general population. This is not critical if we want to predict purchases, but is more problematic if we want to say something about the general population. In the case to be presented below, we studied purchasers' behaviour when buying eggs. Most Norwegians eat eggs, but we lack certain knowledge about who purchases eggs in store. Most likely, one or two persons in each household are responsible for purchasing everyday food. Hence, the population is not 'all Norwegians who eat eggs', but rather 'the people who buy eggs'. This distinction is not necessarily critical with respect to the interpretation of results, but needs to be taken into account in order to increase reliability.

The context of the experiment location must also be taken into account when consumers' perceptions are measured. Jervell and Borgen (2004) show that context matters when consumers evaluate food. With respect to field experiments, data collection takes place in the natural context for the activity. Consumers seem to think differently about potatoes when they are in the grocery store than when holding discussions in focus groups or responding to surveys. Buying potatoes directly from the farmer appears different from buying potatoes in a supermarket, even though the potatoes are identical. A focus group is a retrospective setting where the role of consumer is combined with other roles (e.g. citizen).

Experimental economists have introduced laboratory experiments with economic incentives to mimic real market behaviour. Introducing economic incentives can reduce some of the biases seen in surveys, such as the social desirability bias or the hypothetical willingness-to-pay bias, by making it costly to choose the socially 'correct' alternative. However, even laboratory experiments can suffer from the fact that the researcher observes the subjects' choices (Levitt and List 2007). Obviously, all methods in consumer research have inherent strengths and weaknesses that must be taken into account. Our contribution in the following is to discuss the potential and pitfalls of conducting natural field experiments, by extracting the basic learning content from an in-store study among purchasers of eggs.

## Case study: Using a natural field experiment to reveal consumers' actual preferences

### *Background*

Our empirical illustration is drawn from a natural field experiment conducted among egg buyers in two Norwegian grocery stores. Consumers in this market can select between three categories of eggs that are produced using different animal welfare quality standards (battery, indoor free-range, and organic).

Farm animal welfare is a much studied consumer issue, but most studies use focus groups or surveys to study this phenomenon. Consumers seldom reveal their real behaviour in relation to ethical issues such as animal welfare in a survey situation. A method that focuses on revealed preferences is therefore preferred as compared to methods that only capture stated preferences. The specific purpose of our natural field experiment was to reveal consumers' actual behaviour in relation to eggs from hens that benefit from better welfare than the standard production method. What did we learn? Let us start with a few remarks on the contextual background for the experiment. Studies of consumer attitudes can lead to the quick conclusion that a huge sales potential exists for organic products in European markets. Actual market sales do not support this assumption. On average, each European spends only €26 each year on organic food (Schaak 2010). Few Norwegians eat organic food regularly. The overall market share for organic food is only 1 per cent (Norwegian Agricultural Authority, SLF, 2013). The most successful organic products in Norway are baby food, soy and rice milk and eggs. Compared to Sweden and Denmark, organic food is a small niche in Norway. Approximately 162,000 hectares are used for organic farming in Denmark, and 480,000 hectares are used for the same purpose in Sweden. In comparison, only 56,000 hectares are used in Norway. In per cent of total agricultural hectares, this corresponds to 6.1 per cent in Denmark, 15.4 per cent in Sweden and 5.4 per cent in Norway (op cit.). Per capita consumption of organic foods in Denmark and Sweden are quadrupled and double the amount in Norway respectively (SLF 2013).

These measures serve as an informative reference point for our natural field experiment. Another reference point is the results from a survey about consumers' perception of farm animal welfare (Kjærnes and Lavik 2008). Figure 1 summarizes the results from this survey, consisting of a sample of 1,365 Norwegian respondents. This survey concluded that high animal

welfare is among the most important factors when consumers buy eggs. That the eggs are organically produced is reported by the informants to be equally important as low price.

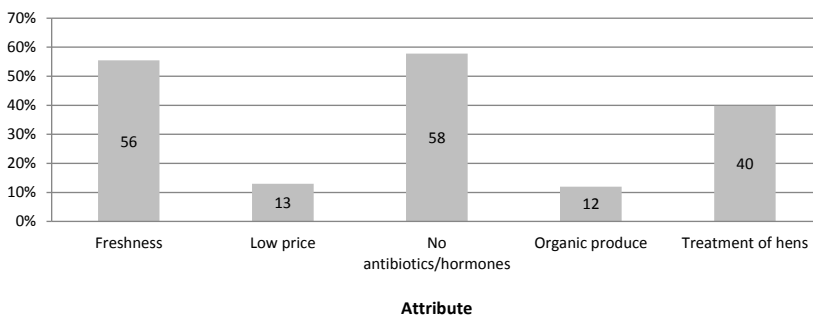


Figure 1: Percentage reporting 'very important' for different attributes when buying eggs among Norwegians. Source: Welfare Quality® survey. N = 1,365. The questions asked were 'When you buy eggs, how important is freshness, low price etc.'

An important motivator for our study is that consumers' revealed attitudes do not materialize in the market. The cheapest egg alternative (egg from caged hens) totally dominates. In 2012, eggs produced with the highest animal welfare standards had a market share of only 5.3 per cent (SLF 2013).

That actual market shares appear to be inconsistent with attitudes does not necessarily reflect that consumers ignore animal welfare as such. People may feel powerless (Kjærnes et al. 2009). Consumers who believe that their actions have little or no influence on animal welfare issues dissimulate their interest in this topic. A consumer cannot choose farm animal welfare-friendly products that are not available. According to a study by Roe and Marsden (2007), Norway has the smallest selection of farm animal welfare-friendly food among the seven European countries studied. However, when it comes to eggs, most stores have several levels of farm animal welfare. Consumers who are concerned about the standard of animal welfare in their country may optimistically believe that the welfare is improving because 'someone else' takes care of it, consistent with what Norwood and Lusk (2011) refer to as 'The California Egg Paradox'. In November 2008, 64 per cent of the voters in California voted for a ban on battery eggs. Alternatives to battery eggs have a very low market share in this state, so a discrepancy between attitude and action seems to exist among Californians. Norwood and Lusk claim that the major reason for the discrepancy is not free-riding or hypothetical answering,



which would be the normal reasoning in economics, but the different roles humans play. In a referendum, people act as citizens, which means they think in a more holistic manner. The same may hold in a survey, where consumers think more about their general views on society than their actual purchasing behaviour. As citizens, people act normatively. As shoppers, they think about what to eat, not about solving complex societal problems. Our study mapped what consumers see as important when they actually buy eggs, and came to conclusions that deviated significantly from the survey results. The survey and the experiment measured different roles and tasks ('responsible citizen' and 'feed the household'), and the roles are not very consistent.

What is the core point? Since people play different roles in different settings, the effect of the setting must be clearly comprehended by the researcher. The setting is an integral part of the analysis. The relevant setting when it comes to animal welfare may be either consumers' choices in stores, or the politicians' responsibility to demand sufficiently high farm animal welfare standards from food suppliers. Consumer research dealing with ethical issues should try to map people's viewpoints in their roles as both consumers and citizens.

### ***Experiment***

Our natural field experiment was conducted during five weeks in November-December 2011. We explored whether consumers choose animal friendly products when products are more clearly labelled as animal friendly. We manipulated the information given to egg buyers in two large grocery stores in Oslo, Norway. We exposed the participants to four levels of information: (1) No information given, (2) an A3 format poster hanging on the egg shelf stating that organic hens have higher animal welfare compared to free-range hens, (3) a sticker on organic egg cartons about animal welfare, and (4) both the poster and the sticker. A professional designer designed both the poster and the sticker. The poster read 'Organic eggs – Happier hens. REMA 1000 will stop selling battery eggs on January 1, 2012. If you want even better animal welfare, choose organic eggs'. The sticker had a drawing of a hen and read 'Improved animal welfare'. The sticker was also on the poster to strengthen the connection between the poster and the organic eggs. The poster and sticker are presented in figure 2 on next page.



Figure 2: Poster (left panel) and sticker (right panel) used to provide in-store information to consumers.

In the first and fifth weeks of the experiment, we did not manipulate the information, and we used these to control for the effect of the sticker and poster. We also had one control store to pick up changes in demand for the organic eggs unrelated to the experiment. The control store was chosen based on: (1) Belonging to the same chain, (2) the size of the store, and (3) similarities in market share for organic eggs. Compared with both monthly sales data for all the stores in the chain and the two test stores, the control store had significantly lower sales of battery eggs. This is most likely due to the location of the control store in a high-income part of Oslo with little variation in income.

During the experimental period, we observed the selection of eggs for all egg buyers in the test stores and the control store. The researchers went to the stores on a daily basis to make sure all alternatives were available to the customers. Sales data from the control store where no manipulation took place shows that there were no major changes in the composition of eggs purchased during the experiment period, and we conclude that there were no external shocks affecting the market share for organic eggs in the test period.

### **Results**

Figure 3 shows the different market shares in our two test stores for the three production methods for eggs during the experimental period.

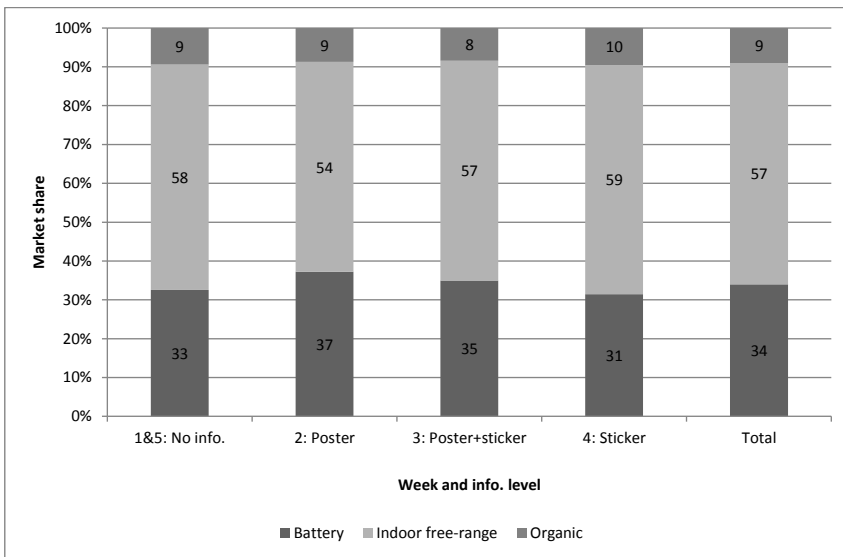


Figure 3: Percentage sales for different egg types in our two test grocery stores during five weeks of manipulation. N = 14,366.

Figure 3 shows no overall effect of our manipulation. The organic eggs have the highest market share when we gave no information about animal welfare. ‘Nudging’ of egg buyers does not seem to affect their decisions in a more animal-friendly direction.

### *Discussion of results*

Organic eggs were the most expensive category of eggs on the shelf. It is not surprising that most customers chose one of the other alternatives even when informed or reminded about the animal welfare differences. The poster and sticker were probably not sufficient to overcome the price barrier. Based on these results, it is not easy to see any significant effect of in-store information about animal welfare on consumers’ choices. In an in-store setting, consumers do not seem to care very much about this credence quality, even though the stores communicate the message effectively. These core results from our natural field experiment appear to be much closer to the actual, aggregated market shares than the impression offered by attitude-based methods.

When visiting a store the consumer is bombarded with teasing information. Every product shouts 'buy me' and there is a lot of in-store marketing to attract consumers to purchase selected items. In the eyes of the buyers, our experiment was probably perceived of as just another in-store marketing trick. Nonetheless, the information was highly visible. For example, we placed the poster on the door that opens the fridge containing eggs. It was impossible for the egg buyers not to see it. We did not support our information campaign with an advertising campaign, which is normal thing to do when a new label is introduced. It is therefore possible that an animal welfare label introduced with an advertising campaign could have achieved a better result than our information campaign. The experiment can only say something about consumers' disposition to choose animal welfare-friendly food based on in-store marketing. The motivation behind this experiment was to see whether animal welfare is an issue that is already present in consumers' minds when they buy eggs. Just as the Welfare Quality® survey wanted to measure consumers' spontaneous *attitudes*, we wanted to measure their spontaneous *actions*. In that sense, a highly profiled advertisement campaign, supporting our treatment, would in fact harm the natural field experiment because the consumers would be more concerned about animal welfare in the first place. If they see advertisements promoting high animal welfare everywhere, they would most likely start to think about the issue and form an opinion about it.

In marketing, forced exposure is the most common way to study the effect of treatments (Nordfält 2007). In studies using forced exposure, the study objects are aware of the treatments they are exposed to, but they are unaware of the purpose of the study. When studying a natural situation, this technique may not be optimal. Incidental exposure would be a better solution, i.e. study objects that are not aware of the treatments taking place. Not only does this division of exposure have practical implications, it also influences the choice of the underlying psychological model (op. cit.). Using forced exposure, people know monitoring takes place, hence the brain focuses on the treatment. A placebo effect from the treatment itself may result, similar to the fact that the placebo effect in a medical experiment seems to treat complaints like headaches etc. In our experiment, we wanted to clarify whether information about hens' welfare could influence the market share of organic eggs. The previous survey (forced exposure) concluded that animal welfare was important for consumers. In this survey, respondents were forced to think about animal welfare. They knew that the purpose of the study was to measure interest in attributes relevant to eggs, including animal welfare. In

our natural field experiment, conducted in-store, consumers did not know it was a study. The poster and sticker that were used as treatments looked like any other in-store marketing material. Our natural field experiment was set up to deal practically with incidental exposure. In our experiment, consumers' brains did not focus on animal welfare. For consumers who already view animal welfare as an important choice parameter, the treatment might act as a reminder of buying animal welfare-friendly products. For most consumers however, animal welfare is not a latent issue, and no effect of the treatments could be observed.

For food marketers, the story often goes like this: Pre-tests of a new product show a huge potential for the new product. In focus groups, participants were enthusiastic about the new product and thought it tasted good. Surveys reveal many consumers who would like to eat it on different occasions. But when the product is launched, it does not sell and is withdrawn from the shelves before one year has passed. Obviously, something is wrong with the way marketers measure perceptions. The setting could be wrong. Consumers have trouble thinking how they may potentially use a new product. The same holds true for food products with an ethical dimension like animal welfare. Consumers say they want to buy it, but when they are in the store, the price is too high. They go for the cheapest alternative with the lowest animal welfare instead. In the store, no-one observes consumers as they do in a focus group. In addition, since consumers must actually pay for the food product in the store, the willingness to pay question is not hypothetical as it is in a survey. Consumer research methods that do not take into account the setting and bias problems are most likely to overestimate the interest in food products. Consumers have nothing to lose if they show too much interest, but they can lose face towards other consumers in focus groups or towards the researchers in surveys if they are too sceptical. This is especially likely to happen if the product deals with ethical concerns.

Validity is the extent to which a measuring instrument measures what the researchers intended it to measure. It is common to distinguish between internal and external validity. Internal validity is the ability of the design used to test the hypothesis the researchers intended to test. We believe our internal validity is high when it comes to natural field experiments. In this case study, we wanted to discern how consumers react to information about animal welfare in store when they select eggs. Of course, the most valid way to do this is in store because the experimental setting is identical to the setting we want to study.

External validity is the ability to extend the results beyond the limited research setting. External validity is thus about generalizing. The question is how generalizable our experimental results are. We used only two test stores and one control store, all located in Oslo. Oslo is the only metropolis in Norway, so it can be hard to extend the results to other parts of the country. However, we picked very large stores that attract many consumers each day. The stores we used probably have a much broader range than the average REMA 1000 store. In addition, this chain is the market leader in Norway. In this sense, it is possible to have high external validity by picking the most typical location for the natural field experiment. In the experiment, we used eggs to measure consumers' perceptions of animal welfare. Eggs are just one food product where animal welfare is important. The other is meat. Animals used for meat need to be slaughtered. This process can be painful for the animal. Egg-laying hens will be slaughtered as well, even though the meat is seldom used as human food in Norway. However, consumers probably do not have the slaughter process in mind when they think about welfare among hens. In this sense, we have low external validity since we did not choose a product that covers all aspects of the welfare of production animals. As a rule, one should choose a product to study in an experiment that covers all aspects of the field of study. If that is not possible one cannot generalize about other products. Hence, our study of consumers' perceptions of animal welfare for egg-laying hens is a study of this perception only.

The reliability of a measure is the measure's ability to produce similar results when one conducts repeated measurements under identical conditions. To our knowledge, our case study is the first in-store experimental study of animal welfare. It is therefore difficult to say whether we have obtained the same results as other researchers. We would expect the same result if we were to conduct our experiment again, since our method was not special, it was only carried out on a new topic. Market researchers manipulate in-store information every day in order to reveal the optimal in-store marketing. Their goal is to sell more products, which was identical to ours. We expect our reliability to be high because we used standard methods for measuring in-store marketing. However, repeating the same experiment with the same consumer sample would remind consumers about animal welfare. This learning effect would most likely influence them and affect sales. It is difficult to be more precise about the reliability of natural field experiments since the method is quite new in consumer research and not many studies have been repeated so far.

## Concluding discussion of the method of natural field experiments

The question of selecting the proper method is essential in consumer research, since potential biases can harm the results. Traditional methods in consumer research – like surveys and focus groups – focus on consumers' attitudes, and can reveal consumers' stated purchase intentions or willingness to pay for specific product qualities. Nevertheless, these methods struggle to reveal consumers' real-life actions. The impact of complex ethical considerations on consumers' choices has proven difficult to conceptualize and measure properly. In many domains and situations, where a discrepancy exists between consumers' attitudes towards complicated ethical issues and their real-life actions, natural field experiment is a particularly useful option. Natural field experiments are conducted in people's normal contexts. Participants are unaware of being part of the experiment. The characteristics of this method have been discussed by extracting learning content from an in-store natural field experiment about consumers' willingness to buy products with enhanced animal welfare. Our case was selected because animal welfare is an increasingly important credence quality attribute in food markets. As compared to results from recent research on consumers' attitudes, the results from our experiment seem more in line with the actual, aggregated market demand. We claim that including a natural field experiment improves the external validity of consumer studies investigating credence attributes with an ethical dimension. Nonetheless, the inherent problems and pitfalls of natural field experiments must be properly understood in order to reap the full benefits from using the method.

A merit of natural field experiments is that participants make real choices in the context where they usually make such choices, and that the participants are unaware that an experiment is going on. Consumers' real behaviour is revealed in a valid way. The major problem of natural field experiment is to gather background information about the participants in order to understand the drivers of their choices. Natural field experiments have the opposite challenge compared to surveys and focus groups: Whereas traditional methods in consumer research (like surveys and focus groups) measure attitude and not action, natural field experiments measure action but not attitude. These problems can be overcome by interviewing the participants after they have made their actual choice. If interviewing does not influence further behaviour or the behaviour of other (potential) participants, the experiments can produce data based on both action and attitude. The natural field experiment is a useful method to complement more traditional methods in consumer

research like focus groups and surveys. Methodological triangulation is normally preferable, because there is no such thing as a perfect and unbiased consumer research method. The weakness of one method is often the strength of another. For all practical purposes, a reflective eclectic approach is required in consumer research, not only theoretically and empirically, but also methodologically.

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# Attractiveness And Urban Form: Spatial structure of cities and its role in the attractiveness of retail activities

Sara Sardari Sayyar

## Introduction

In contemporary information societies, cities are competing on a global and inter-urban scale and they attempt to climb the economic ladder to become attractive partners in the global economy. To reach this goal, cities have been managed for years as *production* centres, where *specialization* and technological developments were essential factors for higher production rates. This led to larger agglomerations of companies and people, which resulted in urban growth of many cities. In recent decades, however, a *diversity* of economic activities has been put forward as perhaps the most decisive prerequisite for urban growth in the knowledge economy. This is due, not least, to the enhanced need for ‘knowledge spillovers’ for cities to be able to reach the higher innovation rate that is required to thrive in a global economy (Glaeser, Hedi D. Kallal, Jose A. Scheinkman & Andrei Shleifer, 1992).

This approach mirrors the increasing interest in urban economics for cities as *consumption* centres (Glaeser et al., 2001) that act as points of attraction for consumers looking for diverse and exclusive services as well as high-quality amenities. In this scenario, the physical settings and aesthetic qualities of cities also contribute to the attractiveness of their urban settings and support both their physical and economic growth (Glaeser, 2011). In this context, retail activities that are commonly known as strong attraction points for consumers have been widely studied within retail studies to explore influential variables

on their degree of attractiveness for users (Drezner & Drezner, 2002; Teller & Reutterer, 2008).

The main focus of this chapter is, firstly, to explore those variables in the built environment, major field of interest in urban design research, that have the most influence on attractiveness of the retail facilities. And secondly to study how the theories and methods developed within urban design can contribute in the investigation of these essential factors. To address this, the current chapter is divided in two parts. The first part tries to summarize the main findings from an undertaken literature review of retail studies as a means for understanding the main components of built environment that are known as effective and influential factors in the location choice of retail shops. The second part represents the possible contributions of urban design theories with the use of ‘configurative analysis’, which is theoretically and methodologically developed within space syntax theory (Hillier, 1996; Hillier & Hanson, 1984). It is believed that the implementation of the methods and theories developed with this approach will allow for a deeper understanding of the role of the urban form and how the spatial structure of cities can support or hinder the development of live and attractive commercial facilities that have been recognized to be a *prerequisite to urbanity* (McMorrough, 2001). Furthermore, the adapted methods from space syntax with configurative analysis will help small-scale analyses of urban spaces at street level instead of studies of aggregated information. The analyses at street level will aid the understanding of the *relationship* formed between retail shops together and with their customers.

## Retail and location

The general concept of ‘location choice’ for retail activities, in which the competitive pressure on retailers is an essential factor in their final choice, is of great interest for marketing studies (Bennison, Clarke & Pal, 1995). According to these studies, the importance of ‘place’, and the way it is exploited by retailers, varies depending on their selected marketing strategies; some strategies seek to market goods and services through places, and others seek to market places through the offered goods (*ibid*). By far, ‘place’ is known as the most influential factor that affects the final decision for the location of retail shops, and leads to their agglomeration in the same location. Such agglomeration, from the perspective of retailers, facilitates the use of common infrastructure and environment and provides access to consumers that are

attracted by the entire cluster of retail activities (Teller & Reutterer, 2008). At the same time, it helps to minimize the search effort and cost for the consumers. Since the retail industry is a demand-oriented sector, in contrast to other production-oriented industrial sectors, it places a large emphasis on both retailers' and consumers' mutual perception of their surroundings in terms of the built environment. Thus, fulfilling the needs of both retailers and consumers will facilitate the liveability of retail centres, as is experienced by their users, and will have a positive influence on their financial prosperity.

In general, finding the most reliable method or analytical technique for retailers to support their locational decision-making is quite challenging, especially for the higher level of strategic management required for a large number of stores. Therefore, many retailers rely on their 'experience', supported by intuitive guidelines or 'rules of thumb'. This is especially the case with convenience stores (Wood & Browne, 2007), where the decision-making process is regarded as an 'art' (Simiken et al. 1985, cited in Hernández & Bennison, 2000). Other techniques following more scientific approaches are also used to deal with large investments. These techniques mostly use large sets of data as well as the testing of pre-defined variables that may affect the process by which retail location choices are made (Hernández & Bennison, 2000). Among these analytical methods, those based on the gravity model (Reilly, 1931) are among the few that take the built environment into consideration. These methods examine the movement of consumers in relation to the *attractiveness* of a retail centre as determined by its adjacent urban setting at the exact location of the centre without going far beyond the boundaries of the centre. Within this approach, store size and distance between the users and activities are considered to be the major attributes with limited consideration of the actual information about urban setting of the areas accommodating the activities.

To overcome this lack, the application of methods using analytical approaches such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) has been suggested for use in retail studies (Hernández & Bennison, 2000). The use of GIS allows for the analysis according to geo-coded data and the modelling of the geographical context of retail activities. Such analyses assist, to a limited extent, in the study of the urban setting of retail activities as well as their socio-economic profiles from a comprehensive perspective.

Despite the application of various methods within retail studies, some of which are summarized here, a limited amount of information is gained in regard to the place in itself and the genuine spatial structure of the places

where retail activities are embedded. This limitation suggests that other methods need to be developed that are better suited for detailed studies of the built environment in the analyses of the location. New tools and methods that are developed in the field of urban design research can assist in studying the urban setting and how it may support or hinder the expansion and maintenance of economic activities. The combination of knowledge from retail studies and urban design could be informative and useful in the practice of both fields of study for higher prosperity and vitality of commercial centres.

In the following section, firstly, the most common factors involved in the location choice of retail facilities, as widely stated within retail studies, will be discussed. In the next section, we suggest the use of *configurative analyses* can largely contribute to investigating these essential factors by presenting a more precise and user-oriented analytical method than traditional ones. The final results lead to a better understanding of the role of urban form and the spatial structure of cities on how such attractiveness is *perceived* by the consumers.

### ***Attractiveness and built environment***

The *attractiveness* or *gravity* of retail facilities is a highly influential factor for both consumers and retailers in their decision-making process, in which *the higher attractiveness* is reflected in *higher sale figures*. Various methods are used to evaluate the most essential variables for such attractiveness, which can be adapted by managers to increase the gravity of the retail facilities. The methods employed in such decision-making process, as stated previously, are commonly based on Reilly's gravity model where the model is inspired by Newtonian physics and the law of gravity that suggests the larger the store, the larger the attractiveness. A review of the latest studies shows that, in addition to size and distance, other components of built environment have also received extensive attention. Three of the most frequently mentioned variables are *tenant mix*, *accessibility and convenience* and *market area*.

The *tenant mix*, by including different retail and non-retail businesses, aids a commercial facility to serve various needs of the consumers (Reimers & Clulow, 2004; Teller, 2008; Teller & Reutterer, 2008). Moreover, such diversity has a significant effect on generating excitement and the desire to stay or to return to use the facilities (Wakefield & Baker, 1998). As is usually the case in retail studies, here 'mix' or 'diversity' is commonly measured as the simultaneous availability of a variety of three major groups of activities: retail, food and entertainment facilities. This definition of retail mix appears to be a

vague and crude definition that does not accurately depict the variety among different types of shops and services, because differences exist among stores not only in terms of their offered goods but also in the way their function is perceived in their urban setting. For instance, although all clothing stores are categorized under the sub-group of retail stores, each store has a different performance according to its accessibility and proximity to other stores. If the store has a limited accessibility within its adjacent neighbourhood and there is no other similar store in its proximity, it will act as a convenience store mostly visited by users residing in the same area, while other stores may function as major attractors due to their location in the inner city. Therefore, due to differences among stores and their functioning level, a detailed study of various methods for categorization of the shops should be conducted to find the one that is appropriate for the specific investigation prior to defining the degree of diversity within retail facilities (Sardari Sayyar & Marcus, 2011).

*Accessibility*, as another major factor, is primarily defined as the required physical or temporal efforts and costs for consumers to reach the facilities. For example, if cars are assumed to be the main transportation mode then the availability of parking areas and the driving time taken to access the facility become important factors to consider (Teller & Reutterer, 2008; Wood & Browne, 2007). As a result, offering a one-stop shopping facility and a compact juxtapositioning of different shops has been the focus of the design for many new retail developments (Reimers & Clulow, 2004). Finally, those who consider the car as the main mode of access to retail centres largely neglect other transportation modes, such as cycling and walking. Thus, a need for further investigations into accessibility for other users such as pedestrians or those who cycle to retail centres is elevated to focal attention. The need is underscored by studies showing that in most of European countries walking comprises the significant mode of transport for many shopping trips (Reimers & Clulow, 2004). Methods that account for a variety of user types are, therefore, required for the rational design of retail centres in terms of *accessibility*.

Before giving more explanation about the third variable, some issues about *distance* measurements should be pointed out that are also crucial for market size definition. As stated before, the distance or proximity between individuals and a collection of stores is commonly recognized as one of the primary factors influencing the attractiveness. Distance measurements generally use three methods, including Euclidean distances, rectilinear (Manhattan) distances, or distances measured along major transportation arteries (Drezner & Drezner,

2002). Most of these measurements, which assign simple metric values to calculate the distance, are argued in this chapter to lack accuracy in terms of actual travel distance and the effort required to reach the facilities by the users. Likewise, these measurements do not provide sufficient information on the spatial structure of the areas hosting the activities, or whether it facilitates or prevents movement between origins and activities as destinations. The application of additional measurements with higher precision, for instance those that measure distance along networks of pedestrian routes, can help develop a better understanding of the concept of distance and how it is perceived by various users.

The size of the *market area* and the extent to which potential consumers of commercial facilities are distributed is the last factor to be discussed here. Similar issues to those mentioned in regard to distance also apply to market area determinations, because such calculations are usually made based on population densities within a metric distance in a pre-defined unit or legal boundary. Market area descriptions within retail studies often rely on residential population density as the most essential variable (Drezner & Drezner, 2002), but more recent studies illustrate the importance of including the working population as an additional source of potential shoppers (Teller, 2008). This general definition can be criticized by questioning how one can define the size of the market area where, although there is a high population density according to census data, the spatial structure hinders the accessibility of those potential users to the activities. To solve this issue, a more detailed analysis of accessible density through the street network is suggested to be more beneficial.

Finally, in addition to the summarized variables defining the attractiveness and differences among retail centres in a city, 'Central Place Theory' (Christaller, 1966) is found to be one of the most extensively implemented theories within retail studies to describe such variety. This theory tries to explain the order and distribution of central places, in which various types of centres are defined according to their presumed level in a hierarchical system of service delivery. According to the theory, larger centres at a higher order will have more variety of goods with larger market area, while no interaction between centres of the same order is considered to exist (O'Sullivan, 2009; Wilson, 2000). Although the model is widely used, it is criticized for being determined by too few basic assumptions that offer some valuable insights into the working of an idealized spatial economy but fail to provide an effective model (Wilson, 2000, p. 136). It is also criticized for not considering the diversity among consumers and



differences between the attractiveness of various facilities for different users (Dennis C., Marsland D. & Cockett T., 2002). A similar hierarchical order is often implemented in many cities as a basis for designing the location of shopping centres to provide access to various types of centres, from regional to district and local centres, even though, by studying these centres during their periods of activity, one often sees that their position in the hierarchy may change according to their function through the influence of various factors. For instance, a regional centre planned at a higher order with a large variety of stores may act on a local scale and become limited to its adjacent neighbourhood, due to a lack of accessibility resulting in access to a smaller market area than what it was planned for. Such consequences and differences would be interesting to study in searching for the factors that cause such fluctuations, especially those that are the effect of urban design and alteration in form.

The following section of this chapter will discuss the contribution of configurational analysis, as developed theoretically and methodologically in space syntax research (Hillier, 1996; Hillier & Hanson, 1984), which we propose can be important for in-depth studies of the mentioned variables and how they are configured by urban designers.

### **From distributed to configured attractiveness**

Primarily, configurative analysis has been proposed here as a means of overcoming the limited approach of models such as the central place theory, in which centres and activities are considered as individual entities distributed in the cities that do not interact with each other. Moreover, configurative analysis, which is developed both theoretically and methodologically within space syntax theory (Hillier, 1996; Hillier & Hanson, 1984), assists in examining the spatial structure of cities as *systems of relations* by exploring how individual spaces are connected to each other through open spaces as structured and shaped by urban form.

The principal objective of the space syntax theory is essentially defined as: “to detect the presence of social and cultural ideas in the spatial form of buildings” (Hillier, 1996, p. 25). It suggests that numerical methods can be used to express patterns and differences to provide a clear picture of the relationship between how collections of people use spaces and *spatial patterns* (the general *configuration* of spaces). Accordingly, buildings – and, on a larger scale, cities – may have similar physical elements but have different corre-

sponding spatial patterns that affect how spaces are related to one another.

Fundamentally, the knowledge developed within this theory is regarded as *scientific knowledge* that takes an *analytical approach* to the understanding of the world by studying the abstract principles through which spatio-temporal events are related. This type of knowledge is in contrast to *social knowledge* that is acquired through the process of creating and experiencing spatio-temporal events (Hillier, 1996). To summarize, the developed *theory* within space syntax attempts to “bring the non-discursive, configuration dimension of built form from cultural reproduction to reflective awareness and abstract exploration of possibility as a passage from the normative to the analytical and from the culture-bound to the universal.” (Hillier, 1996, p. 35)

In the next section, some of the fundamental ideas and concepts within this theory are described since they are considered to be applicable to some of the previously mentioned measurements that are acknowledged to be indispensable in retail studies for the prosperity of retail activities.

### Concepts and contributions

*Configuration* addresses *spatial relations* in architectural artefacts that are defined as ‘links’, such as adjacency or permeability, between spaces and reflect the whole of a complex rather than its parts (Figure 1). Configuration exists when relations between two spaces are changed according to how the spaces are related to one another (Hillier, 1996, p. 23).

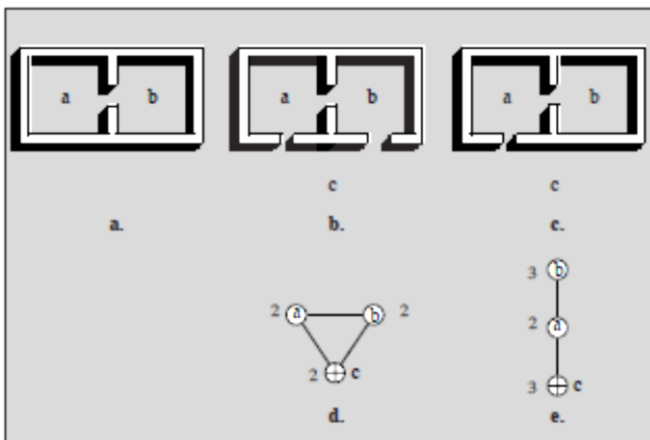


Figure 1: Similar physical elements with difference spatial pattern according to existing relations

Following this principle, *axial maps* are produced as the basis for spatial and configurational analyses that represent the spatial structure of urban spaces and buildings. Each axial map is made up of the fewest and longest lines that cover all open spaces. Consequently, the consistencies in spatial patterns, shown by axial lines, represent how a city works as a series of experiences. An example of an axial map is partially represented for the city of Stockholm covering all open spaces in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Axial map of the southern part of Stockholm

The amount of *movement* generated by the configuration of spatial structure is regarded within space syntax as the most essential factor underlying the distribution and density of activities. As a result, cities are considered as *movement economies* in which movement defines the location of uses. Consequently, the reciprocal relationship between movement influencing the density of functions creates a *multiplier effect* that more movement attracts more activities to the same location and vice versa, yielding to an ‘urban buzz’ as the final product of this process (Hillier, 1996). Recognition of such a multiplier effect as a critical factor affecting the location of retail activities seems vital for exploring the role of urban setting in this, which is the main interest of this chapter. In space syntax, two major types of movement are examined,

*to-movement* and *through-movement* that respectively describe goal oriented and least angle change route choices. To study these concepts, *integration* and *choice* measurements are developed accordingly (Hillier, 1999, 2009; Hillier and Iida, 2005).

*Integration*, more precisely, is a measurement that describes *accessibility* in terms of how easy it is to get to a segment from all other segments. By this measure, the most integrated nodes are recognized as the most central and accessible nodes in the system. These nodes are theoretically more attractive as destinations than others. *Choice* measurement, on the other hand, shows how likely it is to *pass through a particular segment* on a trip, so its potential as a route from all segments to all others is analyzed (Hillier and Iida, 2005; Hillier, 2009).

*Distance*, as noted previously as an essential factor in retail studies, is further developed within space syntax where it is analyzed as '*cognitive distance*'. Here, distance is measured in accordance with how it is perceived by people moving along the street network rather than as a simplified linear distance. In this context, three different types of distance are introduced: 'metric', 'geometrical' and 'topological' distances. Metric is the distance between segments from the centre of each segment, and geometrical distance assigns the degree of the angular change during the movement, while topological distance considers the number of turns or changes in direction (axial steps) (Hillier and Iida, 2005). These different ways of calculating distance provide a more accurate description of perceived distance through the street network and enable us to contextualize the activities corresponding to potential movement within the spatial structure of a city. These measurements emphasize the perception of accessibility or closeness of the studied activities by following a user-oriented approach.

With such definitions of distance, the proper selection of scales is also feasible. One could choose across a range of different radii – metric, angular and axial steps – from highly local scales and short distances to longer distances on global scales, to critically explore the studied areas. Hence, performing common techniques like integration and choice analyses with various radii will facilitate moving between scales from global to local, finding the interrelations between them, and comparing areas and their location on various scales in the urban system. An example of these types of analyses is shown in Figure 3, where the results from integration analysis at a global (30 axial steps) and local (three axial steps) scale are shown for the city of Stockholm. At the global scale, the image illustrates that a large area of the southern part of

the city is not integrated with the rest of the city, making it less accessible on the large scale. At the local scale, however, there are more areas connected to each other within shorter radii, although we can still see areas that have a segregated structure.

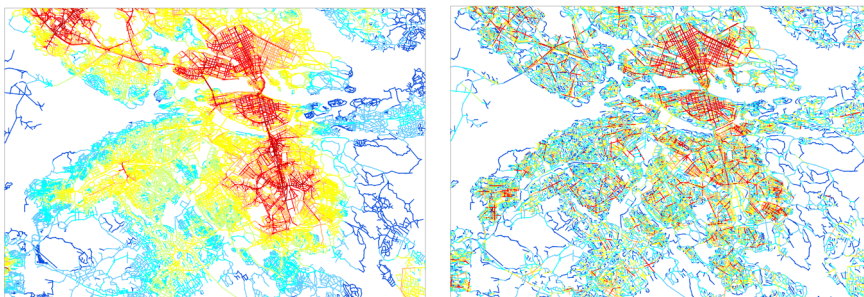


Figure 3: Integration analysis of Stockholm at a global scale (left) and local scale (right). Darkest grey illustrates the most integrated streets.

When exploring the available methods for studying the spatial qualities of ‘centres’ in an urban settlement, Hillier suggests examining the *centrality as a process* rather than considering it as a state (1999). As mentioned previously, during the development process centres may take up new positions within the hierarchical order in accordance with their activity level. Moreover, centres may develop and expand during some years or shrink and lose their vitality. The result of these fluctuations means that these centres do not act consistently as an attractor over long time spans. According to Hillier’s argument, various spatial factors play critical roles in the entire process, from development to expansion or in the maintenance of their vitality. Other factors, including economic and planning decisions, may influence this process, but the effects of urban structure generating natural movement patterns are considered to be critical: centres fit into the natural pattern of the movement in the area at different scales. This relationship between spatial structure and centrality is investigated by a wide range of analyses, using the space syntax techniques, that have brought into view *a generic dual form* (Hillier, 2009) in many cities, including a *foreground* network of *linked centres* at all scales that is set into a *background* network of mainly residential spaces.

From this viewpoint, to understand centrality, one needs to explore the interrelation between functional and spatial dynamics followed by examining the social and economic life of urban societies. In an intricate pattern of

interconnected centres of all scales, wherever one is in the system one will be close to a small local centre and not far from a much larger one. What is meant here by distance is the configurative distance that is created by the network. The patterns of centres and sub-centres on the urban surface generate 'attraction inequalities' that are influenced through urban structure and natural movement patterns at various scales. This theory represents a spatial theory of centrality in which *configuration generates attraction* and defines the position and scale of the centre in the system. Results from a large number of studies, using the represented ideas to investigate the essential factors on location choice of the retail centres, illustrate the effectiveness of choice measurements for the scale and scope of the centres (Chiaradia, Hillier, Schwander & Wedderburn, 2009; Hillier, 1999, 2009). Additionally, other studies using similar methods with a primary focus on retail activities have shown strong relationships between spatial factors and density of activities in an area and other variables like rent values of the retail shops (Craane, 2009; Griffiths, Vaughan, Haklay & Emma Jones, 2008; Netzell, n.d.; L. Vaughan, Jones, Griffiths & Haklay, 2010; Laura Vaughan, 2006).

The last tool, proposed here, as a complementary tool for configurative analysis, is the *attraction-accessibility tool* that is one of the functions developed within the Place Syntax Tool (PST) (Stähle et al., 2007; Karlström and Göran Mattsson, 2009). This tool is primarily a software extension for GIS MapInfo that has been developed by the Spatial Analysis and Design group (SAD) at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), which enables the importing of geographical information onto the maps developed in space syntax such as axial maps. PST attempts to emphasize the importance of *content* of the studied spaces as attractions, whereas space syntax analyses assume that attractions are equally distributed within the whole area (Griffiths et al., 2008). Attraction accessibility analysis helps to measure the number of *accessible attractions* within the configurative distance, as defined in space syntax, rather than counting the pure number of attractions within a predefined unit (Figure 4). Within the examined distance, one might cross the defined boundaries of the studied unit. It is believed that the results from using this tool will be useful in retail studies for investigating the relationships between various retail outlets as competitors as well as their access to potential customers.



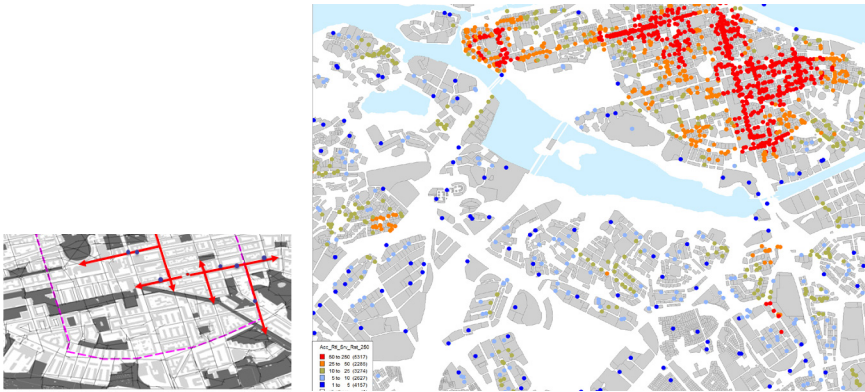


Figure 4: Attraction accessibility analysis by counting the accessible activities through the street network system (left), and accessibility from retail activities to other shops within 250 m walking distance. Highest intensity of shops (accessible shops) is found in the inner city (dark grey)

Moreover, this tool enables the measurement of the actual market area in accordance with *accessible population* for definition of potential market area instead of conventional density measurements that are done according to available census data within legal boundaries. This analysis achieves a higher precision by using geo-coded data and their degree of accessibility within various distances. Some examples of such analyses are shown in Figure 5. Studies have been conducted using this tool, and higher correlations have been found between the amount of movement flow and accessible population density (Legeby, 2010), and strong relationships have been seen between the diversity of business enterprises and their accessibility (Marcus, 2001, 2007).



Figure 5: Accessible total population, including both residential and working population, to the address points within 800 m walking distance (dark-light grey).

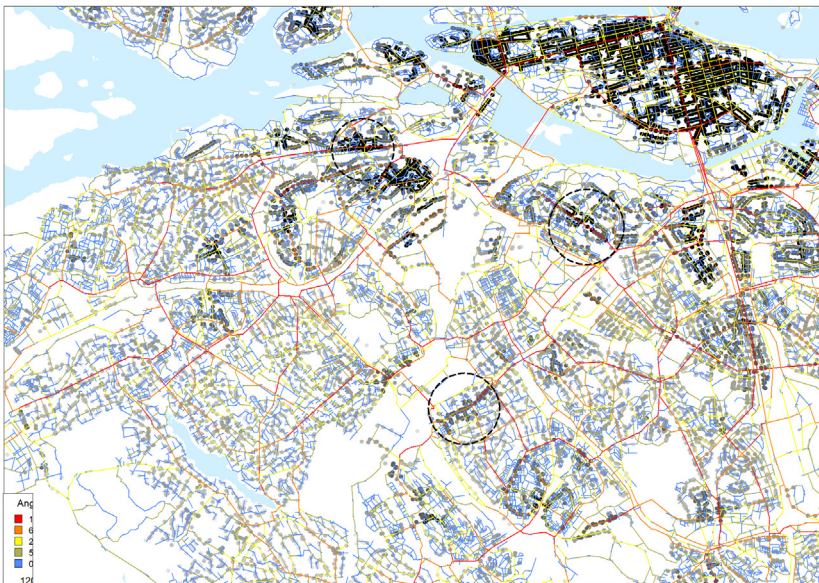


Figure 6: Overlap of betweenness analysis within 3 km and the location of economic activities in Stockholm (pixels in grey scale). This supports an analysis of the relationship between the retail clusters and spatial accessibility.



## Discussion and conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to present foundations for a developed understanding of the consumer's perspective and perception about the accessibility to various services and amenities in cities, by using the theories and methods recently developed within urban design research. We have primarily put forth the proposal that configurative analysis can be a useful complementary method to other well-recognized methods in the field of retail studies, when it comes to investigating the most influential factors in the urban environment on attractiveness of retail facilities. We believe that this method has the potential to provide highly detailed analyses of spatial structure of retail facilities according to the most recent available data. Considering cities as consumption centres puts more emphasis on the study of the essential factors for prosperity and vitality of retail facilities as major urban attractors in this context.

In this study, the review of retail studies showed that three of the most essential factors in the built environment for increasing the attractiveness of retail facilities are tenant mix, accessibility and market area. It is suggested that the use of configurational analysis developed within space syntax theory and tools such as PST contributes to more precise measurements of each of the stated factors in various ways. Accessibility as one of the primary factors could be studied by detailed analyses, using the measures such as integration and choice in space syntax where the natural movement pattern is considered to be essential for the functioning of the centres. Tenant mix, on the other hand, could be assessed by measuring the accessible distance and diversity to other competitors in support of the evaluation of retail clusters. For analyses of market areas, the accessible population is proposed to be a better measurement compared to population density calculations based solely on census data. In addition, centrality studies could be better developed by considering the spatial structure of cities as an influential component in the variety among centres and for studying them as a system rather than as individual entities in a hierarchical order.

Finally, further development and exploration of the suggested tools remains to be completed, but a wide range of analyses, conducted as part of the PhD studies of the author and supported by the same analysis makes such an endeavour promising. The preliminary results of these analyses show significant relationships between intensity/diversity of retail activities in Stockholm and various urban variables such as integration and accessible total population (Sardari Sayyar, working paper).

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**Part III**  
**Societal perspectives**



## Consumer empowerment in Europe: its determinants and the challenges met in measuring it

Michela Nardo, Beatrice D’Hombres,  
Massimo Loi, & Luca Pappalardo

In 1936, the economist William Hutt coined the term consumer “sovereignty” in his book “Economists and the Public”. According to Hutt, consumers using their purchasing power do not necessarily have to buy, and can take their business elsewhere, if dissatisfied, while the profit-seeking sellers find that they can make the greatest profit by providing the best possible products for the price (see Persky, 1993). Seventy years later, aggregated data suggest that consumers could play an important role in determining the market outcome. According to Eurostat data, in 2010 there were roughly 422 million European consumers; household final consumption expenditures (which include estimates for transactions which are not related to consumer policy and exclude the purchase of financial assets which on the other hand are covered by consumer law) were equal to the 56% of the EU GDP, ranging from 30.5% in Luxembourg to 73.5% in Greece. Consumers are undoubtedly key elements in the economy, as are consumer empowerment: well-functioning consumer markets, real choices, accurate information and the confidence that comes from effective protection and solid rights are considered framework conditions to growth (European Commission 2011). But are European consumers indeed empowered, and thus sovereign? What do empowered consumers actually look like? Is there an average consumer to target policy measures? Can we portray the most vulnerable consumers in Europe?

This chapter aims at answering these questions using the data from the Special Eurobarometer survey n° 342 launched in 2010 by the European Commission.

The three main elements identified by the EU Consumer Policy Strategy 2007-2013 (European Commission 2007) – that is, consumers' basic skills, consumers' level of information on rights and prices, and consumers' complaint and reporting behaviour – are those surveyed by Eurobarometer and captured in the Consumer Empowerment Index (CEI) presented in this paper. Our results show that most empowered consumers are found, as expected, in the Nordic countries, with Norway ranking first, followed by Finland, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. On the other hand, Eastern and Baltic countries, in particular Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, are found at the bottom end of the Consumer Empowerment Index. Finally, a group of southern countries (namely Italy, Spain and Portugal) shows comparatively low levels of consumer empowerment, especially in terms of consumer skills.

In the second part of the paper, we complement the analysis by presenting the socioeconomic determinants at the individual level of the CEI. We estimated that materially deprived consumers are 14% less empowered than wealthier consumers. As expected, education, language spoken and internet use contribute positively to empowerment. Surprisingly, for all EU countries except Italy and Slovenia, males outperform females despite the fact that 68% of women lead shopping decisions.

To the best of our knowledge, this paper constitutes the first attempt to measure consumer empowerment at the European level and to portray the characteristics of empowered consumers using econometric techniques.

### **Consumer empowerment: what is it about?**

The power of consumers has been largely debated in economics, sociology and marketing literature. Consumer behaviour is the root of consumer theory in Economics and dates back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with A. Quetelet, who created the “average man” (*l'homme moyen*) (see Stigler, 1954), and E. Engel (1895), who firstly proposed a law of consumption. Only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with W. H. Hutt (1940), did consumer sovereignty gain theoretical status (see Persky, 1993). Since then, consumer empowerment has gained increasing attention especially in relation to consumer culture. However, no agreement exists in the literature on how to describe consumer power (Burns, 2010), on what constitutes individuals'



needs and desires (Denegri-Knott, 2006) and how much power consumers actually have (Grønmo and Ölander, 1991). Denegri-Knott maps the research on consumer empowerment, presenting three dominant explanatory models: consumer sovereignty, cultural power and discursive power. Under consumer sovereignty, a consumer is empowered *when he or she is free to act as a rational and self-interested agent. [...] consumers combine resources and skills to make producers do what they would not do otherwise...* (Denegri-Knott, Zwick and Schroeder 2006). Empowerment thus stems from consumer rationality and freedom of choice (incremented by the new technologies). This line of research led to a celebration of the unprecedented market power of consumers (see Fuchs et al. 2010), but also to the lack of real consumer power being underlined (Sirgy and Su, 2000) due to high search costs (including the difficulty in handling large amounts of information), the substantial impossibility of comparing quality or the lack of truly differentiated products. In the cultural power model, the market is a place of conflict between consumers and producers where the latter try to condition and control consumers' choices. Consumer empowerment does not reside in the simple capability to stand firm against this manoeuvring, but it implies a strategic behaviour, and *motivations and processes whereby communities of various form resist and attempt to distinguish them from markets* (Kozinets 2002; Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Finally, the discursive power model recognises a positive role for the interaction between consumers and marketers, who are co-responsible for the market definition (Denegri-Knott 2004; Hodgson 2000; Holt 2002). Here, empowerment is *the ability of the consumer to mobilize discursive strategies to determine what can be known and what actions can be undertaken...* (Denegri 2006). Researchers in this field are interested in social, economic and juridical differences, cultures, and knowledge variety as drivers of empowerment or disempowerment. The value added by this literature is the identification of the internalised norms, codes and rules, which represent the 'normal' consumer engagement.

The notion of consumer empowerment is also used in the marketing literature (Hunter and Garnefeld 2008) to indicate either a subjective state/experience related to an increase in abilities (Wathieu et al. 2002) or an objective condition related to greater information or understanding (Brennan and Ritters 2004; Rust and Oliver 1994). In the latter, a wider choice, easier information access and more generally higher education are the premises to empowerment and to have, as a consequence, greater consumer involvement.

In the surveyed literature reported so far, consumer empowerment is analysed in relation to its historical development, social and psychological

functions, and economic implications. However, this analysis does not aim at providing an operational definition that would allow us to measure it. Clearly, skills, competences, rights, information and consumer involvement should be part of this operational definition. It is more difficult to specify and measure the capacity of the market to provide legal and practical devices to protect consumers.

According to the EU Consumer Policy Strategy 2007-2013 (European Commission 2007), empowered consumers need real choices, accurate information, market transparency and the confidence that comes from effective protection and solid rights. Moreover, it recognises as a major objective that of ensuring the effective application of the rules, notably through enforcement cooperation, information, education and redress. The concept of consumer empowerment seems therefore to build on knowledge, skills and assertiveness, while it is accepted that it can derive from different sources, including consumer education, valuable information, and institutional regulations.

In particular, the following elements seem to be important for a definition of empowerment:

- consumers should be aware of their decisions when buying (e.g. terms and conditions, comparing prices, products' labels);
- consumers should be able to get information on their rights;
- consumers should have access to advocacy and redress mechanisms.

To the extent that consumer empowerment is outcome-driven, the public authority ought to be capable of identifying features of the market which impede the realisation of consumer benefits or cause consumer detriment, and put in place the necessary tools to deal with such problems, thus enabling empowered consumers to make informed choices.

### **The survey – Special Eurobarometer 342**

Policies that affect consumers have relied on rather patchy empirical data in terms of their knowledge, capacities and skills. The aim of this survey on consumer empowerment was to fill this gap and complement other initiatives of the European Commission, such as the Consumer Market Scoreboard, which is published biannually and analyses different aspects of consumer markets (such as the consumer perception of the markets, consumer conditions in the EU and the integration of the European single market from a consumer

perspective – see [http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer\\_research/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_research/index_en.htm)). The project was financed by the European Commission and was implemented through the Eurobarometer tool. Eurobarometer surveys are instruments through which the European Commission monitors the evolution of public opinion in the Member States, as support for decision-making and the evaluation of its work. Details of the methodology used by these surveys can be found at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm). The objective of the Special Eurobarometer n° 342 was to provide a thorough picture of the capacities, the level of information and the assertiveness of European consumers. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first survey aimed at analysing these issues carried out in a harmonised way in Europe. It asked about 70 questions on different aspects of consumer empowerment and on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Between February and March 2010, the questionnaire was administered in 29 countries (the 27 Member States of the European Union, together with Iceland and Norway) through face-to-face interviews with 56,471 respondents, aged 15 or over and resident in the European Union (in Iceland and Norway, the survey covers the national citizens and the resident citizens of one the 27 EU Member States). The report is available at [http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer\\_empowerment/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_empowerment/index_en.htm). According to the features they explore, the questions asked can be grouped as:

- Socio-economic questions – aiming at classifying the respondents by gender, age group, education, occupation, marital status, use of internet, etc.
- Questions on consumer skills – aiming at investigating the ability of the respondents to make informed decisions in different scenarios with a quantitative component (such as a discount or an interest rate), and the capacity to read logos and interpret labels.
- Questions on consumer awareness – examining the knowledge of consumers’ rights on issues such as unfair commercial practises, cooling-off periods, guarantee periods and cross-border transactions.
- Questions on consumer engagement – focused on consumers’ behaviour, and in particular on consumer’s actual behaviour when facing a problem.
- Questions on consumer self-perception – aiming at assessing the perceived confidence, knowledge and protection of respondents as consumers.

- Questions on detriment – used to gauge the overall detriment suffered by consumers as a consequence of a problem.

The wide range of issues covered by the survey is due to the complexity of the phenomenon to be analysed, which was briefly described above. Being a sort of piloting exercise, the questionnaire was built on the basis of experts' opinions of what constitutes the role of empowered consumers.

The sample design applied in all the countries is multi-stage and random. In each country, a number of sampling points was drawn with probability proportional to population size and to population density. In order to do so, the sampling points were drawn following stratification by region (following the NUTS II Eurostat classification) and type of area (metropolitan, urban or rural).

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes and in the national language. The sample size of each country is of about 2,000 respondents, with the exception of the countries with a population of less than one million inhabitants (Malta, Cyprus and Luxembourg, where a sample of 1,000 respondents was drawn), and of Germany and the UK. In Germany, two different samples were drawn in Eastern and Western Germany (of 1,031 and 2,023 respondents, respectively), and in the UK two different samples were drawn in Great Britain (2,044 respondents) and Northern Ireland (607 respondents). For the purpose of our analysis, the samples of Eastern and Western Germany have been merged as well as the samples of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This choice, which is standard for Eurobarometers, leads to a very volatile sampling ratio, and to a better coverage of small countries.

The results of the survey show that many European consumers are far from being able to play the role of active, informed and assertive market participants needed by the economy to drive competition and innovation. Indeed, only 44% of European consumers feel confident, knowledgeable and protected. Besides, consumers suffer from considerable detriment, both through sub-optimal choices resulting from a lack of transparency and comparability in consumer markets and from problems arising from transactions.

The survey identifies significant ways in which consumers could be empowered. Consumers feel that they lack adequate formal and informal means to remedy the problems they face, which prevents them from enforcing their rights. Improving access to redress mechanisms, in particular

including small losses in such mechanisms, could have significant benefits for consumers, as well as making businesses more efficient and responsive to consumer needs.

Overall skill levels in arithmetic and reading labels indicate that a significant proportion of consumers struggle with simple tasks: 44% of respondents could not perform a simple calculation involving a rate of interest, 42% could not correctly interpret nutritional information, and only 2% could correctly recognise all five consumer logos proposed. These insights suggest designing smarter policies that provide consumers with the information they need and can actually use. Simplification and standardisation of information could help considerably. The findings on logos reinforce the case for better design and testing, as well as awareness-raising. Widespread ignorance of the most fundamental consumer protection measures appears to confirm how vulnerable consumers are to fraud, or inadequate compliance with consumer protection law on the part of businesses.

These results provide important background information for policymakers and stakeholders at both EU and national level, to help them design smarter policies and regulations that improve consumer decision-making and reduce administrative burdens.

## The Consumer Empowerment Index

The survey described above analysed several different aspects of consumer empowerment, which are difficult to summarise. Although consumer empowerment is a multidimensional phenomenon, the authors of this chapter developed, as a pilot exercise, a composite indicator, the Consumer Empowerment Index (CEI), with the aim of capturing with a single index the various aspects of empowerment. CEI is neither a final answer nor a comprehensive study of all the different facets of consumer empowerment, but is instead meant to foster the debate on the determinants of empowerment and their importance for protecting consumers.

The structure of the index is reported in Table 1. It has a pyramid structure and includes 22 indicators grouped in pillars and sub-pillars. The Index is the weighted average of three pillars (Skills, Awareness and Engagement). Each pillar is the weighted average of a variable number of sub-pillars, and finally each sub-pillar is made up of various indicators constructed from the survey questions.

The first pillar measuring *Consumer skills* aims at capturing the ability to perform basic arithmetic operations deemed necessary for consumers to make informed purchase decisions (basic skills), to correctly read a label and to properly identify and interpret various commonly used EU logos (logos and labels). The pillar *Awareness of consumer legislation* describes the actual knowledge of consumers of several pieces of EU consumer legislation related to these specific issues (Unfair commercial practices, cooling-off and guarantee periods). *Consumer engagement* is the most heterogeneous pillar, as it refers to many different aspects of consumer behaviour. The sub-pillar *Attitude in comparing products* aims at measuring the effort consumers make in obtaining information on products, including prices. The sub-pillar *Consumers' habits when reading terms and conditions* aims at capturing consumers' behaviour when signing contracts: do they read terms and conditions carefully and completely? If not, why? The sub-pillar *Interest in obtaining information on consumer rights* measures the pro-active attitude of consumers when looking for information on their rights. The sub-pillar *Tendency to talk* aims at capturing consumer attitudes to talking about negative and/or positive experiences. Finally, the sub-pillar *Detriment and redress* is related to consumers' attitudes when experiencing a problem causing a legitimate case for complaint. This was the most difficult sub-pillar to construct, due to the structure of filtered questions.

The attribution of numerical scores to each question and of weights to the indicators and sub-pillars was done by the policy analysts of the European Commission's Directorate General for Health & Consumers. The weight of each pillar was defined using a participatory approach by the participant from the Consumer Market Expert Group, which assists and advises the European Commission in carrying out the monitoring of consumer outcomes in the European Union and in benchmarking the national consumer environments, and is composed of representatives of the national authorities handling consumer affairs of the 27 EU Member States. Using the technique known as budget allocation, each participant in the group was asked to allocate 100 points to the three dimensions of consumer empowerment. The set of different weights obtained was then summarised by measure of central tendency to construct an "official" weight for the CEI (see Table 1). The small sample size suggested the use of the median instead of the average, as it is less sensitive to outliers as compared with other measures of central tendency. In any case, the median was sufficiently similar to the mean to produce roughly the same scores and exactly the same ranks. Multivariate

analysis has been used to verify the suitability of the theoretical framework to the available dataset.

Table 1 – Framework and weights of the Consumer Empowerment Index

Pillar	Sub-pillar	Indicator
<b>Consumer Skills (0.33)</b>	Basic skills (0.5)	QA42: Recognize cheaper product (0.25)
		QA43: Find the best interest rate (0.3)
		QA44: Calculate the interest on a loan (0.45)
	Capacity to read logos /labels (0.5)	QA45: Correct interpretation of "grams of fat" (0.2)
		QA46: Find expiring date for a product (0.3)
		QA47(b): Recognize correctly logos (0.5)
<b>Awareness of consumer legislation (0.31)</b>	Unfair commercial practices (0.4)	QA8: Rule for illegal advertisement (0.33)
		QA11: Rule for gifts received by post (0.33)
		QA13: Rule for advertising prices (air tickets) (0.33)
	Cooling-off period after purchase (0.4)	QA6: Rule for money back guarantee (0.33)
		QA9: Rule for the purchase of car insurance (0.33)
		QA10: Rule for door-to-door sales (0.33)
	Guaranteed period (0.2)	QA7: Rule for commercial guarantees
<b>Consumer engagement (0.36)</b>	Comparing products (0.2)	QA17: Comparisons when purchasing a good (0.5)
		QA18: Actual behavior in comparing products (0.5)
	Reading terms and conditions (0.2)	QA14-15: Reading terms and conditions
	Interest in consumer Information (0.2)	QA16: Knowledge of consumer organizations (0.33)
		QA40: Knowledge of programs related to consumer rights (0.33)
	Tendency to talk (0.2)	QA41: Actual behavior in obtaining info on consumer rights (0.33)
		QA25: Tendency to communicate negative experiences (0.5)
	Detriment and redress (0.2)	QA26: Tendency to communicate positive experiences (0.5)
		Combination of the questions QA27, QA28, QA31, QA36, and QA37: actual behavior when experimenting problems for which there is a legitimate cause for complaint

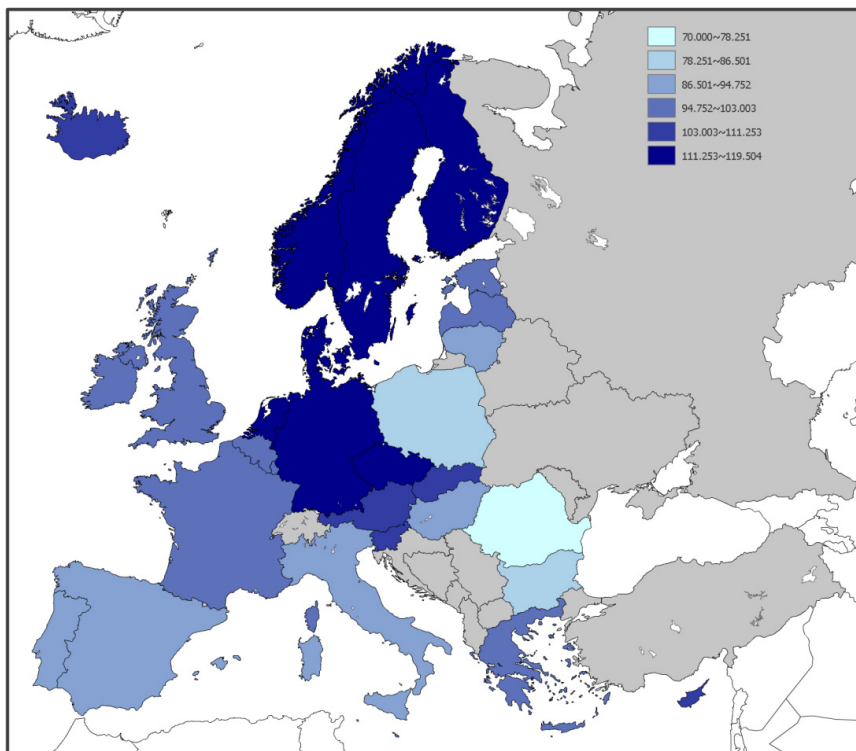


Figure 1 – Consumer Empowerment Index, 2010

The CEI score of countries participating in the survey is shown in Figure 1. The most empowered group of countries is clustered in Northern Europe and includes Norway, which scores highest, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Austria and Iceland. The middle of the ranking is dominated by Western European countries, such as France, Belgium, the UK, Luxembourg and Ireland, together with Cyprus, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Malta. At the bottom of the ranking we find Mediterranean and Eastern European countries: Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, Poland and Bulgaria. From the analysis of the socio-economic indicators, it appears that consumer empowerment is strongly linked to age, profession, education level and internet use. As with the Eurobarometer survey on which it is based, the CEI suffers from the fact that the indicators and pillars of which



it is composed are determined ex-ante by the experts’ opinion. Ex-post, the analysis of the CEI shows that empowered consumers do not always behave as experts expect them to. For instance, the survey revealed that in Norway, the country with the highest score, most of the consumers do not read terms and conditions when signing a service contract. It is likely that the empowered Norwegian consumers have very good reasons to do so, however the question was included in the survey and the scores assigned in the CEI assume that an empowered consumer should read terms and conditions before signing a contract.

### Determinants of consumer empowerment

To explore the determinants at the individual level of consumer empowerment and of its pillars, we used the following econometric framework:

$$\ln y_{ij} = X_{ij}\beta + \varepsilon_{ij}, \quad j = 1, \dots, 29 \quad [1]$$

where  $\ln y_{ij}$  is the logarithm of the CEI (or of its pillars)  $y$  for the individual  $i$  living in country  $j$ ;  $X_{ij}$  is a vector of observable individual characteristics (covariates) chosen from the set of socio-economic variables surveyed and  $\varepsilon_{ij}$  is the error term of the equation [1] that we assume to be independent and identically distributed. Since  $y$  is expressed in logarithm, the coefficients  $\beta$  associated with  $X_{ij}$  represent the percentage changes in the dependent variable resulting from one unit change in the explanatory variables.

The vector  $X_{ij}$  of explanatory variables, aimed at featuring empowerment, includes the following covariates:

- *Gender*, a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent is male. This variable tests the possibility that empowerment differs according to gender.
- *Age* of the respondent, expressed in years. To explore the possibility of a non-linear relationship between age and empowerment, we also included the square of the consumer’s age (Age squared).
- *Children*, a dummy variable equal to 1 if there are children below the age of 14 in the respondent’s household. With this variable we test whether the presence of children does indeed enhance responsibility/awareness and thus empowerment.
- Two discrete variables measuring the educational attainment of the respondent: (i) *low educational attainment*, equal to 1 if he/she has at most a lower secondary education (ISCED 0 to 2); (ii) *high educational attainment*,

equal to 1 if the respondent has a tertiary education (ISCED 5 or 6); the omitted category – the reference group – includes individuals with an upper secondary or a post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3 or 4). The coefficients associated with both variables should be interpreted in comparison with this omitted category. The variables on attainment aim at exploring the relationship between literacy and empowerment.

- *Language*, a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent reports a mother tongue different from the official language(s) spoken in the country of residence. The use of the language spoken at home as a proxy of the migrant status aims at capturing the potential effect of the linguistic barrier on the empowerment of foreigner consumers.
- *Material deprivation*, a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent is “materially deprived”. Individuals are considered deprived if they are living in households who cannot afford at least two of the following four items: (i) to eat meat, chicken, fish every other day, (ii) a telephone (fixed or mobile), (iii) a car, (iv) a television. The deprivation index is used here as a proxy of households’ standards of living (information not collected in the survey).
- Two dummy variables capturing the occupational status of the respondent: (i) *Unemployed* is equal to 1 if the respondent is unemployed or temporarily not working; (ii) *Studying* is equal to 1 if the respondent reports that he or she is a student. The coefficients associated with the variables Unemployed and Studying should be interpreted in comparison with the reference category of employed consumers.
- *Rural area*, a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent declares that he or she lives in a rural area or in a small village. We expect a positive relationship between living in cities and being empowered, as urban consumers face more diversity of supply, more information and easier access to channels for making complaints.
- *Internet user*, a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent uses the internet at home or at work. This variable aims at capturing the effect of the use of internet – independently from the intensity of use.
- *Country*, a set of 29 dummy variables controlling time-invariant country characteristics.

In a first step, equation [1] is estimated on the pooled sample using ordinary least squares estimators (OLS). Under this specification, the effect of individuals’ characteristics is assumed to be constant across countries; hence

the coefficient associated to a given covariate summarizes the average relationship between the dependent variable and this covariate conditional on the other regressors. In a second step, we relax the assumption of stability of the coefficients across countries and present country-specific estimates. This allows us to examine whether there is a vulnerable consumer profile that is common across European countries or if it differs between countries or groups of countries.

Note that when equation [1] is estimated for a given pillar, we also add as additional covariates the remaining two pillars in order to be able to capture the effect *per se* of the socio-economic characteristics of the pillar under consideration.

### **Rich, educated and middle aged: what matters for consumer empowerment**

Our empirical analysis shows that the most significant factors of empowerment are material deprivation and education. (See Table 2 for a summary.) Materially deprived consumers are 15% less empowered than wealthier consumers, while consumers with low education score up to 10% less than more educated ones at the EU level. (This percentage is higher in Eastern countries.) Whereas the role of education is similarly important in all the countries surveyed, the impact of material deprivation varies across countries, with Italy, Portugal, Spain, Ireland and Luxembourg displaying a strong relationship between material deprivation and empowerment while the opposite is found in Finland, Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Cyprus. Having a PhD or simply a degree does not really matter, as higher levels of education seem to have proportionally less effect on empowerment.

It is more difficult to interpret the effect of internet use and language spoken on consumer empowerment. Our estimation show that consumers using the internet are 12% more empowered, placing internet second among the influencing factors. However, internet use may actually capture the impact of other “omitted” variables related to consumer empowerment (like age, education and gender of the respondent), thus results should be cautiously interpreted. On the other hand, the small proportion of non-native speakers in many countries does not always allow robust conclusions to be drawn on the effect of language spoken at home on consumer empowerment, even if our analysis points to a significant effect at the EU level (especially high in Hungary, Finland and Italy).

Among the moderate influential factors, the most interesting outcome is the non-linear behaviour of age: empowerment increases up to a turning point (which spans from 35 to 55, depending on the country) and then decreases. On the other hand, both gender and area of residence display quite heterogeneous patterns in the EU countries without a clear geographical clustering. Gender does not seem to be crucial for empowerment: males are 2% more empowered than females in spite of the fact that shopping habits are strongly related to gender: 68% of the female respondents declare that they have the lead in shopping decisions versus 32% of males.

Being unemployed is not systematically associated with high or low empowerment (nor is it associated with skills, awareness and engagement) both at the EU level and at the country level. Likewise, being parents does not seem to influence empowerment (with the exception of Latvia and Cyprus).

Table 2: Influencing factor in order of importance

Highly influential factors	Effect
Material deprivation	Materially deprived consumers are 15% less empowered than wealthier consumers. They are 35% less skilled, 21% less aware and 8% less engaged. This result is valid in the majority of countries (especially IT, LU, PT, IE and ES), while it is not confirmed for FI, NO, IS, SE and CY.
Internet use	Consumers using the internet are 12% more empowered (13% more skilled, 14% more aware, and 9% more engaged). The largest impact of internet use on empowerment is found in IE, PT, IS and LU.
Education	Consumers with low education score up to 10% less than more educated ones at the EU level. Low educated consumers are 16% less skilled, 10% less aware and 8% less engaged. These results are confirmed in each country; the divide is especially high in Eastern countries (PL, RO, BG, SK, LT). Higher levels of education have proportionally less effect on the amount of empowerment.
Language spoken	Language is indeed a barrier in many countries: at EU level consumers reporting a mother tongue different from the official language(s) have an empowerment 8% lower than the remaining consumers. They are 10% less skilled, 16% less aware and 3% less engaged. This effect depends on the country considered: it is high in HU, FI and IT (up to 20%) but is not found in CY, EE, ES, LV, MT, NO, PL, SE.

<b>Moderate influential factors</b>	<b>Effect</b>
Gender	Males are 2% more empowered than females (who declare that they lead the shopping decisions in 68% of the cases). Males have a higher level of skills (+7%) and awareness (+6%) but are less engaged (-5%). Countries, however, behave differently: males outperform females in DE, DK, NL, SE, BE, AT, PT, UK, NO, RO and especially EL. The reverse happens in IT and SI.
Area of residence	Living in rural areas has a modest positive effect (+1) on empowerment. However, countries display heterogeneous patterns: a positive effect is found in UK, BE, CZ, FR, NO; but a negative effect is displayed in Southern (PT, EL, ES) and Eastern (PL, RO, BG, LT) countries together with AT, SE, IS. No effect on the remaining countries.
Age	Age has a moderate but significant effect on empowerment. The effect has an inverse U shape form: consumers aged below 30 and above 50 are less empowered. The turning point varies across countries: the highest empowerment is around the age of 42 for the overall sample of 29 countries, but spans from 55 in DK, BE, NL to 35-40 in PL, EE, CZ, LT, SI and PT.
<b>Non influential factors</b>	<b>Effect</b>
Presence of children at home	The presence of children below 14 in the household is not associated with more empowerment at the EU level. Country evidence is mixed and small in absolute value. Parents are slightly more empowered only in LV and CY.
Occupational status	Being unemployed is not systematically associated with high or low empowerment (nor is it associated with skills, awareness and engagement) both at the EU level and at the country level.

## Conclusions

Both the results of the survey and the further analysis carried out through the CEI show that many European consumers are far from being able to play the role of active, informed and assertive market participants of the kind the economy needs to drive competition and innovation.

These results provide important background information for policymakers and stakeholders at both European and national level, to help them design

smarter policies and regulations that improve consumer decision-making and reduce administrative burdens. They can be applied in relation to interventions in any policy seeking to shape or influence consumer decision-making where what is done needs to fit the cognitive skills of consumers. It can also be used to help design and target information campaigns, consumer education initiatives, information about the work of public authorities and consumer NGOs, and the role of consumer media.

These results were made available in detail at the European Commission website (at [http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer\\_empowerment/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_empowerment/index_en.htm)), and the European Commission will use them to prepare a consultation of stakeholders on policy options on consumer empowerment.

These results could also be useful for rethinking the set of criteria used to evaluate empowerment. The survey was conducted measuring consumer skills, awareness and engagement, but are we sure that reading terms and conditions carefully and completely, maybe involving several pages of text that is written very small and full of technical words, is an essential criteria for empowered consumers? Does empowerment rest entirely on the shoulders of consumers?

Our analysis suggests that, while at the aggregated level, we can find a north-south divide in terms of consumer empowerment, when analysing the determinants of empowerment the picture is much more blurred. We could not find clear geographical patterns (or patterns related to the size of the country) in terms of how education, age, material deprivation, internet or other variables affect empowerment. This suggest two lessons: (i) the *average individual* is probably not the right target for policy analysis as is the case in standard economic analysis, as this average individual looks very different depending on the country considered; (ii) the differences between EU countries are substantial and worth exploring in order to portray more effectively the vulnerable consumer and target interventions. Internet influence remains the major unsolved issue in our findings. In spite of the high influence on empowerment, its correlation with age, gender and especially education hampers the identification of a clear relationship between internet usage and consumer empowerment. This topic is left for future research.

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#### List of abbreviations

AT	Austria	IS	Iceland
BE	Belgium	IT	Italy
BG	Bulgaria	LT	Lithuania
CY	Cyprus	LU	Luxembourg
CZ	Czech Republic	LV	Latvia
DE	Germany	MT	Malta
DK	Denmark	NL	Netherlands
EE	Estonia	NO	Norway
EL	Greece	PL	Poland
ES	Spain	PT	Portugal
EU	European Union	RO	Romania
FI	Finland	SE	Sweden
FR	France	SI	Slovenia
HU	Hungary	SK	Slovakia
IE	Ireland	UK	United Kingdom



## Safe Grounds and Ambiguous Substances. Framing risk and pregnancy at the Facebook site of the Swedish National Food Agency

Helene Brembeck

Food consumption today is generally considered a risky business (Östberg 2003), not least during pregnancy. When women become pregnant they enter a contested terrain of good and bad in relation to food and eating; there are certain foods you ought to eat and others you have to avoid. In Sweden, this information comes from governmental agencies like the National Food Agency (NFA), institutions like maternity care centres, magazines and blogs, partners, friends and family, or workmates (Brembeck 2011). Sometimes it comes from almost everyone, as suggested by British researchers Fox, Nicholson and Heffernan (2009), since the female pregnant body seems to be practically everyone's concern. Information comes in the form of everyday talk and conversation, advice from experts or packed in verbatim in brochures, in magazines or on the internet. This means that pregnancy is drawn into a 'riscscape' with several actors, laypersons as well as experts, where risks and anxieties are framed and handled. In this chapter, the term 'riscscape' is used colloquially as a way of visualizing sets of diverse food risks, and how they are associated with the pregnant, female body in many different ways and by many different actors. The chapter presents a study within the ERC-funded programme Consumer Culture in an Age of Anxiety, CONANX, which focuses on anxiety at the intersection of markets and morality, trust, risk and health ([www.sheffield.ac.uk/conanx](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/conanx)).

The starting points of the CONANX programme are the now commonly recognized ideas in the social sciences that we are ‘living through a period of acute insecurity and high anxiety’ (Wilkinson 2001: 42), that we are living in an ‘age of anxiety’ (May 1950: v) or a ‘risk society’ (Beck 1992). Pregnancy seems indeed to be a good example of this development. This is particularly true if you study information manuals given to pregnant women. There is no ‘no risk’ category in these manuals, Canadian feminist scholar Lealle Ruhl (1999) argues. Threat is everywhere; no one is entirely safe, merely more or less statistically vulnerable. Ruhl concludes that more than anything else the ‘risk society’ exists in pre-emptive anxiety, because the things most feared (pollution, toxic side effects, miscarriage, deformed babies) are only visible when their effects are manifested.

From the general idea of a riskscape, this chapter will discuss one of the most studied of these actors – expert advice – but this will be done by refraining from the most common approaches in public health research of governance versus resistance (or strategies versus tactics), or a sender-receiver or ‘deficit model’, where members of the target group are typically seen as lacking knowledge or the right ‘attitudes’ for behavioural changes (see for example Halkier & Jensen 2011). Instead, I follow Jackson and Everts (2010), who contend that any kind of social anxiety can be understood more thoroughly by focusing on interweaving sets of practices. They argue for the need to understand how anxieties are framed and handled within different ‘communities of practice’; from the way in which government institutions are organized to identify and handle possible outbreaks of anxiety to the way our everyday lives of shopping, cooking and eating are affected.

### **Modulating anxieties**

As shown in an earlier publication from the CONANX project (Brembeck 2011), the risk communicators at the NFA have used essentially the same strategy in brochures and lately at the NFA’s website; informing expectant mothers of what foods to avoid during pregnancy by listing good and bad foods. The objective is to not frighten women, but to promote their capacity to act rationally in encounters with potentially harmful foods. This strategy has been discussed within the CONANX group in terms of manipulation, or more accurately, modulation, of affect, drawing on works by Brian Massumi (Milne et al. 2010). The modulation is done by two means: by placing information about pregnancy and potentially harmful foods within a risk

discourse, and by liberal governance; leaving the final decision about how to act to the woman herself (Ruhl 1999; Lindsay 2010). One reason for this democratic stance is the fear of playing the role of ‘nanny state’. The NFA wants to be a friendly partner, giving consumers good advice, but never being bossy and giving orders. However, women in the previous study did not consider the advice to be consistent, giving rise to a considerable amount of anxiety and confusion versed in an everyday life perspective of competing discourses (Brembeck 2011).

In an attempt to find ways of giving even more democratic and friendly advice, the NFA introduced a Facebook site about pregnancy before Christmas 2010. Here, women can ask questions and post comments, and get more or less immediate answers from NFA staff. This highlights the virtual community of internet chat rooms and health sites as a new space in which the politics of pregnancy is played out in the twenty-first century (Fox, Nicholson & Heffernan 2009). This chapter reports finding from a study of this Facebook conversation during 2011. The ambition is to give an overview of common themes and ways of communicating, and, in particular, to highlight the field of herbal teas and pregnancy, which proved to be the most disputed during 2011.

One could of course argue that the readiness of the NFA to always be there to give a helping hand, including the use of interactive means such as Facebook, is not only a way to prevent anxiety that agrees with the women’s preferences for personalized here-and-now information, but also a way of keeping pregnancy and food steadfast within the realm of risk and anxiety (see for example Ruhl 1999). My ambition in this chapter, however, is not to discuss whether this form of communication can be understood as a form of liberal governance, following Ruhl (1999) and others. Rather, my interest is in how anxieties are framed, handled and institutionalized, on the basis of the conversation at the Facebook site.

## Facebook chat

The Facebook site ‘Dietary advice during pregnancy and breast-feeding’ (*Kostråd till gravida och ammande*) was launched November 24, 2010 by the NFA. During 2011 about 300 unique questions were posted at the site. Most were simple questions and answers, but some threads resulted in several comments from other visitors to the site. According to the NFA information officer, 411 posts were registered during the period November 24, 2010 - July 27, 2011.

This is about 50 posts a month, of which an estimated 30 posts a month were questions to the NFA and the rest were comments. Now and then the NFA posted information and reports, such as ‘Berry time: Recent figures on vitamins and berries’ (*Bärtider. Färska siffror om vitaminer och bär*) and ‘New NFA advice encourages breastfeeding for six months’ (*Livsmedelsverkets nya råd uppmuntrar amning i sex månader*), the latter post generating the highest number of comments: 16. The site had received 841 ‘likes’ since it was launched in late 2010 (retrieved 3 January 2012). I was not able to find information about the number of visitors, but according to e-mail correspondence with the information officer, the posts dispatched by the NFA at the site had been shown nearly 50,000 times at the users’ own Facebook sites during the period November 24, 2010 – July 27, 2011, which, she stated, ‘says something about its popularity’. Women aged 25-34 were the most frequent visitors, which was also the target group.

The Facebook initiative was also immediately applauded at the site:

- Good job, slv! (‘slv’ is the abbreviation for *Livsmedelsverket*, the NFA, used in their e-mail address)
- Hurray for *Livsmedelsverket* (the NFA)!
- Really good initiative! Well done!
- What a good initiative, I will spread this to my friends!

The questions were answered by different persons at the NFA under the common denomination ‘The inquiry’ (*Upplysningen*). The answers were usually given within 48 hours, commonly within a few hours or even minutes. They were given in an unauthoritative and friendly manner and an everyday parlance was used. They always started with a ‘hi’ or ‘hello’ (*hej, hejsan*). Sometimes the name of the respondent was included, which made the form of address even more personal: ‘A good thing, Sofia, that your son’s colic disappeared when you stopped drinking milk.’

The women often expressed serious gratitude for the answers given:

*‘Thanks so much for such a quick answer. It is wonderful that you are on FB. And your website is also very useful. Thanks again, many regards, Eva + Julia and husband’*

*‘Many thanks for the replies! What a super service!’*

## Quick and relevant

Two aspects of the Facebook conversation seemed to be especially valued by the women and appeared to be the particular reasons for the appreciative exclamations above: that the answers were quick and that they were adapted to real-life situations. Examples of the rapidity of the answers were questions about what was on the lunch menu the same day, such as:

*'It is on the lunch menu today that we will get "Snapper"... is it OK to eat that when pregnant? When I Google, it seems snapper is a collective name for various fish so I am not sure...'*

That the questions were grounded in everyday situations was noticeable since many of them were very specific and dealt with particular branded products from the supermarket shelves.

*'Is it OK to eat Coop's own, ready-cooked ham packaged in sealed plastic with liquid (Swedish Meat) that we breaded at home?' (Coop is The Swedish Cooperative Union grocery retailer, Swedish Meat is a cooperative owned by Swedish farmers and also a quality brand.)*

*'Can you eat Kalix whitefish roe that has not been frozen?' (Kalix is a place in northern Sweden and also a brand.)*

*'Hey! Is Milko's "Crème Fraîche Extra fine with chanterelles and cognac" and "Shallots and white wine" OK to eat during pregnancy? I am thinking about the fact it's got cognac and wine (i.e. alcohol) in it. Grateful for answers 😊'. (Milko is a dairy brand.)*

It is obvious that the site responded to a need for direct and personalized information. One of the reasons why the information in the brochures was considered ambiguous and difficult to grasp by the women in my earlier study was that it was difficult to apply to real life situations, in spite of the efforts of the NFA to be pedagogical and consistent (Brembeck 2011). The women did not only buy generic staples, such as "meat", "bread" or "beans" that were listed in the brochures, but packaged and branded products with mixed content. This was apparent also from the Facebook queries quoted above. The answers reflected a closeness to detail that general advice and guidance could not reach.

## Communities of practice

As the huge number of posts dispatched by the NFA at ‘Dietary advice during pregnancy and breast-feeding’ shown at the users’ own Facebook sites indicates, the conversation at the site can be regarded as the ‘tip of an iceberg’ of queries about food and pregnancy, or one of many nodes of the riskscape. Risks involving food and pregnancy were discussed with friends and family, at work, at maternity care centres, in magazines and on the internet.

*‘We have talked at work about the reason why you should be careful with cured ham when you’re pregnant. Is it because of listeriosis or toxoplasmosis?’ The answer from the NFA was that there is no risk of listeria in cured ham, and the respondent replied:*

*‘Thank you! I shall forward this information to my workmates.’*

Here is another example; a woman writing:

*‘I found this site in a pregnancy magazine, which is fortunate as I have a lot of concerns about food when you are pregnant...’ There then followed a question about a fishing expedition and which fish was safe to eat.*

Another woman referred to a discussion at her local maternity care centre:

*‘One of my questions was whether it is OK to eat pasteurized sheep and goat milk. I understand that your answer is yes. At mvc (the maternity care centre) they thought that you were only allowed to eat feta cheese from pasteurized cow’s milk. That’s why I wonder.’*

Family and friends were also involved. Sometimes male partners asked questions about the diet of their pregnant wives and girlfriends (such as ‘Can my girlfriend eat squid?’), and mothers and friends also posed questions (‘Is it OK for my pregnant daughter to eat fish caught in the sea outside Sundsvall?’).

Media and the internet were other important actors. According to the information officer at the NFA, many blogs and search engines reported traffic to ‘Dietary advice during pregnancy and breast-feeding’, that is, it was common for visitors to find the Facebook site via Google and many blogs. The launch of the NFA’s revised dietary advice during pregnancy and breast-feeding, stating that it was OK to give the baby small servings of food from the age of four months, instead of from six months as had previously been the advice, received a considerable amount of attention in the media, and was discussed in length at the site.

From these examples, it is obvious that these women were part of several communities of practice forming and modulating the ‘riskscape’ of pregnancy and anxiety, but with the NFA as a prominent actor.

### Reliability and correct answers

Another reason why the Facebook site was valued was that the answers given there were considered very trustworthy by the women.

Earlier studies show that Swedish women respect the answers from the NFA. They are considered highly reliable. All of the women in my previous study had looked for information at the NFA website, and they trusted – with reservations – the information they found there. They considered it the best and most up-to-date information available (Brembeck 2011). This agrees with the results of surveys carried out by the NFA, stating that 87% of pregnant women were aware of the advice given and brochures published by the NFA. Another study from January 2011 confirms that most consumers know and trust the NFA (only 2% had never heard of the agency). Consumers found the NFA’s staff to be highly skilled, and that their advice had a scientific basis and was up-to-date. The individual group with the greatest confidence was families with children (Livsmedelsverket 2011).

I contend that the reason for the high level of trust in the NFA from pregnant women in my two studies is that the discourse about food, pregnancy and risk, of which the NFA is an exponent, is based on science. It deals with the interaction of molecules in food and human cells. As Norwegian researcher Ådnegard Skarstad (2008) shows, the whole field of food and risk has been opened up by the natural sciences and their technological advances. Likewise, what is actually happening at a molecular level when potentially harmful substances encounter the human cells of the foetus, pregnant body or newborn baby cannot be studied or controlled by the women, although signs such as rashes and upset stomachs can be. The NFA always has the preferential right of interpretation, which was recognized by the women. You have to trust the experts, providing you accept the risk discourse in the first place.

From this, it is obvious that the NFA is not just any actor in the riskscape; it is an important one, because of the high skills and scientific basis of the agency’s work. This agrees with statements at the Facebook site showing that women turned to the site to resolve disputes or to get the ‘correct’ answers.

*Hi, I'm pregnant in week 35 and have become very fond of rhubarb in recent days. I just got the idea to Google "rhubarb and pregnancy" and found some pages that said that you should be careful about eating rhubarb during pregnancy because of some acid. Therefore, I want to check with you, can I still eat about two servings of rhubarb cream per day, or can it harm my little baby?*

Another example:

*'At a parents' forum, a member writes that her midwife says that advice about sushi is incorrect and that one should avoid eating it altogether. Have there been recent recommendations or is the midwife talking drive!'*

A comparative European study confirms that Danes and Norwegians trust authorities (Halkier et al. 2007), and this is most likely the same for Swedes, too, since Sweden has the same Scandinavian welfare-state focus on consumer protection as Denmark and Norway have.

### Pre-emptive anxieties

Most of the questions at the site were 'pre-emptive' and concerned whether it was OK to eat certain kinds of food in the women's surroundings: from the grocery store, at the restaurant they planned to visit, smoked salmon they had received as gifts, or foods they might encounter on their holiday trips to another European country. There were also questions about how to handle food: the temperature to which meat should be heated to make sure bacteria were killed, etc.

This means that the women already accepted the risk discourse and the NFA's expertise and right of interpretation. This did not, however, imply that the women were anxious, rather the contrary: they appeared to be already attuned to the risk discourse and in control. They did not follow the advice unquestioningly, but the advice was often 'translated' to fit the women's own everyday lives, local habits and circumstances. A question whether it was OK to eat crayfish, for example, that received the answer that crayfish contained low levels of contaminants, but that lobster butter might contain high levels of certain pesticides, made the respondent make her own calculation and answer: 'Then I will avoid the lobster butter and focus on the crayfish meat. 😊THANK YOU for the answer.😊'

This is reminiscent of the coping strategies in relation to sushi in my previous study (Brembeck 2011), allowing pregnant women to go on with their



daily eating habits, but still avoiding anxious encounters and feeling safe, simply by choosing sushi that was based on avocado, crab, shrimp and omelette instead of the risky raw fish.

## Anguish

Some of the questions at the site, however, expressed deep concern:

*'Today the freezer had been open and I ate ice cream that had melted. ... Then I got anxious (fick jag ångest) and Googled it ... and there it is that you absolutely must not eat melted ice cream when pregnant ... and not otherwise :s is it true?'*

*'Hi! I got food poisoning from a salad with shrimps, egg, corn, tomatoes, cucumber and dressing that I bought for lunch yesterday. Will this affect my child in any way? Hug.'*

*'I happened to eat fried reindeer today and didn't think about whether it was OK or not, and I am a bit worried. They seemed very particular about hygiene and had a thermometer in the meat and plastic gloves on their hands?'*

All of these questions were asked after the intake of the food, when the food had already entered their bodies. There seemed to be no return and the possibility of harming their unborn child for life became perceptible. This was when anxiety struck the women, and it took a few calming words from the information division at the NFA before the event was oriented, delimited and could be dealt with. In the words of Jackson and Everts (2010), anxious objects and subjects were created: the food was framed as dangerous and possibly toxic, and the women temporarily lost control and became engulfed by fear.

The same thing happened at group discussions about pregnancy and fish as part of my earlier study (Brembeck 2011). Some of the women described the bodily activation caused by eating fish from the blacklist, such as Atlantic halibut or Baltic herring. They described the bodily reaction that came before the intellectual realization of what they had done, displaying vivid gestures of disgust, as if they were trying to vomit food out of their bodies. They depicted the panic and showed with facial expressions and body language how they became petrified with fear, calming down only after reasoning with themselves about the actual risk.

Just like these women, the women at the Facebook site were not attuned to the food in question as risky; they had not previously thought of these food items as potential dangers, and the sudden realization made them temporarily lose control.

### **Ambiguous substances**

The questions at the Facebook site almost always dealt with subjects the NFA had the correct answers to; they were about cooking times, frying temperatures, nutritional content of food to maximize health and avoid risks etc.

The reason why the NFA staff could be so assured in their answers, I would argue, is that the questions dealt with issues that are scientifically based. Substances and frying times have been tested, and potentially harmful substances have undergone a rigid risk assessment. Risk evaluation is a strictly scientific process generating 'tolerable intakes' and security factors; for example, the amounts of dioxins in fish must be 100 times less than what has been proven harmful in animal studies (Brembeck 2011). As Ådnegard Skarstad (2008) argues, when a risk assessment is conducted, something happens with the food: it is shaped as an issue of risk or non-risk, a potentially harmful substance. It thus becomes obvious that the answers at the Facebook site are not only expressions of friendly conversations, but scientific statements dressed in everyday language; the voice of science meets everyday concerns.

During 2011 there was, however, one field where the NFA did not have the 'correct' answers: the field of dietary supplements and herbal remedies of the kind that can be bought in health food stores. In this context, it was revealed that the conversation was the meeting place of two different logics: a scientific logic and an everyday logic, or two different communities and ways of framing and handling risks. During the field work period, one particular area of discussion was different kinds of herbal teas. These were generally considered healthy by the women. The health food industry advertises herbs as the world's oldest medicines, dating 2,000 years back and used by monks as natural remedies that can support and help the body's own resources when it comes to gaining strength and energy and overcoming diseases ([www.ortagubben.se](http://www.ortagubben.se)). But since these substances had not been tested, the NFA wanted the women to refrain from using them until they had undergone scientific testing. This was obvious from the 'standard response' to questions about herbal teas, in the following example as a response to the question 'Hello! How does rooibos tea work if you are pregnant?'

*'Hi there! The NFA advises caution with herbal teas and herbal products during pregnancy and lactation. We know very little about the effects on pregnancy and birth from this type of product. What is known with certainty is that many herbs have varying degrees of effect, but obviously there are no studies on prenatal/pregnant subjects. So there is not always evidence that they would be dangerous, but there is not any scientific evidence that can ensure their safety during pregnancy.'* / *The Inquiry*

Rooibos tea is, of course, a common choice of drink for young women who meet for social encounters and a chat, or used as a relaxing beverage during the day. From the answer from the NFA it becomes evident that the NFA did not care much about commensality, taste or relaxation; the only scale they use is the scientific one of more or less risk. There was no mention of possible positive effects of herbal teas. It was simply stated that there was 'no evidence that they might be *dangerous*...no scientific evidence that can ensure their *safety*'. Their reasoning was about 'just in case'. Just in case there might be unwanted side effects, the women should refrain from drinking rooibos tea. This is evidence as good as any of the attempts on the part of the NFA to draw these substances into the risk discourse as a means to control them and provide guidance.

In health stores, herbal teas are advertised as having many positive effects during pregnancy and lactation. Tea made from raspberry leaves is supposed to speed up delivery, and 'breastfeeding tea' (herbal tea with anise, caraway, fennel and fenugreek seeds) is thought to increase the production of breast milk. When women enthusiastically asked about these remedies, the NFA was quick to dampen their enthusiasm.

One woman wrote:

*'I have bought raspberry leaf tea; I know many who have tested it. Is it good? I am almost four days after the due date, so I am willing to try out everything that people tell about.'*

The NFA was quick to respond:

*'Hello! Raspberry leaf tea has traditionally been used to speed up delivery. There is very little research on it, but it is suggested that raspberry leaf may actually increase the risk of complications for both mother and child. Scientific literature advises against use during pregnancy because it is not possible to say that it is safe. We therefore recommend that you do not drink raspberry leaf tea when you are pregnant.'* / *The Inquiry*

In this case the NFA hardly lived up to its task to inform but not frighten. An interested and curious subject was turned into an anxious subject ‘just in case’. The same happened in the following case; a woman asked if there was something she could use to increase the production of breast milk. When she got an immediate answer from another visitor at the site, to use ‘breast feeding tea’, and eagerly answered: ‘But thanks :) Where can I get breast feeding tea?’, the NFA representative at the site felt compelled to step in and send out a warning:

*‘Hello! The NFA advises pregnant and nursing women against the use of health food products. This is because we do not know if the products are safe for the foetus and the infant. This kind of product is rarely tested scientifically and there is also no “approval process” of food’ / The Inquiry*

Obviously, all women were not attuned to herbal teas as risky, or even prepared to accept this framing by the NFA. In the excerpt below, the recommendations not to drink green tea were questioned.

*‘Hello! I read below that you discourage from drinking green tea during pregnancy. I have read your website many times and never seen this advice, wondering if it’s something completely new?’*

The Inquiry answered:

*‘Hello! The reason why we recommend limiting the consumption of green tea while pregnant is that we do not know enough about its effects. However, we advise against consuming herbal tea extracts because they can have harmful health effects.’ / The Inquiry*

The woman replied:

*‘When I was pregnant in August 2010-May 2011 there was nothing at your site to say that green tea should be avoided. And then I read it carefully. Every few days...’*

The NFA representative felt obliged to respond:

*‘Hi there! It’s a bit of a question. We advise caution with herbal teas, herbal products and green tea, because we do not know how the foetus can be affected. Drinking a couple of cups of green tea a day is probably good, but excessive consumption of plain green tea and green tea in the form of extract has been shown to cause liver damage.’ / The Inquiry*

When pressured, the NFA representative dared to remain outside the discourse for a moment and admitted that ‘a couple of cups of green tea a day is probably good’ – and this is most likely what most people consume, and not many turn to ‘excessive consumption’. But just in case consuming excessive quantities of green tea might cause possible harm, it must be framed as risky for everyone just in case and all pregnant women positioned as anxious subjects.

To be able to do their job of modulating anxiety, anxious objects and subjects must be created; herbal teas must be positioned as probably harmful and the women as in possible danger. Only then can the NFA do their job to calm down, guide and advise in a friendly, non-authoritarian and highly respected manner.

## Conclusion

This chapter is not a statement for or against the healthiness of herbal teas during pregnancy, and nor is it a critique of the NFA. They obviously do their job excellently and are highly valued by the women at the Facebook site. My argument is that the NFA and their conversation at the Facebook site can be regarded as a powerful node in the riskscape of food and health surrounding pregnancy, and moreover that the NFA staff have to draw foods into the risk discourse to be able to do their job. This is their way of dealing with food and pregnancy. The women have to trust the NFA, since the wonders of pregnancy and childbirth are existential issues; they deal with life and death and the survival of the human species, and it is not possible for laypersons to have complete knowledge of and control over what happens inside the uterus during the nine months of confinement.

Pregnancy has probably always been linked to anxiety, but of different kinds. In the peasant society of a hundred years or more ago, threats came from the supernatural world of trolls, goblins and witches or from malicious neighbours with ‘evil eyes’, and there was a huge amount of protective tools and measures (among them the use of herbs). Today, fear is in the microscopic world of bacteria and harmful molecules that has been opened up by the advances of medical technology. The NFA and their way of framing, handling and communicating anxiety is simply the ‘wise woman’ of our time, emerging from the network of fear, and the keeper of some of its secrets. But from the conversation at the NFA’s Facebook site it is also evident that other logics, other framings and other practices are trickling, which softens and

reorients the scientific framing of the NFA and their attempts at modulation by creating anxious subjects and objects their way. Other framings and other practices happen at other places and in other communities, making up the riskscape of food and pregnancy.

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## The institutional foodscapes as a sensemaking approach towards school food

Mette Weinreich Hansen & Niels Heine Kristensen

The sensemaking of consumption will, in this chapter, be addressed from the public food perspective. One dominant view in consumption research is related to the individual consumer behaviour and the rational/irrational choices made individually (Aschemann-Witzel & Hamm 2012; Dean et al. 2012; Verbeke et al. 2011). This approach has been questioned by researchers looking into the practices and the complexities of everyday life consumption and lived lives. The everyday life perspectives in particular have a focus on the actions and (often tacit) routines of everyday life and are thereby open to whatever comes out of practice, rather than what is predefined by a rational or economic behavioural approach (Brembeck 2005; Shove et al. 2007; ).

One aspect of consumption has until now been more or less neglected in the research of consumption, namely the daily consumption of food that takes place in public institutions, such as schools, nursing homes, workplaces, prisons and military barracks. This type of consumption has a certain type of meaning and practice connected to it. The institutional settings underline a public attention and scope for agency by public and/or private actors in order to ensure nutritional, public health oriented or commercially founded interests (Morgan 2010; Winson 2004).

## Sensemaking of school food?

Educational institutions are regarded as key carriers of cultural values, which is an important dimension in the examination of school food systems. Local, regional, national and international decision-makers are involved in developing school policies. Agendas raised in modern society often also address the school setting. This can be exemplified in discussions of the general health of pupils and in worries of the rise of obesity among young people. The food consumed at schools also has a symbolic meaning besides the material and nutritional dimension, and is 'a service that is widely deemed to be a litmus test of a society's commitment to sustainable development because it caters for the nutritional well-being of young and vulnerable children' as Morgan (2010) expresses it.

In a research project which is the basis for the research results presented in this chapter, the focus has been on school food and especially the conversion to organic school food with the aim of improving this aspect of school food in different European countries. Here, the object of attention will be the political and administrative level in four municipalities, and not directly the practice at the schools. Institutional foodscapes are characterized by involvement of many different actors on state, market and civil society levels of society, and are defined by Winson (2004:299) as 'institutional sites for the merchandising and consumption of food'. The term 'institutional foodscapes' thereby represent a wide or even cacophonous complexity of interests and voices (Forero et al., 2009; Grignon, 2001) and is, in that sense, regarded as useful for capturing the sensemaking aspects of an institutional food context. For school foodscapes, this complexity of interest can be illustrated by the number of actor groups identified (national food and health policies, municipal politicians and civil servants, food distributors, kitchen staff, teachers and other people employed at the school, pupils and parents and other relatives). These decision-making institutions have only received fragmented research attention in the school meal literature (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008; Winson, 2004), although the decisions made by these actors construct important frameworks for the space for action regarding school meals. Also, the framed decisions taken outside the individual schools on a higher political level exposes a certain understanding and a certain governance perspective, although this is not always explicit. The institutional meal is, in other words, deeply embedded in the societal food strategies including also the supply side, the purchasing agreements, and similar structures and networks. With an empirical basis, we will identify networks involved in organic school meal projects at different



stages and discuss the role of the institutions around the political and administrative level regarding the promotion of organic food in schools. The research will present a comparative study of four municipalities in four countries. As the results will show, the common goal in all four countries of promoting organic food in school meals has very different success rates. The real life implementation of organic school food is, of course, dependent on many other actors besides the administrative and municipal level, which are the school administration, the kitchen staff, the teachers, the parents and the pupils, to mention the most important actors. Regardless of their important roles, they will however act as the context in this article.

### **The institutional foodscapes**

‘The institutional foodscapes’ is a term used in this school food context in order to offer a holistic approach to food including the food itself, the actors (eaters, producers, politicians etc.) and the physical and mental ‘space’ of the food (Johansson, this volume; Brembeck and Johansson, 2010; Panelli & Tipta, 2009; Dolphijn, 2004). It is used in this context to capture the complexity of making sense in the school food arena as already described. The ‘foodscapes’ term has been used in a range of different meanings, especially in the last ten years, but the common basis is ‘food in a physical space meaning’ involving a range of different actors (Forero et al., 2009; Grignon, 2001). When using the term ‘institutional foodscapes’, the attention is on the food-related processes outside the family meal context, and thereby with an expanded room for manoeuvre for politicians and administrative actors in society.

By defining institutional foodscapes, we intend to create both a dynamic and holistic analytical framework that can facilitate the implementation of a study of change processes, and how to conduct transition to, as in this case, organic food in schools ensuring an approach that includes a complex view of the many interaction processes involved in both decisions and concrete implementation.

### **The iPOPY school food project**

This chapter is based on collaborative work in four different European countries in the Core Organic ERA-net research project called iPOPY ([https://djfextranet.agrsci.dk/sites/coreorganic\\_ipopy/public/Pages/front.aspx](https://djfextranet.agrsci.dk/sites/coreorganic_ipopy/public/Pages/front.aspx), accessed 12<sup>th</sup> February 2012).

The four qualitative case studies in four selected municipalities in four European countries all have experience with organic school food. The interviews along with comprehensive literature studies of national reports and statistics have been the main methodological basis for the gathering of data for the study. The interviews were carried out as individual face-to-face interviews, and telephone interviews simultaneously in the four cases. Data from these case studies have been supplemented with data from four national data reports that have been conducted by all national partners in a European research project. The national reports mapped and analyzed the state of the art of organic school food schemes in Denmark, Finland, Italy and Norway (reported in Nielsen et al. 2009). The national partners' empirical work was conducted using guidelines developed by the Danish partners. The guidelines concentrated on the background for the decisions to increase the organic share in the school food network, and on the mapping of the roles of involved administrative and political actors. The informants have been key persons in the political municipal level strategic departments and in central administrations in municipalities. In Italy, the regions were also examined since the regional level has an important role in the development of school food policies. The informants were identified by a snowballing methodology where pre-knowledge of the cases initiated the contact, and the first interviewee identified other key actors in the municipality. Most interviews were face-to-face, but some of the interviews with politicians were done by telephone. The telephone interviews have been documented through notes taken during the interview.

### **Institutional school foodscapes in the four countries**

This section will give a short description of the four school food case studies analyzed in this chapter. More case studies were conducted in the iPOPY project in each country. Together with the national reports, this gives knowledge of the variation within each country. The four presented cases have been chosen to illustrate the different experiences in small, medium size and large municipalities. The many different actors involved at different levels combined with the cultural context in each country reveal a complex institutional foodscapes arena which is important to bear in mind in understanding the processes in a change process like organic conversion.

### *Denmark*

The Danish case is a large municipality (the capital municipality). The municipality has approximately 520,000 inhabitants and 44,000 public meals are served daily. Organic school food has been on the agenda for some years. In the 1990s, the organic conversion received quite a high level of attention in many municipalities in Denmark. This resulted in a number of conversion consultants offering a service for public kitchens to introduce organic products into the daily routines. In the case municipality there has been a political priority to promote organic food. One mayor of the municipality in particular decided to put extra focus on this issue and decided to establish a 'Copenhagen House of Food' (in Danish: Madhus) in 2007. This (now former) mayor has been actively involved in the establishment of the 'Copenhagen House of Food', and has a personal interest in promoting organic food in general. The 'Copenhagen House of Food' has been an important actor together with the Children and Youth Administration in the reorganization of organic school meals at all schools in Copenhagen. The 'Copenhagen House of Food' has been involved in developing a twofold system, where some of the socially challenged schools in the municipality are developed into 'food schools'. In these 'food schools' there is a whole school approach towards food as a pedagogical tool besides the mere food production purpose. The rest of the schools in the municipality offer school food from a central kitchen using a liberal model approach where parents have to pay for the food in advance. The organic share is ambitious (75%), and there are explicit goals of animal welfare, fresh and simple food, tasty and challenging food to develop the pupil's knowledge of products and taste etc.

The organizational context of the school food shows a high priority of the political level in the municipality combined with the use of key actors with knowledge of conversion strategies. The political visions were followed by a large amount of money to prioritize the project. One central key actor in this context is the head of the 'Copenhagen House of Food', who is a former conversion consultant and has knowledge and experience from many years of working with organic conversion in central kitchens. The 'Copenhagen House of Food' has worked very actively in building up a broad range of competencies (40 employees in 2009) and has been given a fair degree of freedom for manoeuvre both in terms of re-developing the structures of school food and in terms of the money to fulfil these tasks.

The challenges for the schools and the administration today are connected to a fairly low market share in a traditional 'packed lunch culture'. At many

schools there are no separate facilities for eating the food in school, which means that many pupils eat their lunch in the classrooms.

Another challenge for the 'Copenhagen House of Food' is to cooperate with the different administrations. Although a division of labour has been agreed, there is an ongoing discussion of the responsibility areas, and how to allocate resources in the municipality. Also, the recent mayor (since 2010) in the municipality, who is not personally dedicated to the organic conversion project, might be a future challenge.

### ***Norway***

In Norway, the case is a large municipality approximately 400 kilometres north of the capital Oslo with approximately 170,000 inhabitants. In 2007, the political level at the municipality decided to increase organic consumption in order to make the municipality more environmentally friendly. This vision involves 1) a 20% increase in organic consumption in a number of schools, 2) kindergartens and after-school care institutions (SFOs) offering some organic food, and 3) that 30% of the central kitchen are to be organic in 2011. Originally, the decision was based on a more radical vision from one of the politicians in the municipality. She wanted at least 30% of all products used by the central kitchen to be organic as early as 2009, but this was considered too ambitious. The main actor involved in implementing the decisions was related to an organization called Children's Green City (CGC). The reason for making this organization responsible is that they work with the goal of increasing environmental awareness in public institutions for children (kindergartens, schools and SFOs) throughout the country. But as the case shows, organic food was not a part of the focus in this organization, and there were no direct competencies related to the conversion project. This may be due to the fact that very few schools offer food for purchase in Norway. Here, the kindergartens are the only ones offering food while the lunch box is the normal choice for school children. Often the lunch box is supplemented with school milk (paid for by parents) and also in many cases school fruit schemes which can be free or paid for by parents. The main actor in the CGC organization had a personal interest in healthy food and composting food waste, and is an important champion of the conversion network, but does not have competencies in the conversion processes. The challenge of the political vision has turned out to be considerable and the project has needed to be downsized dramatically. This is explained by several reasons. The very low level of served food facilities in the schools in the municipality

presents difficulties for the project. Despite the involvement from the CGC organizations, they have also experienced difficulties in offering a change that addresses the system level. The buying agreements in the municipality limit the room for manoeuvre, and the fairly low level of organic products limits the access, especially because the large suppliers are able to substitute an organic product with a conventional product if they cannot get the organic version. When the market is relatively limited this will often be the case and the supply will remain low. This can also be seen in the dairy that delivers to the municipality. They are not very focused on marketing their organic product line, although they are the biggest supplier of both organic and conventional milk products. Another area described in the case is the fruit and vegetable suppliers, who are not able to get organic local produce in sufficient quantities.

Today, there are almost only milk and fruit schemes in the schools, and here the organic share is quite modest. The political goals are also moderated in new legislation. Economic limitations make it very difficult to act because the kitchen facilities that have to be prioritized are quite expensive, and the lack of overall priority to change the facilities to serve food makes it very difficult to increase the level of organic served food.

### *Italy*

The Italian case is the most developed in terms of organic school food, since Italy has national and regional legislation promoting organic food in schools, and they have a long tradition of school meals at primary and lower secondary schools. The case municipality is situated in the region Emilia Romagna in the northern part of Italy. It is in the northern part of the country that the implementation of the legislation is most developed, and the variation throughout the country is very great regarding organic school food. (There are approximately 8,000 Italian municipalities.) One unusual administrative feature of Italy is the two to three layers of administration – the region, the province and the municipality. The regional and municipal levels in particular are involved in organic school food, and the Emilia Romagna region is actively involved in promoting food as an educational tool. Emilia Romagna is one of Italy's 20 regions (4.3 million inhabitants). The region has 341 municipalities, with Bologna being the largest (approx. 380,000 inhabitants), and many of the small municipalities have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. 16.9% of the organic school canteens in Italy are situated in Emilia Romagna (<http://www.biobank.it/en/BIO-biobank.asp?act=ddc&id=395>, accessed 11<sup>th</sup> February

2012). The Italian case is a municipality in the Emilia Romagna region with 185,000 inhabitants and is thereby one of the larger municipalities in the region. They have outsourced the school food to a private supplier for many years. From 2005, when they had to renew their contracts for school catering, they decided to introduce 100% organic school food according to a regional law from 2002 ([http://www.sportellomensebio.it/doc/LEGGE\\_REGIONALE\\_29-02.pdf](http://www.sportellomensebio.it/doc/LEGGE_REGIONALE_29-02.pdf), accessed 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012). The major argument was, according to the interviewee, who is head of the Municipal Office for School Catering, to show that the municipality prioritised quality food and particularly school food. The municipality is known worldwide for its quality products such as Parmigiano Reggiano and Parma ham, and quality food plays an important role in the identity of the municipality. This also implies a fairly high priority to quality food products, which are not necessarily the cheapest. Another important focus point was improving the health of the people in the municipality. Here, the head of school catering in the municipality argued that the improvement in the quality of the school food could be a good argument to reach the parents. Key factors in the decision to introduce a 100% organic replacement in all schools include the long experience from a school food administration in the municipality and a close relationship between the municipal administration and the catering company for a number of years. Following the organic conversion of school food production, the municipality also emphasized a threefold focus on Protected Designations of Origin (PDO), seasonal menus and local/regional products.

In 2006 a project termed 'Grow in harmony' (GiH) was introduced from the Municipal Office for School Catering. This project aims to function as an umbrella for all activities relating to food, education and wellbeing. The interviewee underlines the importance of this project by connecting different actors and stakeholders and by creating a platform for the development of new ideas. Some of the initiatives from the GiH project are food excursions to production units, cooking lessons for parents at schools, a focus on locally produced food, initiatives to reduce waste, the school lunch as a didactic and social event etc.

The interviewee is content with the system as it works today. The private supplier has very close contact with the municipality and the outsourcing has made it possible for the municipal office to concentrate on more strategic decisions. But the interviewee emphasizes the need to keep competencies and knowledge of the school food system in the municipal administration in order to make sure the development is not out of their hands regarding the quality or percentage of organic products.

The price of the school food, which is paid for by parents on a yearly basis, is quite high compared to other prices in the four countries. A small amount of money is provided by the municipality, but the majority of the price is paid by the parents themselves. This does not seem to be problematic, although the worry in the conversion phase was that the prices of the organic food would be too high.

### *Finland*

The Finnish case shows a rare exception in the Finnish systems because it is a story of a small municipality where organic food has actually been introduced at largely the same price as conventional food. The municipality serves approximately 1,500 daily portions of food for schools, kindergartens and homes for the elderly, and it is all produced at a central municipal kitchen. The interviewee is an administrator in the municipality. He is the director of the food and cleaning service. The price focus is quite high in Finland and it is therefore difficult for many schools to focus on organic food. The main argument from the director of the food (and cleaning) service in the municipality was therefore to keep budgets at the same level as for conventional products, and this argument seems to have been crucial in supporting the success of the initiative.

Besides this, it is clear that the role of the responsible director in the municipality is pivotal for the development, since he has been able to convince the 'system' (particularly the municipal administration and the central kitchen that delivers the food for schools, kindergartens and homes of the elderly) that this was worth trying. The products introduced in the municipality have been primarily products like carrots and onions, cereals and milk, and also berries. Another focus that has been equally important for the director is locally produced products, and this seems to be a typical case in Finland that the Finnish products are considered 'organic' because of their Finnish origin.

It is clear from the interview that the change to organic is not meant to be visible or to involve organizational changes in the municipality. The organic products are there because of one person and his passion for local and organic food, not because of parents' wishes or visions from politicians.

The Finnish system is administered in a fairly top-town way, and it is very hard to make changes in the system. The case shows an insider being able to change the system, but only within a very tight budget, which also limits the possibility of expanding the project to more products.

## National relationships and common structures

The difference in the embedded food traditions and cultures in the four case study countries are obvious when looking at each country. This means that food-related consumption, institutions and markets are quite heterogeneous and dynamic. These differences are also reflected in the school food systems. Whereas school food services are relatively widely embedded in the school systems in Finland and Italy, Danish and Norwegian school food is predominantly defined by the packed lunch brought from home (Johansson et al. 2009, Hansen et al. 2010). When it comes to organic food, the pattern is different. Here, there is a focus on organic production and consumption among politicians, producers and consumers, especially in Denmark and Italy, while Finland – despite explicit political goals of increased organic production and consumption – does not have the same level of production and consumption in practice (Mikkola 2008). Norway has some fairly ambitious national goals in relation to the share of organic production and consumption, but actual consumption is, as in Finland, relatively low (Loes et al. 2008).

It appears that the tax financed system in Finland makes the system much more resistant to changes than the liberal systems in Denmark and Norway, where the food producing systems are not established (as in Italy, for historical and cultural reasons). Danish research shows that the liberal model is very sensitive to the sale rate, and this sensitivity also has an effect on the quality and healthiness of the food served (Brinck et al., 2011). The Danish case in this iPOP study is also affected by the liberal systems, since the rates of sale at the schools are very different. Lately, this has resulted in the closure of the serving of school meals at schools selling a low number of daily portions of the school food. The food menus are also debated in relation to changing the menus to aligning them with the preferences of the pupils, in order to increase sales.

The four cases in this article show both common development tracks and differences. It has already been stated that the structural differences in the four countries mean that the possible developments are, to some extent, dictated by these structural frames. It is, for example, difficult to have a strategic focus on serving school meals to all children in countries like Denmark and Norway, due to the fact that there is a lack of facilities for cooking and serving food and a lack of school food tradition. Changing the packed lunch tradition in these two countries will require significant state investments. On the other hand, the structures are not able to explain all the differences in the four



cases. Here, the roles of the actors within the structural frames are in focus. For Finland, this means that the case description shows a profile where the share of organic products is much higher than in most of the rest of the country, due to one man in the administration being able to argue for the organic share being higher if it has an economic focus as well. In Denmark, the case also indicates that the packed lunch structures can be challenged if there is a political will and economic instruments to do so, but also that a range of economic and individual commitment and competencies are required in order to realize the visions. In Norway, the intentions of doing the same met challenges in terms of economic support, institutional capacity and the lack of competencies related to organic food systems, which made the decision hard to implement in practice. In the former description of the context it seems as if the two top-down managed systems in Italy and Finland are the most embedded systems. Especially in Finland, there is a highly articulated, law-based and institutionalized system with a major focus on nutrition and scientific management aligning a so-called 'plate model' for the content of school meals (Tikkanen 2009). The school food is free in the sense that it is paid for by the public school budget. The price focus is ensured via public tenders, and is quite important as organic food, for example, is almost absent. The primary focus in general is on cost reduction, which leaves little room for manoeuvre regarding organic products. Finland is an example of a system where cost reduction and organic food have been combined due to the work of one man (a 'champion'). In Italy there is a fairly complex system of regulatory units on the four levels: state, province, region and municipality. There are differences from place to place in terms of how much the school food is prioritized, but on the regional level – as in some regions of Northern Italy – organic and local food is an important issue and much creativity has been put in place to ensure organic and local food is served to pupils. The price of the Italian school food is an issue that, in a crisis, may be problematic since the expense of promoting organic, local quality food for the pupils results in a system that is more than twice the price of the Finnish system. In contrast to the Finnish tax-funded and thereby indirectly paid for system, the Italian school food is paid for by parents who pay a year in advance.

## **Making sense of the institutional foodscapes in organic school food**

The case studies of the institutional foodscapes in four European countries show various interesting potentials and challenges when it comes to converting from conventional to organic school food or introducing organic school meals in schools. The findings show us that food is (locally) embedded in how we organize ourselves and our societies – in local foodscapes. This is an obvious result in discussing the public approach to the sensemaking aspects of consumption, since the institutional organizations and the market role have some serious impacts on the implementation of visions relating to organic school food in different countries. The school meals reflect the symbols in the local societies and these local foodscapes can therefore also be seen as symptoms of existing structures, interests and controversies. From the study, we find that both structural and actor-related actions are important in developing the idea of introducing organic food until it is either realized or has to be abandoned. Also, the cultural background of different societies plays an important role in the context of how organic school meals are provided. One overall conclusion from the study is the importance of strong networks, competencies and institutions around organic school food and also the importance of ‘champions’ fighting for organic food in a system where there is little room for manoeuvre.

It is clear from the studies in this part of the iPOPY project that the complexity of school food systems, where different municipalities have various approaches, and many actors are involved, means that a fruitful discussion to address obesity and health problems among children should build on some analytical understanding of the many different aspects and cultural meanings of a given area, in this case the school meal. “Institutional foodscapes” as an analytical term is useful in the analysis of the complexity in a comparative international study in order to capture not only the complexity and cultural differences but also the common interest of several levels in society across the different case countries. The cases in all countries confirm that organic conversion requires a holistic institutional approach to be able to move forward with the visions of improving the organic food share. To follow up on Morgan’s (2010) citation about the school food as a litmus test for societies’ approach towards sustainability, the case studies in four European countries indicate that political vision alone is not sufficient to build up sustainable consumption structures in the public arena. The focus on the institutional foodscapes can offer an understanding of the difference from the family meal context to the public meal, since it is crucial to involve an

analysis of the political and administrative level in the institutional foodscapes approach. The dynamic view of the structure-actor relationship is, in our opinion, important in order to be able to understand successes and failures of organic school food initiatives internationally.

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## Why has the level of household energy consumption stopped increasing in Norway – and how can we bring about a decrease?

Carlo Aall

Energy use in households has increased over the last few decades in most rich, developed countries. This has been a desired development, in the sense that increased household energy use has been part of the process of modernisation and increasing standards of living. However, some countries – like Norway – have experienced an unforeseen shift in household energy use since 1990. In this chapter we will reveal the nature of this development for the case of Norway, and discuss the possible causes as well as the possible future consequences of this shift. We will also discuss potential policy strategies and means to promote a continued reduction in household energy use in Norway.

In 1990, it was generally assumed that the increase seen since 1945 would continue in Norway. As recently as 1998, in the report ‘Energi- og kraftbalansen mot år 2020’ (‘The power balance toward 2020’; NOU 1998:11), a Norwegian public committee presented an expected scenario where the increase in electricity use among households would reach 9 TWh (terawatt hours)/year (25%) from 1996 to 2009, compounded by a slight increase in the use of firewood and a fairly level use of heating oil. In reality, the level of energy use among households remained flat from 1996 to 2009, despite the fact that population growth rate and consumer spending had seen a somewhat higher increase than predicted in the scenario ‘Stø kurs’ (‘Unchanged direction’; NOU 1008:11).

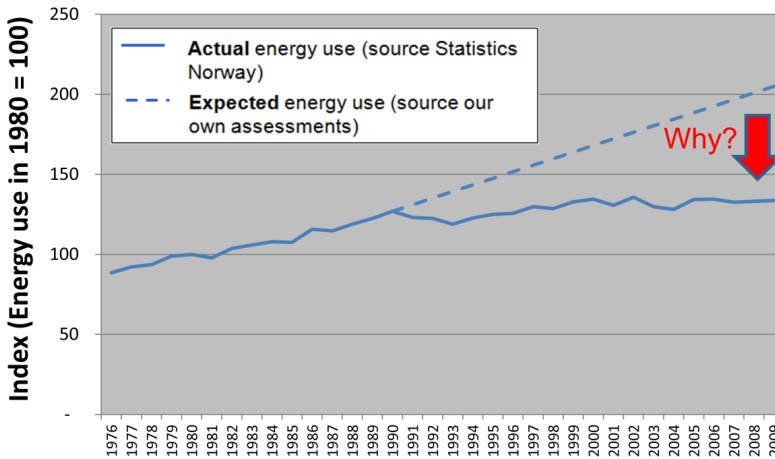


Figure 1 The relative development of stationary energy use in Norwegian households 1976-2009, indexed by 1980 = 100 (Hille et al. 2012)

## Sustainable production or sustainable consumption?

Climate policy has become an important policy driver for changing energy policies in rich, industrialised countries like Norway. So far, this has primarily resulted in changing energy *production* policies (Aall and Hille 2010). The most prominent part of these changes can be captured in the slogan “Norway as the green battery of Europe”, and consists of the following three main elements (Kamprath 2009). (1) A strong and renewed interest in developing both “old” (i.e. large-scale hydroelectric power) and “new” (i.e. small-scale hydroelectric power, wind and bio) sources of renewable energy; (2) efforts to increase the physical capacity of exporting electricity to Europe, and (3) plans for managing existing hydroelectric storage capacity in Norway within a European rather than Norwegian energy system context.

The situation of downplaying the importance of changing consumption as part of climate and energy policymaking is reflected in a very precise way in the case of Norway by the government-appointed Commission on Low Emissions, which was established to assess the possibilities for reducing Norwegian GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions by 60% by the year 2050 compared with 1990. In the introduction to their government green paper, an important delimitation was made (MoE 2006:5, our translation and underlining). “A radical shift in the Norwegian way of life in a more climate-friendly

direction could deliver major reductions in future GHG emissions. The Commission on Low Emissions has, nevertheless, chosen not to recommend such a strategy, because, among other things, we believe it would be politically impossible to put into effect”.

A society which has substantially less energy consumption than the present – a Low Energy society – adheres to a continuous theoretical and international discourse, initiated in the early 1970s by contributions from scholars like Daly (1968) and Georgescu-Roegen (1971). Embedded in these early discourses was a strong critique of economic growth as a superior goal for the development of nations. Alternatives to this model presented in the discourses were (among others) the steady state economy (Gilbert 1972) and the bio-economy (Georgescu-Roegen 1971). The 1987 United Nations Brundtland Commission report “Our Common Future” served to give renewed impetus to these discourses (WCED 1987). Energy use and consumption were key themes in the report, and the need to fundamentally change energy policies in rich countries was very much emphasised. The most common interpretation of the report is that it recommends that all rich countries reduce their levels of energy consumption by at least 50% within 40-50 years, with 1980 as the base year, and integrates this into their wider concept of sustainable energy (Høyer 1997; Holden and Høyer 2005). However, the recent development has gone in the opposite direction, including in Norway. Thus efforts to achieve large sum effects of energy efficiency measures have largely not been successful (Aall and Husabø 2010).

The post-Brundtland discourse has, to a larger extent than the Commission report itself, highlighted the climate change issue and the need to substantially reduce GHG emissions. During the last decade, the need to reduce global emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> in particular by at least 80% – within 30-40 years – has gained broad support internationally (Høyer 2010). In Norway, for one, a development towards a society with zero net emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> within the same time span is claimed to be a key aim by the current political authorities. The EU is applying the concept of Post-Carbon Society to express a similar aim. “Towards a Post-Carbon Society” was the title of a 2007 high-level EU conference focusing on the need for European research on economic incentives and social behaviour to support a necessary development towards such a future society. According to the conference proceedings (EC 2008), this society is characterised by far-reaching energy efficiency, virtually wiping out all use of fossil energy and the extensive use of other forms of energy production.

The sustainable development discourse has focused on transforming production to become more efficient in terms of resource use, and hence less environmentally harmful. This strategy, coined “eco-efficiency” in 1992 by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBSCD 1992), was endorsed the same year at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development as a means for private enterprises to contribute to sustainable development. The strategy of eco-efficiency entails more being produced with less input; the intention being that the production of economically valuable goods and services should cause as little ecological impact as possible. The strategy of eco-efficiency originates from a more general idea of how society could be transformed in order to solve environmental problems: the reform-oriented school of ecological modernisation which emerged in Europe during the early 1980s (Spaargaren et al. 2000). A basic assumption of ecological modernisation is the idea of environmental re-adaptation of economic growth and industrial development, as echoed by the aforementioned notion of producing more with less. The debate on eco-efficiency and ecological modernisation has focused on the marginal environmental efficiency of industrial production measured e.g. in the form of energy per unit of production or per price unit. The final output has been subject to less attention; that is, whether applying a strategy of eco-efficiency has actually reduced the environmental pressure – or energy use – in society as a whole, or simply moved the pressure to other regions or related economic activities, often referred to as rebound effects (Hertwich 2005).

A recent contribution in the discourse on the relationships between economy, energy use and GHG emissions is that of *degrowth*. Several works have explicitly focused on the field of energy efficiency and degrowth as a condition limiting the creation of rebound effects and their significance (Schneider et al. 2010). In these works, it is argued that degrowth should not be treated as a negative event affecting the present global economy – thus being met with strategies to boost the economy back onto the growth track. It should instead be treated as a strategy for economic development in rich, industrialised countries in order to achieve two goals: To achieve a more just distribution of economic welfare between rich and poor countries, and to reduce substantial environmental pressure from consumption in rich, industrial countries. A core idea in this approach to the degrowth discourse is to shift the focus in energy (and environment) policymaking from production to consumption. However, current policies world-wide to address the reduction of GHG emissions have mainly focused on the production



of goods and services (UNFCCC 2010). Still, it is increasingly recognised that the role of consumption may be even more important (Munksgaard and Pedersen 2001; Bastioni et al. 2004; Peters and Hertwich 2006, 2008; Aall and Hille 2010). Peters and Hertwich (2008) argue that a stronger focus on consumption-related GHG emissions may reveal new options for emissions mitigation, encourage greater use of environmental comparative advantage, address economic competition issues, and encourage technology diffusion. This argument could also be applied to the case of energy; that is to focus more on reducing energy consumption at the expense of supplying society with even more energy (even if this is renewable and “clean” energy) in order to achieve the necessary amounts of GHG emission reductions (Høyer 2010).

Many of the limits to eco-efficiency are to be found in real-life implementation of desk-top technological solutions aiming at changing ways of production. However, so long as eco-efficiency is most frequently being applied to alter production processes, it seems obvious that we need to either apply the concept of eco-efficiency also to consumption, or develop strategies explicitly aimed at changing and even reducing consumption.

## Research design in the Norwegian case study

In a research project commissioned by the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE), we compiled available knowledge to shed light on changes in the non-mobile household energy use among Norwegian households from around 1950 and up until the present, in order to analyse possible causes for the levelling out of this energy use since 1990. Furthermore, we were commissioned to develop a mathematical model to create scenarios for energy use in Norwegian households over the next 20 years.

The first task in our study was to develop a *causal model* demonstrating how energy use is influenced by physical conditions (direct drivers) and underlying social factors (indirect drivers) – cf. figure 2.

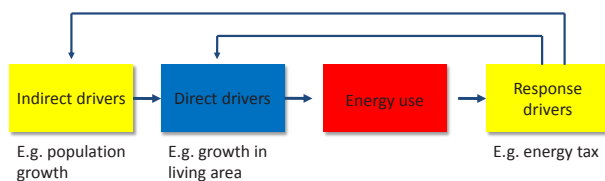


Figure 2 The causal model applied in the study of domestic energy use in Norwegian households (Hille et al. 2012)

The following *direct* drivers were identified and calculated:

- Living area
- The distribution of dwellings and living area according to types of building
- The condition of the building envelope
- Indoor temperature
- Water heating specific energy consumption
- Energy consumption relating to lighting and electrical equipment
- Choice of heating system
- Heat pumps

The following *indirect* drivers were identified, discussed and, to some degree, measured:

- Changes in environmental conditions (mainly outdoor temperature)
- Demographic change
- Economic considerations
- Technological development
- Changes in terms of knowledge, attitude and preference

The following *response* drivers were identified and the mechanisms in which they could influence the direct and indirect drivers were discussed and assessed:

- Information
- Taxation
- Regulations
- Economic support

Our second task was to develop a calculation model which should serve two purposes: (1) Interpolate the to some extent sporadic historic data on energy use available in order to establish a proxy complete historic dataset, and (2) allow for presenting future historic scenarios – cf. figure 3.

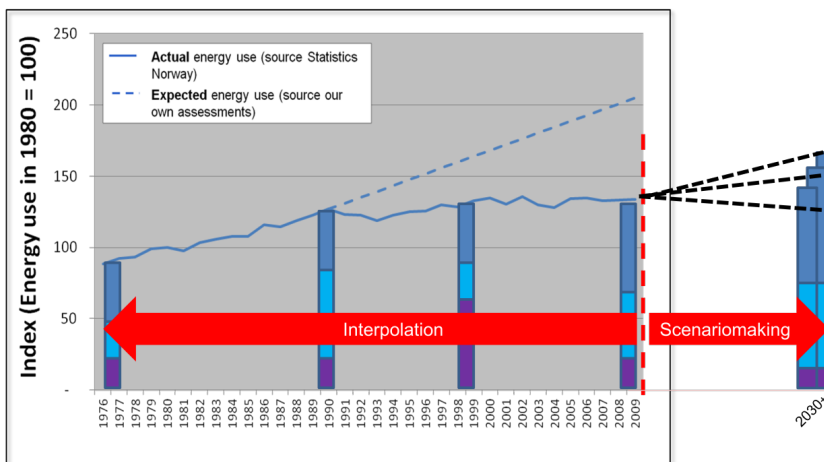


Figure 3 The calculation model applied in the study of domestic energy use in Norwegian households (Hille et al. 2012)

Our calculation model relies on Statistics Norway (SSB) and their prognoses for population change towards 2030. Our model incorporates a range of requirements enabling the user to select development rate (per cent change) and development type (linear, exponential or stepwise change) for a number of factors. The factors apply to area (total area, area by residence type or distribution of area among different residence types) and energy use (kWh/m<sup>2</sup>). The user can modify requirements for future development relative to the following factors:

- Housing (area, residents, and numbers – overall, and distributed among types of residence)
- Specific energy use, waste heat and technological development of major appliances, lighting, technical operations, electronic devices and water heating
- Ambient heat (distribution between type of residence and technological development)
- Choice of energy carrier for heating
- Gross heat demand (distribution between type of residence and technological development)

It is important to note that it is possible, in principle, to generate two different projections or scenarios: Single or multiple factor analyses. In the former case, the intention has been to demonstrate how changes to one requirement can affect overall energy use. In the latter case, it is possible to demonstrate how changes to several requirements can affect overall energy use. The latter approach can also be utilised to generate what the user would regard as the most likely development, and thus in principle to generate a prognosis, or to depict, for instance, how different political measures may turn out – an approach normally associated with creating scenarios in public political development and planning.

### Knowledge deficiency

The project has uncovered a substantial knowledge deficiency relating to the use of energy in Norwegian households. As to the conditions directly influencing energy use, the project has revealed the following:

- At present, there is no exact data by which to measure the total living area
- The rate at which dwellings are demolished or renovated is not known
- There is no exact data on indoor temperature
- There is no exact data on hot water consumption
- For the majority of electrical equipment, the frequency of use is unknown
- The knowledge of how energy use is distributed for different purposes in cottages is limited

The lack of knowledge is even more evident when considering the underlying factors deciding energy use, among which consumer behaviour mechanisms constitute the largest knowledge deficiency. As a consequence of these uncertainties, we have not been able to come up with an overall explanation for the levelling out of energy use after 1990; instead we are presenting suggested partial explanations. For cottages, the information basis is too weak to engender anything but general assessments. Overall, the knowledge deficiency relating to Norway is more severe than seems to be the case in Denmark and Sweden, our neighbouring countries. One reason for this could be a sustained difference in energy price levels, where Norway has benefited from low cost energy and consequently had a more relaxed focus on energy

conservation. This in turn may have resulted in a lack of motivation when it comes to producing detailed data on the utilisation of energy within households, as well as factors influencing households' energy use.

### Direct explanations for the levelling out of energy use from 1990 to 2009

Our analyses show that the total, temperature-adjusted energy use in Norwegian year-round residences increased by 3% during 1990-2009 from 42.2 to 44.9 TWh (terawatt hours), while energy use during the previous 20 year period (1970-1990) increased by 55%. If the development in energy use for the period 1990-2009 had followed the trend of 1970-1990, the energy use in 2009 should have been 73 TWh. Thus, we need to explain the reasons why we have experienced a reduction of 30.8 TWh (42%) in relation to the expected trend in energy use. The figure below sums up the main findings relating to the explanation for this change; namely: (1) A slower increase in per capita living area relating to 55% of the total reduction from 73 TWh to 42.2 TWh; (2) reduced energy use per m<sup>2</sup> (relating to 37% of this reduction); and (3) a milder climate since 1980 (relating to 9% of the reduction; a contributing factor comparable to the significant transition to heat pumps occurring in Norwegian households during the same period).

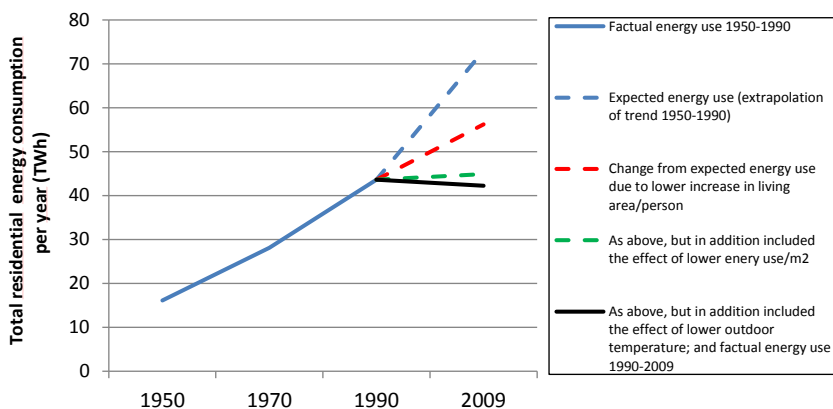


Figure 4 The main explanations for the difference between observed and trend in total domestic energy use in Norwegian households in 2009 (Hille et al. 2012)

The *first* explanation involves changes in per capita living area (cf. figure 5). Our analyses document a markedly slower increase in per capita living area in the years following 1990, compared to the previous decade. If per capita

living area in 1990-2009 had seen a growth rate similar to 1970-1990, the total living area in 2009 would have ended up at 350 million m<sup>2</sup>, or 36% larger than it actually is. Even considering the higher energy efficiency of newly built houses, the estimated energy use by households would have been 25% higher than de facto 2009 figures. Thus, the slower increase in per capita living area is the most significant of all the factors contributing to the levelling out of the graph representing energy use by households.

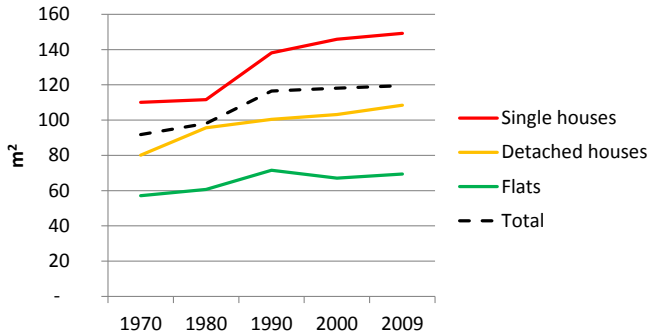


Figure 5 Changes in average annual size of newly built houses in Norway 1970-2009 (Hille et al. 2012)

The *second* explanation involves changes in energy use per m<sup>2</sup> (cf. figures 6 and 7). The figures below show how changes within a selection of energy end-use areas have occurred during 1990-2009.

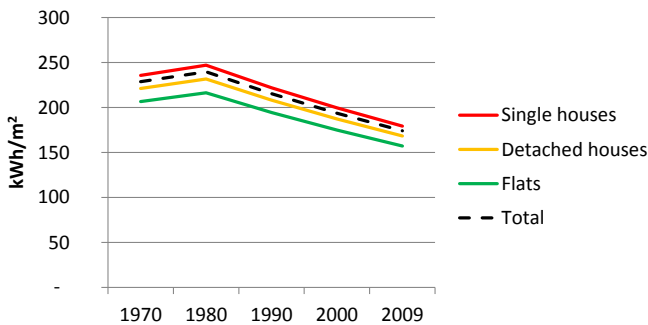


Figure 6 Changes in energy use per m<sup>2</sup> for domestic energy use in Norwegian households 1970-2009 (Hille et al. 2012)

Figure 7 illustrates more specifically how energy use per  $\text{m}^2$  has changed from 1990 to 2009. These areas of changes in energy use, when added up, constitute a total reduction equivalent to  $41 \text{ kWh}/\text{m}^2/\text{year}$ . The grey section of the graphs represents the margin of uncertainty in our estimates, indicating the possibility that data may be combined in several ways to reach an accurate explanation.

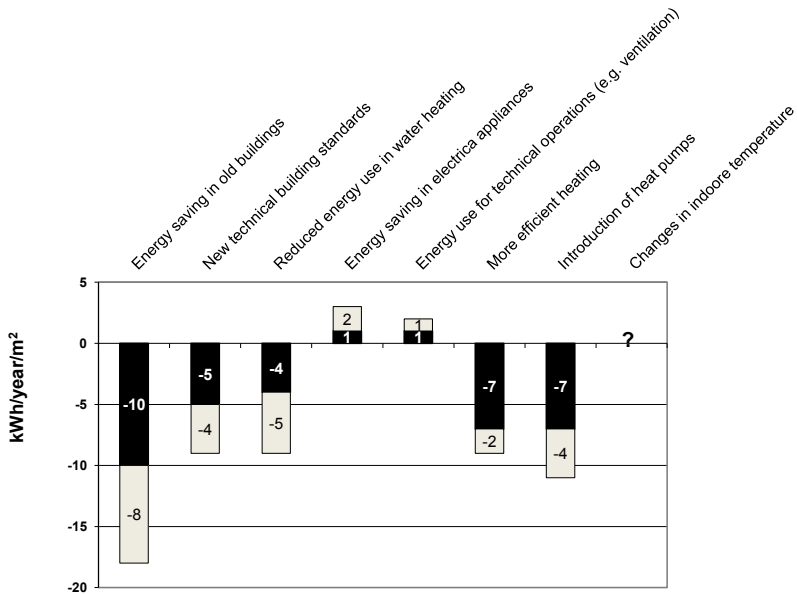


Figure 7 Upper (grey) and lower (black) range for estimated contributions in total reduction in energy use of  $41 \text{ kWh}/\text{year}/\text{m}^2$  from 1990 to 2009 in Norwegian households (Hille et al. 2012)

The most critical factor is incremental energy-saving measures (as opposed to complete renovation) relating to improvements in the building envelope of older residences (façade, windows, roof and insulation). This is of particular interest as they are measures which have received limited attention from authorities, whose focus in recent years has been on public and commercial buildings. Moreover, to the extent that attention has been directed towards private residential housing for this type of energy-saving measure, it has been for the benefit of newer houses, through amendments to building regulations. As indicated in the figure, this has contributed to approximately half as much as incremental measures in older houses. In joint second place are

contributions from the implementation of heat pumps and a reduction in heat loss as a result of increased heating efficiency (mainly due to the phasing out of household furnaces). These are followed by the amended building regulations mentioned earlier, affecting new building projects and changes in water heating such as the introduction of water-saving shower heads and a transition from manual dish-washing to the use of dishwashers (which heat water more efficiently). As for factors contributing to an increase in specific energy use, there is the issue of the growing number of electrical appliances, and an increased amount of energy-demanding technical operations in blocks of flats (elevators and ventilation systems).

We do not have sufficient data to determine whether indoor temperature has changed over time. Surveys abroad suggest an increase; if this turns out to be the case, several of the entries in the figure above would need somewhat higher values in order to compensate for the increased energy use that higher indoor temperatures would generate

Furthermore, our analyses show that there has been a decrease in specific energy use of 6-7% compared to temperature-adjusted energy use for the period from the 1980s through to the 2000s. This does not apply when considering the reduction between the specific years 1990 and 2009, as 1990 was an exceptionally mild year. It is important to note, however, when the starting point is a graph representing 30 years of actual energy use in households, that part of the levelling out is a result of increased outdoor temperatures. Six per cent of the specific energy use in Norwegian year-round residences corresponds to 10 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>, an effect proportional to that achieved by heat pump implementation and changes in heating habits since 1990.

When it comes to energy use in cottages, our analyses show that we have scant knowledge of the development. To the extent that anything specific can be said, our figures show that, contrary to what is the case with year-round housing, a marked increase has occurred in both overall and specific energy use. While in year-round residences the overall energy use not adjusted for temperature increased by 5% from 1990 to 2009, the corresponding increase for cottages was 70% (we did not have the data needed to provide numbers for the temperature-adjusted energy use in cottages). The difference in electricity use was even greater; +17% for year-round residences, compared to +142% in the case of cottages. In 2009, energy use per year and m<sup>2</sup> was as high as 107 kWh for cottages, while it was 178 kWh for year-round residences within all categories; that is, merely 40% lower, which is remarkable considering the comparably short amount of time one spends in cottages (somewhere in



the range of 20-40 days per year). In 2009, energy use in cottages still only amounted to 6% of the energy use of households; however, with the much higher growth rate for energy use in cottages, this may become a substantial component in the energy balance of the future.

### **The underlying explanations for the levelling out of domestic energy use in Norwegian households from 1990 to 2009**

As pointed out earlier, the most significant reason for the levelling out of energy use since 1990 is a slower increase in building size. Population growth has been substantial, particularly in the 2000s, and would, all other factors being equal, have produced a higher increase in living area compared to the state of affairs from 1970 to 1990. The decrease in household size, however, is slower; i.e. the number of households does not increase at a significantly higher rate than the population. In 2001, the 'non-Western' immigrant population had access to a per capita living area which was 1/3 smaller than that of other Norwegians. The number of individuals belonging to immigrant groups from what used to be defined as non-Western countries increased from 99,000 by the end of 1990 to 415,000 by the end of 2009, constituting 52% of population growth from 1990 to 2009, and as much as 61% from 2001 to 2009. Consequently, this may be an essential partial explanation as to why per capita living area has had a markedly slower increase since 1990, and particularly since 2001, compared to earlier periods.

Also, the considerable increase in real estate prices and real interest rates contribute strongly as an explanation. Opting for that extra m<sup>2</sup> now comes at a much higher price than it did previously. In 2009 we inhabited an area per capita that was 2/3 larger than in 1973, but had to pay seven times more for it (in constant prices). There is not much doubt that the expenses attached to residences have slowed down the increase in living area since 1990, although the importance of this influence, compared to demographic factors pointing in the same direction, and possible preference changes, can hardly be decided with certainty.

What then is the reason behind the decrease in specific energy use? The focus of previous studies is on the importance of prices as determining factors of energy use (Pettersen et al. 2005). The prices of electricity and oil were fairly stable throughout most of the 1990s, but have increased in the 2000s to a degree that will have taken many by surprise, including the committee behind NOU 2008:11, who in 'Stø kurs' ('Unchanged direction') conjectured

that the price of electricity would remain unchanged until 2020. Increasing real prices of both oil and electricity will have been of some importance – encouraging energy-efficient buildings, the phasing out of household furnaces, and the implementation of heat pumps. The increase in real prices is largely due to market forces and legislation priorities, rather than consumer taxes on energy goods. Financial support has barely had an effect – with one possible exception: While energy-saving measures aimed at Norwegian households have been modest, a 2003 support initiative for air source heat pumps may have played an important role.

Access to improved technology has been of some importance. The relevant technologies in 1990 included energy-saving light bulbs, water-saving shower heads, heat pumps, solar water heating, and refrigeration devices which would have been eligible to receive a class A energy efficiency classification when the labelling system was introduced later in the 1990s. What became of these technologies in the subsequent 20 years speaks of the difficulties in making general statements regarding what we know to be possible versus what will be implemented:

- In 2008, refrigerators and freezers of energy efficiency class A and higher had a market share of 84%
- In 2009, there were water-saving shower heads in 50% of residences
- Heat pumps – the technology that probably contributes the most to reducing energy use – had a negligible distribution up until 2001, but had been installed in 18.5% of residences by 2009
- In 2006/2007, energy-saving light bulbs still constituted a modest 13% of light sources in Norwegian residences
- Solar water heating still has a negligible distribution

Regulations have contributed in some measure. New building requirements could explain 10-15% of the reduction in specific energy use for all residences since 1990. Regulations relating to equipment inside the building have so far been of less importance, but are likely to contribute more following 2009.

We know rather little about the effect of changes in behaviour, in the sense that we do not know the extent to which behaviour has influenced development as a whole. What we do know is that behavioural differences may have a great impact on an individual level. Energy use for certain categories of electrical equipment may see differences by a factor of 20 among otherwise equal households, and there may be differences in energy use for heating by a

factor of three. In the former case, the differences are explained primarily as extent of use; in the latter, primarily as a choice of room temperature.

Our analysis of the development during the 1990-2009 period indicated a probability that political decisions aiming to reduce energy use – i.e. the sum of revised building regulations in 1987 and 1997, other regulations, taxes, subsidies and information campaigns – provide an explanation for only a smaller part of the reduction in specific energy use occurring during the period. A great deal has been accomplished as a result of private initiatives, independent of regulations and without financial support. This includes the rather extensive number of renovations of older building envelopes – particularly for detached houses; replacing hot water tanks; the installation of water-saving shower heads, and a majority of changes involving a choice of energy carriers and heating solutions. Political decisions, too, may have had an effect on the greatly reduced increase rate for per capita living area since 1990. If this is the case, it would largely be as an unintended consequence of decisions relating to topics other than changes in energy use (e.g. immigration policies and interest rate policy).

### **Which are the more important contributors ahead?**

It is clear that the growth rate for living area will remain a significant factor when determining the energy use of households in the next couple of decades. If the population is to increase as much towards 2030 as SSB (Statistics Norway) estimates in its current, average projection (+27% during the 2009-2030 period), and if the increase in per capita living area remains at 0.5% per year, as it was in 1990-2009, this would entail an increase in living area of 40%. Assuming a demolition rate of 0.1% per year, and a strict adherence for new housing to existing building regulations as well as any future tightening of these regulations, total energy use could increase by 10 TWh. With an increase in per capita living area twice as high (1.0%), the total increase in energy use would be approximately 50% higher. If we can avoid an increase in per capita living area altogether following 2009, total energy use will be approximately 30% less. Freezing the average per capita living area so that it remains at a 2009 level would have an effect equal to introducing, as defined by Norsk Standard (Standards Norway), a passive house level energy efficiency (68 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>) for all new buildings after 2009, according to the calculations above.

As we have seen, specific energy use in year-round residences was reduced by 19% from 1990 to 2009, a rather small part of which came as a result of new houses being built during the period. Is another one-quarter reduction in energy use towards 2030 viable for existing buildings, and if so, how? The ongoing transition to energy-saving light bulbs will only make a small contribution (1-2%), and the potential for heat loss reductions is probably minimal as there is almost no remaining use of heating oil – and a reduction in the use of firewood is unlikely. The changes that may still contribute substantially are:

- Changes to water heating (transition to foam insulated hot water tanks, implementation of water-saving shower heads among the remaining half of the population, installation of solar water heating, and heat recovery from drain water). -10%
- Continued transition to heat pumps: -25% (In which case much wood burning and related heat loss would be replaced by heat pumps.)
- A continued upgrading of building envelopes: -12-20%
- Transition to more energy-efficient electrical equipment (the largest potential probably lies with refrigeration devices and electronics). -3%

Throughout the last 20 years, owners of existing residences have carried out several efforts, voluntarily and without any support, to minimise energy use. One could infer from this that the positive development has its own momentum, with no need to implement particularly strong measures. On the other hand, one could argue that as long as there is an interest among the public, supportive measures – financial, advisory, or a combination of both of these, and possibly others – have great potential. In any case, there is a probability that when moving from the simple and inexpensive to the costly and more complex – from water-saving shower heads to solar water heaters (to use an extreme example), from air source heat pumps to alternatives requiring a water based heating system, from economically viable efforts aimed at the building envelope to the rather more expensive – both advisory assistance and financial support could play a more decisive role in maintaining heightened energy efficiency. This would require more comprehensive arrangements than the limited support available today for heat pumps and solar water heaters, which at least up until 2010 mainly seem to have found resonance with a group of people who are already interested enough to make the investment without any support.

## Making sense of policymaking and consumption?

Looking back at the last 20 years in Norway, it is tempting to come up with some reflections regarding a striking lack of consumption-oriented focus in Norwegian energy policy. It seems fair to state that the factual reduction in domestic household energy consumption in Norway is *not* a result of policies specifically aimed at reducing energy use, nor is it an effect of consumers striving for less energy consumption. More, is it an unintentional effect of non-environmental motivated policy and consumer habits. As shown in this article, the main driver behind the levelling out of domestic energy use in Norwegian households since 1990 when it comes to policymaking seems to be our immigration policies and centralisation resulting in rising housing prices (and smaller newly built houses) in the major cities of Norway. When it comes to consumer habits, the main driver for reduced energy use seems to be the constant desire for redecorating and modernising old houses rather than a growing demand for low-energy household equipment and appliances that is decisive.

Thus, there seems to be a significant potential for future reductions in domestic energy use in Norwegian households if policies aimed at such reductions were implemented to a greater extent than what has been the case up until now. Our calculation model indicates that aiming to control the average size of new private residential houses can be a very effective complement to the policies already in place demanding more energy-efficient building standards. However, current energy policies in Norway are still focused on developing more renewable energy, which could in fact lead to more – not less – energy use because of reduced domestic prices for electric energy. Therefore, it seems that the discussion on how to achieve a low-energy society in the very high-energy society of Norway is one that is yet to come.

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## Households in the smart grid – existing knowledge and new approaches

Toke Haunstrup Christensen, Kirsten Gram-Hanssen & Freja Friis

For decades, electricity has generally been produced and available in western societies whenever consumers needed it and consumers could consume without thinking about it. This may not be the case in the future as new relationships between electricity consumers and producers are emerging. Electricity producers as well as transmission and network operators are increasingly interested in influencing the timing of when and how consumers use electricity, and in micro-generation by households (for instance from small wind turbines or photovoltaic solar panels). These changes are closely related to the so-called smart grid debate. In this chapter we will describe and analyse some of these technological changes within the electricity system, which is promoted by different actors, and we will discuss how this may influence the everyday life of consumers as well as the reverse; how everyday practices of consumers may influence this socio-technical system.

### *What is the smart grid?*

It has already been expected for some years that the future of electrical grids will involve increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) at all levels of the electricity system, including the production, distribution and consumption sides. The main drivers are new possibilities within ICT and new challenges within the energy system. One of these is the challenge of balancing electricity consumption and electricity production. Typi-

cally, most households have high electricity consumption at particular times, e.g. the peak between 17:00-19:00 in the evening when people return from work and turn on their electrical appliances in the home and start preparing dinner. Providing and distributing enough electricity for this type of peak is expensive, technically demanding and environmentally problematic. A possible solution could be to use ICT to better balance electricity production and consumption. Furthermore, introducing more renewable energy such as photovoltaic solar panels and wind power into the system implies that electricity production may fluctuate even more.

“Smart grid” is a term used to describe this future responsive and balanced energy system. Comparing similarities and differences between the approach to smart grids in the EU and the US, Coll-Mayor et al. (2007) show how contextualized the smart grid discussion is. Questions related to energy security and policy, including dependence on own vs. imported energy, type of energy market, type of existing energy production system, environmental and climate issues etc., are all influencing what grid developments are needed or could be expected.

Even though there is some agreement on what is meant by the smart grid, the term is an often cited catchphrase, which is vague and open in its definitions. One attempt to be explicit about what is meant by smart grid is found in Wissner (2011). According to Wissner, central factors are: liberalization of the telecommunication market with new competitors searching for new business models together with technological innovations, including appliance-integrated microchips, digitalization of networks and all sorts of wireless communication which enable different types of ambient intelligence including automation of everyday processes and activities. Thus, a possible future scenario of the smart grid includes a network of central power plants, wind turbines and other decentralized power generation, combined in an intelligent structure with houses that can produce, use and store energy, depending on the overall system requirements.

These changes in the power grid are inscribed in a long-term perspective, as the existing energy system is characterized by stability and lock-ins in both social organization and technology. Furthermore, based on a transition theoretical perspective with a multilevel framework on major technological transitions in infrastructures, Verbong and Geels (2010) show that other possible futures might be alternatives to the smart grid. For example the “super grid”, a grid where all European countries are linked together and electricity is transmitted over long distances rather than adjusted to local

energy resources. However, as demonstrated in this chapter, there are already many existing activities from different stakeholders that aim to promote the smart grid in order to overcome the inertia of the existing system.

### *Households in the smart grid*

A very important element in the smart grid is the households and the consumers, who are expected to have a much more active role in the future energy system. This can include household-based electricity production, energy storage in batteries or as heat in the house and “flexible electricity consumption” (load management). The latter implies moving electricity consumption by moving energy consuming activities like electric heating, charging of electric vehicles or laundering to times with high electricity production or “peak shaving”, i.e. shifting demand from “peak times” to times with lower demand. Load management in particular implies the active participation of consumers. Not all types of electricity consumption are suitable for load management; watching television and lighting, for example, cannot be postponed. Therefore, the focus in these areas should remain on efficient technologies to reduce consumption. Both energy efficiency of appliances and load management are important approaches in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Vidalenc and Meunier 2011).

As it seems that smart grids in some form will be part of the future electricity system, and as consumers have a prominent position in the conceptualizations of the future smart grid, it is important to study the role and consequences of the smart grid for the future everyday life of consumers, as well as the opposite: how the everyday life of consumers might influence the smart grid. In the following we will first briefly discuss how consumer practices in changing socio-technical systems can be understood. Then follows a review of smart grids activities in Denmark as an exemplification of the type of activities that are occurring and how households are included in these activities. Then follows a section with a specific focus on electric vehicles, which are expected by many actors to play a particularly important role in the smart grid. Based on the review and the discussion of electric vehicles, we conclude by discussing the most relevant research questions and problems related to this possible future, from a consumption research perspective.

### ***Understanding consumer practices in socio-technical systems***

Consumers' sense-making of everyday consumption is not done in a vacuum. Rather, their consumer practices are interwoven with socio-material systems, linking production and consumption together and including other social actors as well as material objects. Electricity consumption is a particular type of consumption. Together with other types of consumption based on large socio-technical infrastructures such as heat and water consumption, electricity consumption is on one hand invisible and inconspicuous, depending on routines and habits, and on the other hand a fundamental prerequisite of our modern way of living. It can be argued that we do not *consume* electricity as such, but rather perform practices through which electricity is consumed during the use of household appliances. Everyday practices of cooking, laundering, watching television etc. must be seen in relation to the production system of all of the material objects used in these practices, as well as in relation to the production of the electricity, which is a fundamental element of performing the practices (Vliet, Chappells and Shove 2005). Practice theory was introduced into consumer studies some years ago (Shove and Pantzar 2005; Warde 2005), and since then there has been a growing body of research using practice theory to understand everyday practices and their connection to energy consumption (Gram-Hanssen 2010a, 2010b; Hargraves 2011; Strengers 2010, 2011). This approach focuses on the collective aspects of practices, seeing the individual as a carrier of practices rather than as an individual deciding what to do. Furthermore, practices are seen as guided by competences, rules, technology and meanings. This approach of practice theory is thus well suited for understanding how socio-technical systems, e.g. electricity production, influence the everyday practices of households. In this chapter we are interested in the changes that are taking place within the production side of the electricity grid, promoted by different types of actors, as it seems that these will have a significant impact on the consumer side of this socio-technical system, specifically the everyday practices performed by individual households.

### **Danish household smart grid activities – seen in a European context**

As described in the introduction, the national context, including the local electricity system and energy policy, is decisive for challenges and solutions within smart grid development. In this section, we will give a brief overview of the Danish household smart grid activities, including the rollout of advanced

metering infrastructure (smart meters) as well as previous and current smart grid projects related to households. We begin with a short introduction to the Danish electricity system, which forms an important context for understanding the Danish smart grid activities related to households.

### *The Danish electricity system*

Fossil fuels, mainly coal and natural gas, dominate Danish electricity production as primary energy sources, and about half of the electricity comes from combined heat and power production (Danish Energy Agency 2011). However, by 2020, the Danish energy agreement aims to shift 50% of electricity production to wind power. This increasing share of fluctuating wind power in the electricity system poses new challenges in relation to balancing the input and output of the electricity grid. Wind power production already exceeds domestic electricity consumption at times with high wind speeds and low domestic consumption. This has given rise to an interest in developing solutions to manage the consumption side. Through load management, electricity consumption can either be delayed in situations of low wind power generation or moved forward in cases of excess wind power. Hitherto, the focus has particularly been on electric vehicles and electric heating of buildings as objects of load management.

### *The metering infrastructure*

The rollout of “smart meters” is regarded as pivotal for the development of an advanced metering infrastructure that is expected to be the backbone of the future smart grid. Smart meters are electric meters that enable two-way communication between the meter and other actors in the electricity system (e.g. distribution system operators) and record electricity consumption in intervals of an hour or less. Smart meters are typically a technological prerequisite for feedback to customers about their electricity consumption and for load management. Furthermore, the remote reporting feature of smart meters is regarded as a more cost-effective alternative to the traditional meters that included considerable administrative costs in relation to reading the meters.

A 2011 survey by the Austrian Energy Agency of the status of the national regulation and implementation of smart meters in the EU27 Member States and Norway (Renner et al. 2011) shows great differences between the European countries. In some countries a mandatory rollout of smart meters to all customers is already in place or in preparation (e.g. Italy, France, Malta and Spain). However, most Member States do not yet have a mandatory

rollout in place, even though some countries do already have a high degree of implementation of smart meters. Denmark is an example of this: by 2011, an estimated 50% of Danish households already had smart meters and remote reading installed (Renner et al. 2011). With the rollout of smart meters, one solution in relation to “activate” consumers is to regulate energy consumption using dynamic electricity prices. Today, households’ electricity consumption is paid for according to average expenses and includes a considerable element of tax. Dynamic pricing would presumably give a more precise signal of “real-time” expenses and might mobilize consumers by increasing the incentives to change temporal consumption patterns.

### *Status of Danish household smart grid activities*

In this section we present a brief survey of the Danish household smart grid activities based on a study by the Joint Research Centre (2011) and our own review of existing projects. The survey shows (table 1) that load management is the area that attracts the most attention in relation to Danish research & development and demonstration projects, particularly in relation to electric heating (heat pumps or direct electric heating) and charging of electric vehicles. Both areas are expected to become increasingly important for the Danish electricity system in the coming years, due to an expected substitution of oil-fired central heating with heat pumps in single-family houses outside district heating areas and an expected substitution of traditional cars with electric vehicles. Both are seen as part of the change from fossil fuels to carbon-neutral fuels and as a prerequisite in itself for building the needed storage capacity in the future smart grid with a high share of wind power. However, a number of projects also have a more general approach to residential electricity consumption, i.e. not focusing on one particular area.

As noted by Nyborg and Røpke (2011, 7), the question of who should manage consumption in order to provide flexibility – the consumers themselves or the electricity companies through remote control – is one of the core issues in the discussion about load management. The Danish load management projects reflect this diversity. Some projects focus on *automated remote management* of appliances. Other projects focus on *motivating consumers to change their practices* (e.g. defer their laundry or dishwashing) in response to information about real-time electricity prices.

	<b>Electricity saving</b>	<b>Load management</b>	<b>Micro-generation</b>	<b>Power capacity</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Heating/air cond.</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Price-sensitive electricity cons. in households</li> <li>* EcoGrid EU</li> <li>* eFlex</li> <li>* Intelligent remote control of heat pumps</li> <li>* Trials with heat pumps on spot agreements</li> </ul>			
<b>Cooling</b>					
<b>Laundrying</b>					
<b>Cooking</b>					
<b>Lighting &amp; other appliances</b>					
<b>Transport</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* EDISON</li> <li>* EcoGrid EU</li> <li>* eFlex</li> <li>* Intelligent charge stands</li> <li>* Test en elbil</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Test en elbil</li> <li>* Better Place</li> <li>* Etrams</li> </ul>
<b>Household electr. cons. in general</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Consumer/Wash EcoGrid EU</li> <li>* Intelligent home Energy/FlexHouse</li> <li>* Feedback-motivated energy savings</li> <li>* Several "feedback light" solutions in relation to smart meters (provided by DSOs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* EDISON</li> <li>* EcoGrid EU</li> <li>* eFlex</li> <li>* Intelligent charge stands</li> <li>* Test en elbil</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Energy/FlexHouse</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* IMPROSUME</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Innovation Fur</li> </ul>

Table 1: Danish household smart grid projects by type of smart grid activity and consumption area

An example of automated load management is the “Intelligent remote control of heat pumps” project, which aims to develop and demonstrate an intelligent remote control system for individual heat pumps through trials involving up to 300 households (<http://www.styrdinvarmepumpe.dk>). Examples of active involvement of consumers are the eFlex project (by DONG Energy) and the FlexPower project (by SEAS-NVE in cooperation with Ea Energianalyse and others). The eFlex trial finished in 2012 and involved about 120 households (predominantly households with heat pumps, but also a few with electric vehicles as well as some without heat pumps or electric vehicles). The test families were equipped with the home energy management system GreenWave Reality, which enabled feedback at appliance level, apps for smart phones and remote control of appliances. During the test period, the families were offered real-time dynamic prices, which meant that the electricity price varied by up to 1 DKK/kWh (the normal Danish electricity price is about 2 DKK/kWh). The project showed, among other things, some potential for load management in relation to heat pumps, but also limitations to this potential such as in periods of extraordinarily cold weather. Finally, some projects included both automated remote management and active involvement of consumers. One example of this is the research project “Price-sensitive electricity consumption in households”, which included about 500 households divided into one control group and three test groups, including a test group with automated remote control of their direct electric heating system and a group that was notified about the next day’s electricity prices by e-mail or SMS on a daily basis. The study showed that only the first test group had realized actual economic savings through load management (Togeby and Hay 2009).

Electric vehicles are considered by many actors to play a particularly important role in the future Danish smart grid. The idea is that with the (expected) penetration of electric vehicles, these will represent considerable storage capacity for electricity. At times with high power production (e.g. due to high wind speeds), the electricity surplus (or some of it) can be stored in the batteries of electric vehicles through intelligent management of the charging. At the time of the COP15 summit in Copenhagen, two major electric vehicle demonstration projects were launched: “Better Place” and “Test-an-EV”. Both projects aimed at introducing electric vehicles to the Danish market and promoting sales, the projects differ with regard to the basic battery charging design. While the “Test-an-EV” project made use of traditional electric vehicles, the “Better Place” project developed a design with switchable batte-



ries; thus, the car battery could be recharged at home, at the work place or at another charge station (as with “traditional” electric vehicles), or the depleted batteries could be replaced with new, fully-charged batteries at special designed “battery switch stations”. The latter solution was developed in order to solve the problem of limited battery capacity and the problem of time-consuming recharging of batteries. “Test-an-EV” took another approach to the problem of limited driving distance between recharge, as they have been building a network of “Quick Charge” stations across Denmark. At these stations, electric vehicles can be recharged in only 20-40 minutes (compared to a normal recharging typically taking up to 5-6 hours).

In spring 2013, Better Place went bankrupt due to failing car sales, whereas the Test-an-EV project is still running. Both projects relate their activities to the aim of developing a smart grid where electric vehicles play a particularly important role in load management. However, until now with a main focus on popularizing the electric vehicle and promoting sales.

With regard to electricity saving and feedback, almost all customers with a smart meter have access to some kind of feedback services, although the extent of these services varies considerably among electricity companies. The minimum service, provided by nearly all companies, is offering the customers the possibility of accessing data about their household’s electricity consumption based on hourly readings. In addition to this, some also offer services like applications (apps) for smart phones that can be used to monitor the household’s electricity consumption, or receiving alerts by SMS or e-mail if the electricity consumption is higher or lower than usual. Even though in principle almost half of Danish households have access to some kind of feedback about their household’s total electricity consumption, it is still uncertain how great an impact (if any) this has had in terms of actual electricity saving. International research suggests that there is little evidence that this type of feedback to customers will automatically achieve a significant reduction in energy demand (Darby 2010).

While the main focus of the Danish household smart grid projects is on electricity saving and load management (table 1), only one project (the EnergyFlexHouse project) includes tests of household-based “micro-generation” technologies such as photovoltaic solar panels, and no projects focus on households as suppliers of “power capacity” to the grid in situations with a deficit of electricity (e.g. electric vehicles delivering electricity back to the grid). While most of the load management projects focus on electric heating or electric vehicles, electricity saving projects in general have a broad focus on electricity consumption in households.

The number of smart grid projects in Denmark is high compared with other European countries, including Norway (Joint Research Centre 2011). The size of projects varies considerably, but most projects are relatively small, with a total budget of only a few million DKK. However, the list of projects also includes a few large-scale demonstration projects (e.g. the previously mentioned Better Place and Test-an-EV). The largest project is the EcoGrid EU project, launched in 2011 and running until 2015, with a total budget of 21 million euro. EcoGrid EU is expected to be the largest European full-scale testing of smart grids so far (Nyborg and Røpke 2011). The project is based on the island of Bornholm and includes many different smart grid solutions (e.g. “intelligent charging” of electric vehicles and load management in general) and involves at least 2,600 households (Energinet.dk 2012).

### **The electric vehicle: an important technology in the smart grid**

As electric vehicles are expected by many actors to play a particularly important role in the future smart grid, and as they are an emerging technology, this section will present the latest developments in electric vehicles (including challenges and advantages) and review existing studies on consumer adoption of electrical vehicles.

#### ***The state of electric vehicles: advantages and challenges***

To establish electric vehicles as a serious alternative to traditional internal combustion engine cars, manufacturers have primarily focused on improving performance. Companies like Toyota, Citroën, Peugeot, Honda, Mitsubishi, Renault etc. are at the forefront of developing different prototypes of electric vehicles. Now that electric vehicles are competitive with traditional combustion engine cars in relation to acceleration and car size, the focus has turned to solving two critical issues: 1) the driving distance per recharge, and 2) production costs. The vehicle-to-grid configuration of electric vehicles features three operation elements: a power connection to the grid, a control/communication device and a meter (Sovacool and Hirsh 2008). To solve problems with the limited driving distance, a geographically distributed recharge infrastructure is necessary (like the “Quick Charge” stations of the Test-an-EV project or the “battery switch stations” of the Better Place project). Infrastructural changes progress slowly as the incorporation of electric vehicles into the market is a long-term goal. This means that electric vehicles will not be fully competitive with traditional combustion cars until a

recharge network has been established, so that consumers can cover longer travel distances (Sovacool and Hirsh 2008).

Also, the interface to the grid is attracting more focus and standardization is becoming an important issue. The European Commission has issued a mandate to ensure consistent standards within the EU, and while this was previously driven by the utilities, the car manufacturers are now also taking part in that process.

Electric vehicles have many potential advantages. Some arguments for electric vehicles are their mechanical simplicity, ease of use and perception as environmentally out-performing traditional cars (Dickerman and Harrison 2010). “Soft” characteristics such as improving comfort and safety are also becoming a selling point (Sovacool and Hirsh 2008). In this regard, the main barriers facing electric vehicles are not only technical or economic; significant factors could also be social and cultural values, business practices, political interests etc. (ibid).

### *Consumer adoption of electric vehicles*

The literature on consumer adoption of electric vehicles is dominated by the rational choice approach and thereby a focus on economic and instrumental barriers and how these can be translated into policy (Sovacool and Hirsh 2008). However, vehicle trials are beginning to see uptake processes that are more complex and slower than the economic approaches suggest. A study by Heffner et al. (cited in Sovacool and Hirsh 2008) based on interviews with early purchasers of electric vehicles in California found that savings from fuel efficiency constituted only a small part of the reason for adopting electric vehicles. Accordingly, some studies advocate a better understanding of consumer preferences, habits and incentives in the adoption of electric vehicles. Analyses of consumer adoption claim that consumers in general have different patterns of adoption and use, have different attitudes, relate different meanings to electric vehicles and evaluate the attributes of the car differently.

Correspondingly, a study of driving patterns and electricity supply systems in the US (Weiller 2011) demonstrated significant variation between different regions and between different states. This led to a broader conceptualization of segmentations, with the conclusion that there is more than one group of early adopters of electric vehicles, as well as a variety of mainstream consumer segments, each with different motivations and degree of propensity to adopt different types of technology (Anable et al. 2011).

There are also differing post-purchase adoption issues with electric vehicles. An ethnographic study from the UK (Brady 2010) points out that adopters of electric vehicles are challenged by a lack of support with regard to servicing and maintenance of the car, and not by expected issues such as limited recharging facilities. The study concludes that the current market for electric vehicles consists predominantly of multi-vehicle suburban households, who do not mind DIY repairs and servicing. Furthermore, the study describes electric vehicles as a niche technology, as those who adopt electric vehicles can be categorized into classical innovators and/or early adopters. According to the study, drivers are citizens with a high appreciation of energy issues seeking to reduce energy use in their everyday lives (Brady 2010). For example, the electric vehicle drivers express a feeling of wellbeing and less guilt.

Similarly, Jansson (2009) concludes that potential electric vehicle consumers have either a strong pro-environmental orientation or a strong inclination to own this new technology. In general, consumers prefer cars that contribute to their self-realization process. This tendency can be assumed to influence the factors that make electric vehicles socially acceptable (Anable et al. 2011).

Accordingly, factors like information, demonstration and opportunities to test electric vehicles in everyday life could help consumers with purchase decisions and assure them that electric vehicles are compatible with their daily needs. Routines in which electric vehicles differ from conventional vehicles, such as charging or re-routing for limited driving distances, should be designed, communicated and supported by means of appropriate technical devices so that they are easy to manage in daily life. The conclusion is that the range of electric vehicle models should be oriented towards various user groups, so that the different user groups will be able to select the model which is most appropriate for them (Peters et al. 2011).

Despite a wider acceptance of the influence of social and behavioural factors on the adoption of electric vehicles, car manufacturers still emphasize the electric vehicle as a mainstream car in their communication to the public, portraying novel hardware as neither unfamiliar nor sensational, but as safe, familiar and comfortable. This reflects the perception of consumers as close-minded about new technologies. Instead of embracing new energy technologies, it is thought that consumers rely on notions of tradition and familiarity when they make consumer choices, especially when dealing with hardware that requires high capital investment (Sovacool and Hirsh 2008).

## Concluding on future challenges: understanding consumers in the smart grid

The smart grid is an emerging socio-technical system. Many ideas and expectations are associated with the term, but examples of large-scale deployment of smart grid solutions are few so far. Up to now, advanced metering systems (smart meters) have been the technology with the largest distribution in Europe, including Denmark. However, apart from simple and mostly web-based feedback services and remote readings of customers' electricity consumption, smart meters for more advanced applications on a larger scale have not been seen.

While the actual, full-scale employment of smart grid solutions is still limited, the number of research, development and demonstration projects is manifold. Different concepts and strategies are developing, particularly within the areas of energy saving (with feedback to customers about their electricity consumption) and load management.

The high degree of “interpretive flexibility” associated with the “smart grid” means that it is imbued with very different and sometimes conflicting interpretations of how solutions should be designed. One example is household load management and the question of who should manage and control consumption in the household. Some argue for remote control with as little active participation from residents as possible, while others work with designs that aim to involve residents actively through continuous information about real-time prices. Behind these different approaches lie different ways of conceptualizing residents and their interests.

Hitherto, initiatives within the development of smart grid solutions have tended towards a technology-centred design approach. New solutions are designed with a primary focus on the technical needs of the future electricity system, e.g. load management, and only a secondary focus on the interests and characteristics of the end-users. As a result, the end-user context is in most projects only weakly integrated in the design.

The technology-centred design approach involves the risk that possible “un-intended” side-effect uses might undermine the intended, systemic benefits of developing smart grid solutions. One example could be electric vehicles that are believed to play a key role in relation to “peak shaving” and the problem of fluctuating renewable energy production. However, few projects have studied the actual charging pattern of owners of electric vehicles. A potential problem could arise if owners recharge their cars when they come

home from work in the early evening, which would coincide with the peak load between 17:00 and 19:00. In this example, the charging pattern would actually exacerbate the peak-load problem.

In this chapter, we have described how smart grid solutions might form a possible future scenario for a climate friendly energy system, while also describing the way that consumers should be assigned a central role in realizing the smart grid. However, as demonstrated through the examples of Danish projects and the review of consumer responses to electric vehicles, it is also apparent that there are many unanswered questions and challenges to the realization of the smart grid. Establishing the smart grid is about making changes in a large technical system, the existing energy system, which forms a huge complex of integrated economic, technical, institutional and cultural structures with vested interests from many actors. Up until now, the focus of research has been on the technical and economic aspects of developing this new infrastructure. However, we want to emphasize the importance of the cultural and social structures of the everyday lives of consumers as a decisive element in this transition. This importance is mutual: the smart grid will not be able to work if consumers' everyday practices are not integrated adequately into the solutions. But also vice versa: there are many relevant questions to ask of the smart grid solutions from a consumer policy perspective. These include questions of energy security, data security and anonymity in relation to the flow of data on household consumption, as well as rights and obligations related to the new possible roles of "prosumers", i.e. households being energy consumers and producers at the same time.

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## Solar Collectors for Historic Homes; Linking consumption to perceptions of space

Annette Henning

Reducing household energy consumption is one of the top issues in contemporary discussions on sustainable consumption. This chapter concerns one way in which the consumption of purchased energy for domestic heating can be reduced: having a solar thermal system added to one's house (Henning 2007). However, the fact that one of the components – the solar collector – is usually situated on the roof or the façade of a building is a recurrent impediment to such installations. In certain contexts, these attributes may blend into the building, while in others they may be perceived as problematic (Henning 2000). The latter may be the case particularly when the appearance of the building is of major importance, as with houses deemed worthy of preservation for coming generations.

This chapter draws upon a study carried out in the town of Visby in October 2010. Visby is a walled Hanseatic town and a World Heritage site on the island of Gotland, Sweden. This well-preserved town, with streets and buildings dating back to medieval times, is still very much alive with residents, shops, restaurants and workplaces. The research focused on attempts by prospective consumers to purchase solar thermal systems and have them installed in and on their old houses. It links some of the constraints of these particular consumption decisions to the varying, but culture-specific, meaning of solar collectors and heritage dwellings. A basic purpose was to investigate the congruity of two Swedish national interests; the one being preservation

of historic buildings, the other a shift towards more energy-efficient heating systems and renewable energies. The discussion is pursued in the vein of those anthropological studies of consumption, which links consumption to space, home and the relationship between persons and things more generally (e.g. Buchli 2005:210, Miller 1995, 2005:237).

After some background information concerning the town of Visby and solar thermal systems in Sweden, the following section describes how residents tend to perceive one another, and how they tend to vary in the way they strike a balance between preservation and alteration of the old houses. The second section deals with the ability of individual energy consumers to choose heating systems. It begins with a general description of energy consumption and supply in historic Visby, and continues with a description of householder motives for buying a solar heating system, as well as motives which tend to be ascribed to them. In the third section, a focus on solar collectors is used to discuss how perceptions of space may either restrict or allow for consumption. Finally, some general conclusions and summaries are given concerning the link between artefacts, consumption and space, and the way this is illustrated by the Visby case study.

### ***House touring and ethnographic interviewing***

This social anthropological study had an emphasis on ethnographic interviewing (Bernard 2002:204f). Interviews were conducted with twelve individuals, five of whom were interviewed in their professional roles as employees of the local energy company, energy adviser, architect and antiquarian. Seven men and women were interviewed in their role as home owners. Each of these households had shown an interest in having a solar thermal system installed in their house. A majority of all interviewees had been born in Visby and/or had lived in the walled town for most of their lives. Several home owners ran businesses of their own.

One man was interviewed by telephone on two occasions. The others were visited in their homes or at their places of work. The ambition was to meet both the man and the woman in each of the resident households, although this was achieved in only two cases. After interviews of between one and two hours, a tour of the house took place. Photography was used to help informants to tell their stories of how they had made their house a convenient and aesthetic home (Henning 2007; Pink 2004). Photography was also used as a way of becoming more observant concerning buildings, 'street views', 'roof landscapes', and intended sites for solar collectors.



Figure 1. View for the upper part of intramural Visby

### *Islanders in a walled town*

Of a population of 57,000 on the entire island of Gotland, 23,000 live in the Visby area. Of these, almost 3,000 live within the town walls. On one side of the wall, there is the sea. The other side of the town climbs a hill, allowing for good views over house roofs and church ruins (Figure 1). During ten summer weeks, Gotland is invaded by several hundred thousand tourists and summer residents. Farming and tourism are important sources of income for the population. Despite a large public sector and a high degree of enterprising spirit, job opportunities are few. The young tend to leave for the mainland to find work or further education, sometimes only to return on their retirement. When the intramural town of Visby was added to the World Heritage List in 1995, UNESCO stated that ‘Visby is an outstanding example of a north European medieval walled trading town which preserves with remarkable completeness a townscape and assemblage of high-quality ancient buildings that illustrate graphically the form and function of this type of significant human settlement’ ([whc.unesco.org/en/list](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list)).

### *Solar thermal systems in Sweden*

A solar thermal system for the single-family house in Sweden consists of a solar collector, a heat store in the form of an insulated tank filled with water, and connecting pipes, a pump and a heat exchanger. In Sweden, small

systems produce domestic hot water from May to September. More common, however, are the larger combi-systems, which also provide hot water to the house heating system from early spring to late autumn. In order to produce up to fifty percent of the total annual heating, the size of the collector and its angle of inclination are vital, as is the size and construction of hot water stores (Lorenz 2010). The annual insolation is about ten percent more in Visby than in the rest of Southern Sweden (Broman 2007).

### The 'preservers' and the 'renewers'

The population of the island of Gotland is not very large, and even fewer live in Visby. Many of them know one another, or have at least heard of one another:

*'On Gotland, everybody appears in every context. A client is a deliverer next time we meet, so to speak. And a client may be a member of the municipal executive board in another context. You have two or three (different kinds of) relationships with every client. (...) Authority clients, and company clients, and local government, and politicians; They are everything .... They are clients and deliverers and are responsible for decisions and the like. The whole way. So, all this often becomes a circle, so to speak.'* (Man from the energy company.)

Considering the fact that the population in intramural Visby amounts to merely three thousand people, and that many of them have lived and worked there for decades, sometimes since childhood, social networks are bound to be tight and inter-connected. Still, the interviewees repeatedly explained to me that there are two camps in Visby, with the 'Preservers' on one side and the 'Renewers' on the other.

#### **Two camps?**

Most of the householders who were interviewed saw the population this way, as clearly split into two kinds of people with diametrically opposing views. One side was said to demand complete conservation of the town, while the other would demand change, or 'development', as some would put it. At first sight, this certainly seemed to be true. Those who were set on preserving old Visby expressed their regret that owners of historic homes tended to tear out everything to make the interior bigger and more modern, often leaving only a shell of original outer walls. At the same time, home owners would angrily tell me how they were not allowed to do anything, that every single thing was forbidden!

The interview material strongly indicates that those who are placed closest to the idea of ‘preserver’ are the most likely to be the target for criticism. According to the informants, these people are either inconsistent or say no to everything because it is the easiest way out. They could be depicted as being bureaucratic and having a certain mentality, a limited view of things. They would even be described as the work of the devil and, according to some politicians, highly dangerous in their prevention of ‘development’.

Ideas of who these preservers are differ somewhat. Some would say that they work for the local authority, while others would point out the museum or the county administrative board. Some would mention politicians or decision-makers more generally. Preservers could be described as mainlanders (‘fastlänningar’), and assumed to live outside the walls themselves. Someone perceived the split as existing between the local authority, who want change, and the county administrative board, who want to preserve. Almost in line with this statement are the descriptions of disagreements between local politicians and larger companies on the one hand, and civil servants with responsibilities regarding the World Heritage on the other. By placing these varying opinions of so called ‘preservers’ together, we do not produce a clear category of real people. What we do get is a general idea of an on-going discourse.

Balancing change and preservation in a town of strong historic value, where people still live and work, is obviously an extremely difficult task. The many angry or frustrated comments clearly point towards strong disagreements between individuals or groups with varying views on how such a balance should be achieved. The differences seem to be much more intricate and complex than some would claim, however. Titles like ‘preservers’ or ‘renewers’ were almost always applied to others or to the others’ perception of themselves. Not one of the interviewees considered themselves to be solely pro change or solely pro preservation. They belonged to a more balanced ‘third kind’, as someone put it: ‘Because there are people like me and my wife as well. And we are on both sides.’

### ***Balancing change and preservation***

Everyone, regardless of profession and background, seems to have an interest in the history of the town and its houses, as well as in how this built environment may be altered. They definitely differ in the degree to which they accept change, however. Another obvious difference lies in the kind of alteration they promote or are willing to accept. The wide variations in how

change and preservation are balanced are certainly linked to professional training and practice. But they may also be linked to the history and construction of each specific house, as well as to current ideas of an aesthetic and convenient home.

I was told how something new had begun when the biggest employer in Visby had started to use the media as an additional way to put pressure on politicians and the local building committee. Some of the interviewees told me that the company management was not merely trying to take advantage of the positive image of Visby as a medieval town, but that they actually had a genuine interest in the town and its old houses. Still, this is a big expansive company with needs of its own. Gardens have been turned into parking lots, new buildings have been erected, radical interior changes have been made, and buildings of varying ages have been connected by a footbridge or a two-storey underground space. I was told that some leading politicians saw such changes as something very positive and entirely necessary. One of them had even declared explicitly that he would not allow the World Heritage status to prevent 'development'.

Another difference, which seems to have occurred during the last decade, was the way home owners had begun to treat their houses.

*When you buy a house, you want to remodel it. A lot! It is not enough to buy a house to live in, but you buy a house as a starting-point for an idea you have of how you want to live. Which means that... First of all, it has become much more expensive in Visby. So, those who buy houses often have a lot of money. And, after the investment they realise their dream. And then, they invest a lot of money in remodelling the interior. So, most of the time they tear out everything! And sort of start anew, from the inside, leaving only an empty shell.' (Researcher: 'And it was not like this before?') Building antiquarian: 'No, it was not like that before. This is something new.'*

Still, these changes were understandable, I was told. The houses had to be adapted for the life people live today. Furthermore, the unique wooden houses from the eighteenth century are very small, the antiquarian told me, and so one could understand that someone who has paid a lot of money wants to do something with such a house. Still, the radical changes were also considered somewhat unfortunate. Together with the torn-out material, knowledge about how people used to organise their homes would disappear. 'It is a difficult balance', he said. 'It really is.'

According to the energy adviser, many of those who decide to make their houses bigger, as well as replacing their old heating systems, have been summer guests or islanders who have been working on the mainland and who had now decided to move back for good. Even though most of the households who were interviewed in this study are not fully representative of these descriptions, they showed similar tendencies. These home owners were kind enough to show their homes, or parts of their homes. The interiors of these houses were not altered completely. Still, there were always changes, some more radical than others. Walls may have been moved or taken down, a hallway may have been constructed between two houses, or new windows may have been put in to create more light or a better view, etc.

Such changes do not contradict the fact that these home owners very obviously care about their houses. They seemed knowledgeable about the history of the house, and also used different ways of illustrating its age. Some had drawings on the wall, depicting their house or previously empty site at an earlier time. Others had, for instance, removed the wallpaper and insulation to reveal a characteristic old wooden wall, or decorated one of the rooms in nineteenth-century style. One person had lovingly saved a worn threshold leading into the previous kitchen. Furthermore, some of them had put in quite a lot of effort to restore and maintain their property. One house had even been rescued in a situation when it was in a particularly bad state of repair, parts of it having settled nearly half a metre.

*'I believe,' one man said, 'that when you grow up in a place like this, and have always lived here... , particularly when you have been to the mainland and seen these awful medium-sized towns. How disgusting it can be. So, I care very much about this town! At the same time, my opinion is that each generation should be allowed to make its imprint. And put its signature, so to speak, on the work of art.'*

## Heating options

The heating of the walled town seems to follow a pattern which is remarkably similar to any other densely populated site in Sweden. The district heating is mainly based on biofuel, and the pipelines are extended where this is considered profitable enough. In the event of hesitation or delay in this, people who live in the area (or street, in this case) will have started to drill for ground heat pumps or to install pellet boilers or air-to-air heat pumps, thereby withdrawing the clientele base for district heating (Henning and Lorenz 2005).

There are two aspects which differ somewhat, though. One is an increased difficulty in being connected to district heating, in some parts of the town more than others. According to the energy company, it is three times as expensive to lay district heating within the walls, as compared to outside. This is mainly due to the manual work involved in putting the paving stones back in place when the street has been dug up (for the pipelines) and refilled. Since large home owners, institutions and business premises have been prioritised, it has been easier for others who live close-by to connect to district heating. A couple of the town-dwellers I spoke to were of the opinion that an important reason why the energy company had decided not to extend the pipelines to their street was because it was 'one-sided'. For instance, there may be a huge church ruin on one side and also a park, leaving only a small line of little houses on the other side of the street; too few and too small for district heating to be considered profitable.

The other aspect which is characteristic of intramural Visby is the difficulty of being granted a building permit for solar heating. This difficulty, or even a belief that solar collectors were forbidden within the walls, seemed to be widespread among the population. At the same time, rumours reached me that several 'illegal' solar collectors were hidden in the town (although few seemed to know where). And on several occasions, my interviewees would assure me that there have been quite a few applications for building permits. When I questioned this (I had only found three documented cases in the last ten years), they would become more vague and uncertain. According to the energy adviser, most of those who get in contact to learn about their options regarding solar heating choose not to take the risk of paying an expensive fee for a building permit application.

### ***Motives for buying solar heating (and experiences from having used it)***

In one of the households, the man had written to the local authorities expressing his wish to purchase and install a solar thermal system. He had received a written reply signed by the town architect. A second household had used solar heating for parts of their energy consumption for almost seventeen years. They had never asked for a building permit. Three households had all requested building permits for installing a solar thermal system in their houses. Of these, one had been granted a permit (Figure 2), and another had withdrawn the application after a while (see quotation further down). The third household had had the application turned down. They had appealed against this decision, first to the county administrative board, and then again



to the Swedish administrative court of appeal, where the case still lies (when last checked).



Figure 2. The small but legal solar collector seen from the only spot where it is visible

Two women who took part in the interviews were both interested in a solar thermal system because of its non-polluting character. The men varied somewhat in their motives. One man told me that he wanted to save energy by being able to switch off the electricity and air-to-air heat pump during the summer and parts of the spring and the autumn. Another man wished to use solar heating as the main house heating, adding bio-pellet only as an auxiliary heat source. His primary motive for this was convenience. With solar heating, he would not have to attend to the pellet boiler every week of the year. A third man was primarily motivated by having such a perfect space available for a solar thermal system. There was an extension to his house, originally built as a garage. Inside this previous garage there would be plenty of room for sizable hot water stores. And the roof, which had a slight tilt towards the south, would be a perfect site for a collector. Furthermore, he told me, it would be impossible for passers-by to see the solar collector. An additional motive for some of the men was the fact that they saw solar energy as a very inexpensive form of energy:

*'A form of energy which is free of charge must be better in the long run. In principle, you have at least thirty years of free energy. The only costs are for a pump which goes on and off. So, in that way, it certainly makes sense.'* (First man)

*I think it is quite obvious. It is the least expensive fuel you can get. God the Father has created it – if you believe in such things. Moreover, there are so many hours of sunshine here on Gotland.’ (Second man)*

*Well, the price for oil increased. And if you can get hot water for free during the summer, at least, rather than burning oil, that is of course very much better.’ (Third man)*

Two of the households had actually had the opportunity to install a solar thermal system. One of them was the only household who had been granted a building permit. When this solar heating system was installed in 2008, the male householder had hoped to hide the solar collector extremely well. A drawback with this ambition, as it turned out, was that the collector had to be kept very small in order to fit the only south-facing slope of the roof which overlooked the yard and was difficult to detect from outside. He had also used a previous hot water store in order to keep the costs down. As a consequence, he was now rather dissatisfied with the performance of the system.

The other home owner was a lot more pleased with his solar thermal system. It had worked well since he installed it seventeen years earlier, heating from the middle of February, almost through to December. He regretted the fact that he could not make better use of all the hot water it produced during summer, though. In 1993, he never got to apply for that building permit. This solar collector is ten to twelve square metres, as compared to four and a half in the previous case. Still, placed on a south facing roof in a yard surrounded by buildings, it is equally hard to detect (or even harder).

### ***Motives for turning down applications for building permits***

A solar thermal system differs from other heating systems in that one of its components – the collector – is preferably mounted on the roof of a building, or integrated into it. It is only this component, and the fact that it is attached to the outside of the building, that is the reason for the building permit requirements. Thus, despite the fact that solar thermal systems may have sizable hot water stores, the way this part of the heating system may affect interior spaces in the building is never evaluated. In both formal and informal discussions, the visibility of the solar collector is the primary basis for evaluation. Ideally, it should not affect one’s impression of the town when walking along the streets or looking down on it when standing on the hill. The siting of the building is evaluated in relation to this ‘street view’ and ‘roof

landscape', but judgements are also made of the way the collector blends into the building without changing characteristic roof materials or the shape of the roof.

Special recommendations for how the walled town should, and should not, be heated are stated in the municipal energy plan (Gotlands kommun 2010). Still, householders' decisions to heat their houses in one way or another are normally considered a private affair, something not to be questioned by the local authorities. There seems to be only one exception where local authorities do interfere, not only in the choice of heating system, but also in how home owners are assumed to have reached their heating decision. Thus, low profitability for the home owner is frequently used as a reason for turning down, or advising against, a building application for a solar thermal system. Interestingly enough, this ascribed motive is used as basis for evaluation even when the home owners themselves use other motives for their choice of heating, such as energy efficiency, convenience, or environmental concerns.

### **Consumption affected by perceptions of space**

A surprising result from the case study in the town of Visby is the fact that the two national interests – the preservation of cultural heritage, and the shift towards more renewable and energy-efficient use of energy – are neither in conflict nor in agreement. Not even when some private residents and prospective consumers tried to put solar collectors on their ancient roofs did the local authorities try to strike a balance between heritage preservation and energy efficiency. Rather, the issue tended to be treated as a matter of weighing up preservation against an assumed private gain. Consequently, disagreements among prospective consumers, architects, antiquarians and the local authorities tend to be expressed and acted upon as belonging to only one of the two national interests: the preservation of Visby as a World Heritage Site.

Still, opinions differ widely concerning the kind of alterations that could be made, the degree to which changes should be allowed within the walls, and who should be allowed to make such alterations. Home owners became frustrated when they had to ask for permission every time they wished to make a small alteration to their house. Some were particularly angry to see that politicians, who denied them this freedom to make alterations, could make huge changes themselves in Visby. One example, which infuriated some inhabitants, was the decision to move municipal offices outside the

wall, thereby reducing the number of customers for restaurants and shops by several hundred. Politicians, for their part, became equally frustrated when one of the companies in town made them choose between preservation of the town and employment for its inhabitants.

Interestingly enough, there is at the same time a high degree of consensus regarding which spaces could be altered and which spaces could not. There is, in this, also a clear priority of the 'experience value' over 'documentary value' (Robertsson 2002). Thus, everyone agrees that street-facing façades are not to be changed or modernised. Regarding the interior of the house and the enclosed gardens, there is an almost equally strong silent agreement that the authorities should not interfere with the alterations and 'modernizations' that people carry out (with the exception of buildings with very strong protection). These radical differences in how street-facing façades and interior space are perceived and treated are strongly backed up by their differing support in law. While changes to street-facing façades cannot be carried out without a building permit, radical indoor changes should ideally be reported ('bygganmälan'), although they rarely are. There seems to be less agreement on whether roofs and yard-facing façades are to be considered a public or private concern. It is also within this context that we should understand a discussion on solar collectors.

### *Consensus concerning conservation of public spaces*

As the exterior of a house can be observed by every person who passes by, it is always the most public part of a home. The possibilities for controlling the ways in which others perceive the house, and thereby its inhabitants, are primarily restricted by economic resources when choosing a house or by the ability to work on the façade. Consequently, people may use their houses either to draw attention to them or to avoid such attention (Waterson 1996). The latter is usually the case in Scandinavia (Henning 2000).

The project results indicate almost total consensus concerning street-facing house façades in intramural Visby. It is taken for granted that a permit is required for the alteration of a street-facing façade. The colour, material and general appearance of this part of the house is rarely called into question. This space seems to be accepted and respected by all actors as a public space which is to be preserved. Street-facing façades tend to be restored with great care and in keeping with past tradition, and it is only occasionally that someone bemoans the costly special materials which have to be used. Along the alleys and cobbled streets, many well-kept houses, often adorned with roses, can be seen. Such houses convey an impression not merely of passive acceptance

of the strict rules, but also of active engagement by many inhabitants in enhancing this most public aspect of their home.

No one would even dream of putting up a solar collector on a street-facing façade. The air-to-air heat pump is an interesting case here, though. Rather than hanging the outdoor units of the heat pumps on the house wall, they are generally placed on the ground about ten centimeters from the wall. When attached to the house in this more indirect way, they are no longer perceived as being part of the house, and no building permit is required. Air-to-air heat pumps are a good illustration of the importance given to the building, as compared to the street and other surroundings.

The air-to-air heat pump also illustrates a certain lack of coordination when it comes to planning and regulating the energy supply in intramural Visby. The local energy plan advised against air-to-air heat pumps due to the risks of noise disturbance in this densely populated town (Gotlands kommun 2010:14). However, since the choice and purchase of a heating system is considered a private affair, it has still become a popular heating alternative. I was told that, now and then, neighbours complain about noise to the local environmental health board, just as the energy plan predicted. Another problem which may occur with heat pumps is that they stick out too much into the street. In this case, it is a matter for a third authority, this time the local technical board.

### *Consensus concerning alterations to private spaces*

As never before, people in Scandinavia are taking an interest in making their houses into homes. Although most people no longer spend time on making clothes or jam, they are spending more and more time, money and energy on decorating their homes. They do not only renovate their homes or rearrange their furniture when they move or when things get worn out; they do it for the sake of renewal in itself (Garvey 2001; Gullestad 1992). Or rather, they do it in order to express values, lifestyle, identity and social standing (Junkala 1998; Miller 1992). And, to quote Gullestad (1992:82), they do it to 'express the family members' joint interests and emotional closeness, to themselves and to the rest of the world'.

The research project took as its starting point a curiosity about how people manage to create a personal home out of an eighteenth or nineteenth century house. I imagined that such an old house would severely limit their freedom of action. However, it turned out that there was not as much difference as I had expected between the treatment of the interiors of these houses and

those of modern houses (Henning 2008a). Although we live in a time with an extreme interest in refurbishing and redecorating homes, and despite the fact that Visby has been appointed a World Heritage Site, few seem to see this contradiction as a problem. As a consequence, the purchase and installation of new indoor heating components, such as hot water stores, is never an issue for debate.

In the Mediterranean area, windows, doors, balconies or open yards are often used as adjustable links between the outside and the inside, between the public and the private (Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúniga 1999; James and Kalisperis 1999). This is not usually the case in Scandinavia, where we tend to find a sharper line between private and public space. Normally, this divide goes between outdoor and indoor activities (Gullestad 1992; Sjögren 1993). However, Scandinavians also seem to be careful not to trespass on the private sphere of a garden (Björklund 1983, Sjögren 1993). We can see this happening in Visby, where some of the perceived privacy of indoor space tends to spill over to the small enclosed gardens, of which there are quite a few in Visby. Furthermore, the perception of privacy often also seems to include those façades that face the yard or garden.

As a consequence, and as indicated by the interviews, it would probably be considered unproblematic to have a solar collector placed on the ground in one of these enclosed gardens, or on the wall of a yard-facing façade. The collector would be sited in a space perceived as private, and would hardly be visible to the general public. A ground-based collector, in particular, may not even require a building permit since it is not attached to the house. However, in Visby, as in the rest of Sweden, the common location for solar collectors is neither the ground nor a wall, but the roof of the building. This fact has decisive effects on the opportunities for the inhabitants of Visby to buy and install solar heating in their homes.

### ***Disagreement due to overlapping space***

*(only) From down there it would be possible to see it (the solar collector), from a distance of twenty metres at that house there. And then on this street, it would be possible to see it from a distance of five metres. And that was not acceptable, they (the visiting group of inspectors) said. Then I thought, I don't give a damn anymore!' (Angry utterance by home owner who eventually withdrew his building permit application, see Figure 3.)*





Figure 3. One of the two spots where the roof could be seen.

One way of interpreting the varying ideas of the degree to which the solar collectors should be visible or invisible, is to see the roof as two things. For the home owner, the roof is first and foremost a part of his or her house. Primarily, it is private property. From a building antiquarian perspective, however, all roofs are primarily public. From this perspective, each roof is a piece of a bigger picture – a ‘street view’ or a ‘roof landscape’ (Figure 1) – and as such it is a very visible illustration of our heritage. Recent landscape theories can be one way of understanding the in-built conflict in this. Thomas (2001) says, for instance, that the reason why certain conflicts will not easily be resolved through mutual understanding is that different worlds are occupying, or at least overlapping, the same physical space. The roof in the quotation above is both a private and a public space. A solar collector could easily have been fitted in the former, but with a lot more difficulty in the latter.

### Concluding remark on consumption and space

The owners of old Visby houses had a number of different motives for wanting to buy a solar heating system, such as a desire for further convenience, or the sheer joy of having such a perfect site available for a solar collector. However, most of their motives involved a desire to save energy or to acquire a non-polluting heating system. Consequently, these motives were perfectly congruent with the Swedish national interest to achieve a shift

towards renewable energies and more energy-efficient heating systems. Still, when applications for building permits were considered, energy consumption was never an issue. Rather, another Governmental interest, the preservation of heritage buildings, was weighed against an assumed desire (among the home owners) for private gain. The extreme difficulty in obtaining building permission for erecting a solar collector certainly constrained the consumption of these artefacts, as well as the kind of energy carrier it could have provided. Still, residents varied in the degree to which they let themselves be restrained by this. One household appealed against the decision, while others simply did not apply for permission and put up the collectors anyway.

To a large degree, the physical properties of renewable energy facilities affect their location which, in turn, has an impact on what culture-specific meanings are given to them (Henning 2005; Miller 1992). Conflicts surrounding the plans for a large solar thermal plant may, for instance, have more in common with projected wind-power plants than with other solar heating installations, since they will both become part of a certain landscape (Henning 2008b). Thus, as Douglas and Isherwood pointed out in their groundbreaking book 'The World of Goods' (1979), cultural meanings exist in relations between artefacts rather than in individual artefacts. Consequently, the physical properties of artefacts have very clear consequences for how and by whom the respective artefact is perceived and treated (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1996; Henning 2005). In this chapter, we have followed a number of residents of Visby who wished to buy and install a solar thermal system in their old house. The fact that, in Sweden, small-scale solar collectors are normally inserted into house roofs (while the hot water stores are located in boiler rooms or basements) has important impacts on their ability to implement their purchasing decision.

A focus on solar collectors has been used here to discuss the options for using new products to alter heritage buildings. We have seen how it is perfectly possible to make radical changes to spaces which are considered to be private, while the same is not true of spaces that are considered to be public (unless you have the political and economic means to do so). Regulations, as well as modes of thinking among both residents and professionals who are responsible for preservation, agree on this. Therefore, one of the two main components of a solar thermal system – the hot water store – is never disputed. The other main component – the collector – is, however. One of the main reasons for disagreements concerning this artefact is the fact that it is to be placed on the roof, a space which is simultaneously a private space and part of the public roof landscape.



## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the reviewers for valuable suggestions, and my informants for sharing their experiences with me. The research was financed by the Swedish Energy Agency.

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# Addressing consumption and sustainability in design education through a focus on practices

Kakee Scott, Jonathan Bean & Lenneke Kuijer

## A focus on consumption and practices in sustainable design

Students in educational programmes of sustainable design are being challenged to look beyond technological interventions to consider the broader implications of sustainability as a systemic societal change (McMahon & Bhamra 2012; Findeli 2001; Manzini 2009). To help students address the relationship between design and consumption and develop strategic design interventions, several experimental courses and lessons in design for sustainable practices have been implemented at Parsons The New School for Design in New York and Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands.

This chapter reports on initial efforts to integrate 'social practice' perspectives into design curricula, going into detail on how practice theory was understood and applied by students in their design studio projects, and proposes avenues for further research in this area. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight practice theory as a conceptual framework to assist efforts for sustainable design in considering the dynamics of consumption. Although specifically focusing on the context of design education, the issues addressed are relevant more generally to the evolving arena of sustainable design, in which all practitioners are still, in effect, students.

## Why teach practice-oriented design?

In response to a number of key publications in the previous decade (Reckwitz 2002; Warde 2005; Shove 2003; Ingram et al. 2007), the application of social practice theory to the relationship between design and consumption has become a growing area of inquiry that draws from the domains of consumption studies, science and technology studies and design research (Röpke 2009; Gram-Hanssen 2011; Strengers 2009; Hielscher 2008). Social practice theory is typically traced to work produced by theorists Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, among a host of others, to interpret the dynamic mutuality of social structure and individual agency as a function of practices (Reckwitz 2002).

In colloquial terms, practices are the activities of everyday life: driving, listening to the radio, dressing for work, or eating lunch. Despite their seemingly ordinary nature, practices are complex social things, conceptualized as emergent and dynamic clusters of elements: immaterial elements (i.e., shared understandings, emotions), actions (i.e., conversing, thinking, moving), and material elements (i.e., tools, molecules, bodies). These three basic elements have been given shorthand descriptions as ‘image, skills and stuff’ (Shove 2008) or ‘meanings, doings and objects’ (Magaudda 2011).

Proponents contend that practice theory offers a conceptual framework that is better suited for approaching systemic, complex challenges, such as sustainability, than conventional product or user-centred design heuristics (Shove et al. 2007; Kimbell 2011). Sustainability research and education programmes at several universities have made efforts to integrate practice theory into design approaches, typically by using design to strategically alter the course of consumption practices. (Kuijter and de Jong 2011; Munnecke 2007; Hielscher 2008; Scott, Bakker and Quist 2012). For the purposes of design education, the introduction of practice theory is justified as a sophisticated, yet graspable framework that can help make sense of the messy, interconnected assemblages that constitute the ways in which designed products and services are implicated in the social production of everyday life and the design process itself (Ingram et al. 2007). Setting practice as the unit of analysis — as opposed to products, experiences, interfaces, spaces, users/people, and so on — provides an integrative conceptualization of the routine behaviours of everyday life and of how objects of design become enmeshed and normalized within them (Strengers 2011). Theories of practice focus on how these bundles of elements change and persist through iterative performance by individual and collective actors over time, and assert that

practices are the key social processes through which individuals learn, share, invent and adapt.

This interpretation reveals the importance of routine, reproduction, disruption, innovation and adaptation in practices, showing how patterns of consumption can be linked to complex social learning processes occurring in the mundane occurrences of daily life (Trentmann 2009). Practices are also a useful lens through which to view assumptions implicit in design. Warde writes that practices are “internally differentiated on many dimensions”; comparing the variety in practices over generations, geographies and cultures helps to reveal the relative and local nature of normative practices and the tremendous differences in resulting resource consumption (Warde 2005: 12). While dominant perspectives in design tend to equate material and technological progress with societal betterment, a practice-oriented approach traces the spread of social norms and institutionalized standards that influence patterns of consumption, and therefore helps expose the erroneous assumption that progress must always be linked to increased consumption (van Vliet et al. 2005).

As instructors at two different design universities, the authors have been integrating practice-oriented design into several courses and research projects in recent years. Within design studio courses, students are instructed in practice theory to help identify assumptions and break through normative frameworks, to question current practices and familiar conventions, to conceptualize how practices might change in the future, and to develop design interventions oriented toward influencing such changes. Other theories of socio-technical change, including actor-network theory [ANT] (Latour 2005) or multi-level perspective [MLP] (Geels and Schot 2007), offer analytical frameworks for interpreting complex relationships between material goods, technologies, economics and culture. In the context of a design studio course, however, practice theory is more accessible to students than ANT or MLP because of its focus on familiar everyday practices, such as cooking, laundering or driving, and can, therefore, serve as a point of entry to these and other approaches to socio-technical change.

Through reading accounts of historic shifts in practice, with attention to how ordinary life is continuously overturned and transformed, students gain a sense of the role of design in larger patterns of social change. By conducting their own research on particular practices as they happen currently and how they have transformed in the past, students learn to use practice-theoretical

frameworks as mental models to engage critically in thinking about how practices become normalized and how they might potentially change in the future.

Within design efforts for sustainability, interest in behavioural approaches has generated important criticism from supporters of the focus on practices for focusing on human-product interactions in isolation from the complex and dynamic social situations in which they take place, namely everyday life (Pettersen and Boks 2008; Strengers 2009; Brynjarsdottir et al. 2012). As argued, treating everyday life as a static environment rather than a field of active variables ignores the mutual shaping of a designed intervention and the systems it ends up within. It can also lead to unanticipated consequences, for example, in the case of rebound effects, where new technological efficiencies lead to an unexpected net increase in consumption (Hertwich 2005). Likewise, interventions at the scale of individual action that do not incorporate understandings of social dynamics at the cultural scale become problematic when applied to problems like sustainability that necessitate a wider scale of change. Because of its approach to analyzing elements of practice as always interconnected, social practice theory can provide the designer with a nuanced understanding of individual behaviour in relation to social norms. It is therefore useful for designing and implementing socially complex interventions such as smart meters, car sharing services, local energy production systems, and urban farming.

Practice theory helps to reveal how new ways of consuming become routine and integrated into social life, but, unlike in theories of domestication, this process has no definite end point (Shove et al. 2007); it remains subject to continuous smaller and larger transformations. It is useful to bring understanding of such dynamics into the design studio because the normalized, taken-for-granted nature of everyday consumption (wiping up a spill with a paper towel, filling up the car with gas, picking up a cup of coffee on the way to work) makes ordinary consumption practices appear fixed and difficult to change. Design approaches which frame a brief in response to needs and problems are limiting because they tend to reproduce and reinforce practices with negative environmental and social impacts. For example, eco-feedback devices can confirm the perspective that machine drying of laundry is a normal, un-contestable practice rather than exploring new practices that might eliminate the demand for mechanical drying altogether (Strengers 2011). Importantly, designing for practices requires attention not only to material qualities, but also to future developments in expectations, aspirations,

regulations, relationships, understandings, skills and capabilities of individuals within larger social systems (Shove and Araujo 2010).

To engage students in a critical discussion about the relationship between design, consumption and everyday life, practice theory provides a comprehensible and useful framework. Because it challenges the dominant narrative on the role of design in influencing consumption and everyday life, however, overlaying practice theory onto the design process creates a certain amount of discord and ambiguity, necessarily bringing into question the process as well as the content. Practice-oriented design is a new and developing approach, but it is an important one to offer to students of design and sustainability. Given this, how can a practice-orientation be made accessible and operational for design students to enable them to address consumption critically through design work, without confounding their sense of capability and efficacy as designers?

## Implementing practice-oriented design education

Introducing practice theory in a studio course has been an exercise in learning-by-doing for all involved. Below, we discuss one course from each university to demonstrate what we, as instructors and researchers, have learned from our efforts.

### *Parsons The New School for Design*

At Parsons The New School for Design, these efforts align with broader curricular strategies toward transdisciplinary design education, especially in prioritizing “critical studio” courses intended to fuse the broad critical inquiry of a liberal arts education with the strategic, projective, creative and practical methods of a design studio. The efforts described here were made within an interdisciplinary bachelor’s programme in sustainability that spans departments in liberal arts, public engagement and design. The programme is in its fifth year and the curriculum continues to evolve, which provides opportunities for innovative approaches. The course is required for students in the sustainable design track, but the programme is small and so the class size of eight students provided a suitable context for experimentation. Students enrolled in the course, from this and other undergraduate programmes, brought varying experience in the number of years of study, previous design courses and past exposure to sustainability concepts.

The course began with several weeks of introductory seminars combining readings, lectures and discussions to expose students to practice theory and studies of socio-technical systems (Geels and Schot 2007), social innovation, post-consumption economics (Manzini 2008; Jackson 2009) and other relevant theoretical approaches. Students were expected to use readings, class exercises, discussions and critiques to inform and provide continuous input for their projects, which did not begin until several weeks into the semester. The project was described in the assignment as “a design-driven research project that uses collaborative processes to catalyze and support social innovation for sustainable consumption.”

Practice theory was incorporated into every aspect of the studio assignment. The three-part ‘image-skills-stuff’ model was a primary tool for framing research and design, used to put focus on the ordinary behaviours that make up consumption habits and routines and to create new practices that break these norms. Additionally, students were taught to track histories of the practice, look for patterns of change, and consider the internal and external rewards of practices. A set of ‘key factors’ for enabling changes in practice were given to help guide the study, including: motivation, legitimacy and comfort, information, feedback, ideas and tools.

The pedagogical approach was adapted from previous research conducted at Delft University of Technology, integrating selected concepts from practice theory with an experimental methodology for practice-oriented design (Scott, Bakker and Quist 2012). The studio component was framed as a living lab project, a popular future-oriented format for design and innovation research that uses real or almost-real environments to implement and pilot innovation through full-scale prototyping. Similar to practice-oriented design, the living lab is geared toward working with systemic change in the interaction between technology and societal structures through changes in everyday life practices, behaviours, norms, expectations, standards of living, and so on (*ibid*). For their living lab project, students recruited participants not only to be the objects of research, but also to participate in a co-design process through experimentation in everyday life practices. During a four-week period, students used blogs and workshops to engage outside participants with the study and with each other to make use of group dynamics in supporting experiments. Students also took part in the experiments themselves as a mode of empathic design (Fulton-Suri 2003).

In conjunction with practice-oriented frameworks, the studio assignment combined approaches from co-design, critical design and design research.



Critical design (Mazé 2008) was taught as a method for artfully disrupting practices, helping students to frame the design object not as a prescriptive intervention that indicates an intended change in practice, as is seen in many behaviour-based approaches (Strengers 2009), but as a discursive intervention in practice. Instead of producing a physical form of critical design, students used critical ‘triggers’ (bits of discursive information or ideas) to encourage participants to “examine and defy otherwise taken-for-granted norms, expectations, and behaviours”. By promoting defamiliarization and reflection among participants, triggers open up opportunities for the creative re-configuration of practices. To make use of learning through research, students were instructed to find leverage points for design intervention. As developed in systems theory, the concept of leverage points helps to frame how design might strategically intervene within complex dynamics of practices. Both weak and strong elements, or links, in practices can theoretically be leveraged as pivot points for shifting practices or starting points for developing new practices (Scott, Bakker and Quist 2012). Students were encouraged to consider a wide range of possibilities for types of interventions, not to focus too heavily on artefacts or technologies as interventions, and to imagine ways to intervene in relation to skills, image or the links between the elements.

### ***Delft University of Technology***

At Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), practice-oriented design was taught as a module hosted in a section of a large course. This course was the third in a series of five studio courses taught to a total of 300 students in the second year of a general industrial design bachelor’s programme. Unlike at Parsons, these students were not enrolled in a programme focused on sustainability. Although sustainability was recently added to the basic design disciplines taught in the bachelor’s programme, the focus is often limited to concerns of life-cycle design, such as supply-chain issues and product disposal. The studio in question, however, is one of several courses in the programme that have systemic, critical interpretations of sustainability integrated into their objectives, and this has been the case since 1992 (Boks et al. 2006).

The course syllabus states that students will “develop all deliverables taking into account sustainable well-being as an explicit consideration, up to the point of demonstrating the effects of proposals for the user(s), the client company and its societal context”. This broad societal focus, in combination with sustainability objectives, makes the course a suitable candidate for implementing practice-oriented design. However, because of the course size,

existing syllabus and role as a core required course, the course could not be changed significantly; therefore, the teaching of practice-oriented design had to fit established course structures.

In this course, all students apply a future-oriented design approach, using the Vision in Product Design (ViP) technique (Hekkert and Van Dijk 2011). Students work for external commercial clients, with two studios of up to 20 students dedicated to one client. Over a period of ten weeks, student teams of four or five start by analyzing their designated company and its market to select a “project domain”, which is described as a “human activity”. Students imagine a future context for the project domain, which they express as a one-sentence statement. The course manual gives an example of such a statement: “When drinking beer in a café in 2020, people tend to rely on a one-dimensional, predetermined cultural meaning of having fun.” This statement is then used as a basis for concept development.

Practice-oriented design was integrated as a supplementary module within one of the studios. The client brief for this studio was provided by a company looking for applications for a new liquid dispensing technology, with either a manual or battery-powered variant, in the food and beverage market. To explain the theory and its relation to their design projects, the instructor provided the students with a printed assignment, a short presentation and supplementary supervision. The printed assignment included three components:

- 1) A short explanation of key concepts from practice theory, including Shove’s ‘image, skills and stuff’ model, change over time and variations between different (cultural) groups. These were illustrated through a design example: an alternative system for storing vegetables called Save Food From the Fridge (Ryou 2009).
- 2) An explanation of the relationship between concepts from practice theory and other theoretical concepts central to the course.
- 3) A step-by-step assignment guideline. Students were instructed to analyze the current practice, explore its historic career and compare alternative practices, as compositions of elements, oriented toward sustainability and well-being. They were illustrated with concrete examples such as “interview your parents or grandparents about how they stored vegetables 20 to 50 years ago.”

## Lessons learned in teaching practice-oriented design

Practice-oriented design is an abstract, new and evolving concept that conflicts with established design methods and priorities, in particular the deeply entrenched modernist ideals of progress and (apparent) simplicity. Our efforts thus far have called for analytical, critical approaches, with little direction for applying these within design practice. Teaching practice-oriented design is therefore necessarily experimental. While the two efforts described here share similar perspectives and strategies, the different institutional contexts had an impact on the implementation of practice-oriented design education. Parsons' interdisciplinary, experimental programme allowed for an open, exploratory and reflexive mode of teaching and for a full course to be structured around practice-oriented design. In comparison, the course at TU Delft was constrained due to the established, institutionalized requirements of a large design engineering school, the larger group of students with less diversity in their educational backgrounds, the industry-oriented curriculum and a techno-centric assignment. Nonetheless, the two efforts shared many of the same challenges and learning.

At Parsons, students were able to use practice theory to do research and analysis despite having limited backgrounds in social theory, and were able to apply it in a limited way within strategic thinking. The students made heavy use of the three elements in the image-skills-stuff model in their research, which was not surprising as it was a key component of reading, lectures and discussions. However, students sometimes emphasized the distinctions between elements at the expense of describing the relationships between them and investigating how these relationships have changed in the past and might change in the future. The typical visual representation of the three-part image-skills-stuff model, which puts each element in its own self-contained circle, might also contribute to this focus on the individual elements rather than the dynamics between them. For example, one group used bullet point lists to categorize the outcomes of their research into these three areas. Another group used the linked model to interpret the practice of cooking, but only to show how the links between practice elements stand as impediments to change. Although these links were emphasized in lessons, more emphasis is clearly needed, as is design-relevant research to help describe such movements between elements, such as Arsel and Bean's elaboration of taste (2013) and Magaudda's circuit of practice heuristic (2011).

Students easily adopted the use of leverage points as an organizing concept to identify opportunities in their research for developing strategic design

interventions. For example, students suggested that communal student situations can create conditions for developing new cleaning practices, or that emergencies can present opportunities to engage people in low-energy cooking experiments.

Despite their application of practice theory and related theoretical orientations to research and analysis, Parsons students seemed to forget their findings when developing design concepts. Students were uncertain about what forms of interventions would be appropriate to a practice-oriented approach. Many outcomes were either simple and conventional or abstract and modest. Some of the concepts were oriented toward changing practices generally, but they were not framed in terms of the models used to interpret practices. Some of the more intriguing examples were vague suggestions of opportunities, such as a leftovers cookbook intended to help people reduce food waste, or integrating new practices of low-energy cooking within efforts to change dietary practices. Others described existing ideas, such as cooking cooperatives, energy-saving technology and public awareness campaigns, in the language of practice-oriented design.

At Parsons, students worked together with the instructor throughout the course to negotiate abstract and incomplete ideas. They were challenged not only to learn, but also to contribute in developing the approach. Fortunately, struggling and improvising with new and contentious ideas is an important learning objective in design education. Being transparent about the experimental nature of the approach and being accommodating to the students' struggles helped assuage their frustrations. While students felt a sense that their final work was unfinished and somewhat unclear, they showed an appreciation and commitment to the approach for its application of systems thinking, criticality and experimentation. This may be due to the time spent in theoretical discussions, their focus in sustainability, or the university's academic culture.

At TU Delft, all groups created clear concepts expressed as rough prototypes with market introduction plans. However, practice-oriented design was barely taken beyond the execution of the assignments in the three-part exercise provided to the students. Even in this exercise, practices were explored superficially. Opportunities for systemic change were identified but seldom taken further in the concept phase, and there was little critical reflection on broader effects of concepts or final designs.

The Delft students performed parts of the prescribed assignment, such as collecting information on breakfast in different cultures, describing breakfast

through history, visiting professional restaurant kitchens and exploring the history of food preservation. However, these inquiries were typically superficial. When describing breakfast habits in the past, for example, without giving any sources, students compared “the old days” when there was time for an elaborate breakfast to “these days,” when breakfast is rushed. This resulted in the following design brief: “People want to spend less time on the less fun parts of life. Breakfast is one of these less fun parts... with the press of a button we want people to have a clean table, so they can be right on time for work and still have a good meal.” This represents an un-critical, techno-centric view of practices. Furthermore, the focus on sustainability was overlooked. This lack of nuanced interpretation might reflect the very specific design brief, the rigid course set-up, the demanding list of deliverables, students’ time pressures, or the description of overly simplified concepts in the course materials, such as the statement about drinking beer with a “one-dimensional concept” of fun.

There were some examples of groups working with the relationship between design and shifts in practices to identify opportunities for systemic change. For example, an historic inquiry on food preservation led a group to conclude that in order to retain traditional techniques for nutrient-rich food preservation, the image of preserved products needs to change. However, this notion was not reflected in their final concept, an electrical sauce dispenser for professional kitchens.

In general, students were hesitant in critically reflecting on the broader implications of their designs. One design, a fully automated cocktail machine to “make any cocktail with the press of a button” was intended to make bartenders’ work easier and more efficient. Students did not reflect on the potential impact on bartending jobs. The lack of criticality can at least partly be due to students’ excitement about presenting to a company client. They focused on selling their ideas, not exploring potential negative effects.

### ***The challenges and opportunities of teaching practice-oriented design***

Practice-oriented design does not fit easily within the existing institutional and regulatory frameworks for design education. Here, we consider this problem, and relevant opportunities, in relation to time constraints, to the relationship between design education and industry, and to prevalent ways of teaching design.

### *Time constraints*

The typical single project-based structure of studio courses means that there is little time for the thorough gathering of data on a practice. Due to the limited length of studio projects within one quarter or semester, and with the pressure of other courses, students do not always have time to perform the research, observation and analysis that it takes to gain an understanding of a practice. It proved challenging to balance teaching a critical approach with practical training for design and research skills without some aspect falling short. Institutional accreditation requirements also enforce programme curricula and the ratio of studio education to other coursework.

One way to adapt within these constraints is to create a longitudinal, cyclical structure linking studio courses: the output of one studio becomes the input for the next. This addresses the importance practice theoretical approaches place on understanding the patterning of and shifts in practice over time and the cyclical relationship between design and consumption.

However, instituting changes like this will require coordinated work at both the institutional (i.e., distribution and sequencing of coursework) and regulatory levels (i.e., gaining approval for curricular shifts).

Until this happens, practice-oriented approaches will need either to fit within existing design education frameworks or to be conducted externally, for example, in non-degree granting certificate programmes or workshops, which presents an additional opportunity for developing and testing practice-oriented design teaching strategies.

### *The legacy of design education's relationship to industry*

Practice-oriented approaches are also hampered because the priorities and structure of design education continue to be influenced by the implicit and explicit understanding that the primary goal of design education is the production of capable professionals to serve industry, despite loftier goals put forth in curricular strategies and university marketing. One manifestation of this is the embedding of roles such as user and producer into descriptions of the end goals of education. A parallel problem is that students tend to view the acquisition of marketable design skills, such as proficiency with design software and knowledge of materials, to be in conflict with the efforts required for critical thinking. Furthermore, the reporting and presentation methods of typical studio critique do not reward or require students to justify their design decisions with sources or research. Therefore, students have little incentive to develop critical thinking skills, to analyze complex data or to

apply insights from research to design, because these skills are not valued or visible in the outputs (models, renderings and verbal descriptions) upon which grades are based.

Partnerships between industry and education, while beneficial for institutional funding and career development for students, may hinder the application of critical thinking by students. Additionally, students tend to default to normative concepts of value in everyday practices, like ease-of-use, which can get in the way of sustainability objectives. For example, at TU Delft, an industry partner provided variations of a new technology in both manually-powered and battery-powered forms. Students were charged with finding new applications for either form of the technology. Nine out of ten groups included in their requirements the terms “easy to use”, “user friendly”, “quick”, “without wasting time”, “efficient” and “saving time and effort”. This approach, which favoured the battery-powered variant of the technology, is problematic in terms of energy consumption and could be avoided in a more integrated practice-oriented approach.

More generally, our experiences suggest that practice-oriented design is based on a meta-theory of cultural operations that is qualitatively different from existing theories of design that operate *within* the field. A practice approach is difficult to integrate within existing curricula because it clashes with mainstream approaches and models that simplify design aims. Instead of reflecting dominant paradigms of design practice, which tend to centralize products or interactions (Shove et al. 2007), design education that focuses on systemic issues such as sustainability must necessarily promote alternative approaches that tackle the dynamics of socio-technical systems rather than tweaking products, efficiencies and behaviours.

### ***Ways forward for practice-oriented design education***

Four questions can shape a discussion on the future of practice-oriented design curricula:

- 1) How should a practice-oriented project be defined in terms of scope, including time-span and wider interconnections between practices? Following Shove (2009), what are the boundaries of practice? What is the practice-oriented alternative to problem-formulation in a design project?
- 2) What are the intended outcomes of the practice-oriented design process? What are the appropriate forms of intervention? Who should initialize them? How can they be assessed?

3) How does one negotiate the problematic concept of future practices? How can practices be conceptualized longitudinally as the outcome of “careers” (Shove and Araujo 2010)? What are the aims of an intervention: a specific change such as pro-environmental behaviour, the open-ended change of critical design, an immediate change, long term transitions, or something else?

4) What is the potential of practice-oriented design, and what are its implications, as a critical discourse on the practice of designing? Can practice-oriented design encompass the ethical dimensions of design practice? Is practice-oriented design too small a construct that it might lead us to overlook other forms of cooperation, other settings for the work of design, or different ideas about who designs?

The first two questions illuminate a need for more practice-oriented design case studies. Students benefit from concrete illustrations or models of practice-oriented design that invite analogous thinking. Existing case studies of shifts in practice — such as Japan’s Cool Biz campaign (Kestenbaum 2007) or Ryou’s Save Food From the Fridge project — are useful, but a wider variety of cases are needed to illuminate the range possible.

With respect to the third question, this chapter has discussed the application of practice-oriented design in conjunction with two future-oriented approaches, living lab and Vision in Product design. Subsequent teaching efforts have incorporated other approaches, including design-oriented scenarios, transitions management and backcasting (Rotmans and Loorbach 2009; Quist 2007).

Finally, to address the fourth question regarding the potential of practice-oriented design, we suggest further discussion on the concept of the critical studio. Design education should equip students to negotiate frequent transitions between criticality and design, a distinction that contains an inherent paradox. Since design is a subjective, prescriptive act that necessitates a value judgment, it seems incompatible with the abstract, analytical, open-ended nature of critical thinking. While practice-oriented design education can impart conventional design skills to students, it also fosters the valuable skills of critical thinking, radical creativity and learning to work with system dynamics. Although universities are increasingly recognizing the significance of these skills for tackling issues that require systemic change, such as sustainability, they have not yet adequately institutionalized them. Accreditation standards and curricular objectives should prioritize acquisition of these skill sets and



re-articulate the relationship between education and industry in ways that prioritize criticality and experimentation.

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We thank our supervisors, course coordinators, coaches and students for their support, enthusiasm and cooperation in these experimental efforts.

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**Frode Alfnes** is Professor in Food Economics and Marketing at the UMB School of Economics and Business, Norwegian University of Life Sciences and Adjunct Research Professor at the National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO), Oslo. He has mainly worked on issues related to consumer preferences for various types of food characteristics. His work has been published in journals like *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, *European Review of Agricultural Economics* and *Food Policy*. He is also the lead author on the chapter on “Nonmarket valuation: Experimental methods” in the 2011 *Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Food Consumption and Policy*.

**Jonathan Bean** received his PhD in spatial ethnography from UC Berkeley and is completing a post-doctoral fellowship at Parsons The New School for Design, where he is helping to establish a Master of Arts programme in Design Studies. His work is interdisciplinary and deals with domesticity, technology, consumer culture and taste. A co-authored article, which uses practice theory to develop the concept of the taste regime, is in press at the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

**Svein Ole Borgen** is Research Professor at the National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO), Oslo. His current research is within the economics and sociology of the food system (agribusiness and aquaculture), institutional theory and behavioural economics. He has published in *Governance*, *British Food Journal*, *The Journal of Socioeconomics*, *Food Economics* and *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*.

**Helene Brembeck** is Professor in Ethnology and Co-director of the Centre for Consumer Science (CFK) at the University of Gothenburg. Her research interests are parenthood and childhood in consumer culture, including food and eating, and she has published several articles, books and anthologies in this field. Recent international publications include articles in *Culture Unbound*, *Critical Public Health*, *Distinktion*, and *Children's Geographies*, and book chapters in Czarniawska and Löfgren's (eds.) *Managing Overflow in Affluent Societies* (2012), Peter Jackson and the CONANX Group's *Food Words: Essays in Culinary Culture* (2013) and Belasco, Murcott and Jackson's (eds.) *The Handbook of Food Research* (2013).

**Toke Haunstrup Christensen** is Senior Researcher at the Danish Building Research Institute at Aalborg University, Denmark. He holds a PhD in technology and everyday life studies, and works in general with qualitative and quantitative studies of the relationship between everyday life, energy use and sustainability with a particular focus on households' use of technologies. This includes studies of energy saving in households, use of information and communication technology (ICT) in an environmental perspective, smart grid technologies and communication about climate and energy saving practices. His theoretical approach is primarily based on theories of everyday life and practice theory.

**Cecilia Fredriksson** is a Professor of European Ethnology at the Department of Service Management, Lund University. Her research and teaching has revolved around new directions in the cultural theory of consumption, fashion and retail management. She is the head of research at the department and is also in charge of several research projects on sustainability, retail and tourism.

**Freja Friis** is a PhD student at the Danish Building Research Institute, a part of Aalborg University, Denmark. Her work is concentrated on sociological issues of energy consumption. From a user and everyday life perspective, her research focuses on the constitution of households' daily energy use and consumption. Freja Friis' analytical framework is based on qualitative methods and in particular social practice theory to understand the complexities within families' energy consumption. In her recent PhD study, she studies how electric vehicles, as a new smart grid technology, change and constitute social changes in households' everyday life.

**Kirsten Gram-Hanssen** is Senior Researcher at the Danish Building Research Institute, Aalborg University. She studies household consumption related to energy and environment as well as everyday life and the meaning of the home for different types of residents. She uses qualitative and quantitative methods, analyzed within different theoretical approaches including sociological theories of consumption, practice theory and science-technology studies. Her research documents the variation in households' energy consumption and explores the explanations behind these differences. Kirsten Gram-Hanssen is the author of more than 100 publications, including more than 30 peer-reviewed articles.

**Bente Halkier** is professor at the Department of Communication, Business and Information Technologies, Roskilde University, Denmark. Her empirical research focuses on behaviour change communication, media uses and food consumption in everyday life. She is the author of the book *Consumption Challenged. Food in Medialised Everyday Lives* (Ashgate, 2010) and has published in e.g. *Critical Public Health*; *Food Culture and Society*; and *Journal of Consumer Culture*.

**Jenniina Halkoaho** is University Teacher at the Department of Marketing at the University of Vaasa in Finland. She holds a PhD in Economic Sciences and is currently doing research on interpersonal communication of consumers within the local newspaper. Her research interests include consumer behaviour, consumption experiences and branding, especially in the field of Business-to-Consumer products. Her recent research interests are in identity-related consumption of media content, such as TV programmes. She has also taken part in the Consumer Behaviour Erasmus Network (COBEREN), focusing on cross-cultural research on European consumer behaviour. She has previously published in journals such as *Place Branding* and *Young*.

**Mette Weinreich Hansen** is Assistant Professor at the Department of Planning in the research group Foodscapes, Innovation and Networks (FINE), Aalborg University – Copenhagen. She works with food-related research in an interdisciplinary context involving both technical and sociological issues of food production. In several research projects she has worked with alternative food networks and the value issues of organic food production. The food chain perspective and the structural challenges in this complexity have been a central point in understanding food production and consumption. Recent

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**Lena Hansson** is a Senior lecturer at the Department of Business Administration and researcher at the Centre for Consumer Science (CFK) at School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg. She was head of the conference team and coordinated the second Nordic Conference on Consumer Research, NCCR2012. She holds a PhD in Business administration and is currently doing research on the digitalization of consumer culture and accessibility within the field of retail.

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**Sandra Hillén** is a PhD student in ethnology at the Centre for Consumer Science, University of Gothenburg. Her main research area is children as co-researchers, and her theoretical framework is based on the concepts of empowerment, power relations and governmentality. She is interested in what happens when children are admitted into areas that they have traditionally been excluded from, primarily the area of research. She has been involved in various projects with a focus on children and food. She is currently working with her PhD project *Barn, mat och hälsa – att involvera barn som medforskare* (*Food, children and health – involving children as co-researchers*).

**Beatrice D’Hombres** (PhD) – Dr. D’Hombres has worked at the European Commission – Joint Research Centre, Unit of Econometrics and Applied Statistics since 2006. She holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Clermont-Ferrand, France. Her research interests are in labour economics and applied econometrics, with several publications in academic journals.



**Barbro Johansson** is an associate professor in ethnology and researcher at the Centre for Consumer Science, University of Gothenburg. Her research area is consumption in children's everyday lives and issues concerning generation and participation. Research projects deal with children in consumer society; children's participation in city planning; parents and children's attitudes and habits concerning food and health; children as co-researchers of foodscapes and children and culture consumption. She has published in *Food, Culture and Society*, *Culture Unbound*, *Childhood* and *Food and Foodways*.

**Niels Heine Kristensen** is Professor in Food Policy and Innovation at the Department of Planning, AAU Copenhagen in the research group Foodscapes, Innovation and Networks (FINE). He holds an MSc from the Technical University of Denmark and a PhD (Socio-technology) from the Department of Social Sciences at DTU. He studies innovation processes and competence building in food and environmental sectors; innovative and environmental translations and performances in agriculture, food companies and other sectors; regulatory agencies (public and private); and he is involved in developing constructive governance perspectives on environmental, sustainability and food issues in distributed food systems and in relationships between the concepts of consumers/users/citizens.

**Lenneke Kuijer** is completing her doctoral research in design at Delft University of Technology, studying the relationship between design and energy-consuming household practices. In her research, she explores the implications of a practice theoretical approach for industrial design through a series of design projects. Her empirical interests include bathing, thermal comfort and cooking practices. Lenneke has a master's degree in Industrial Design Engineering and has done part of her PhD research at the Sociology Department of Lancaster University. She has published in the *Journal of Design Research* and in *Transactions of CHI* (forthcoming).

**Pirjo Laaksonen** is professor of Marketing at the University of Vaasa, Finland. Her main research interests cover the meaning(s) of consumption and consumer goods, involvement, shopping, purchasing behavior, and the contexts of consumption. Her recent research has focused on the meanings of responsibility and its different manifestations in consumption actions.

**Minna Lammi** is Head of Research at the National Consumer Research Centre, Finland. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Helsinki. She is currently working with a project that studies cultural representations of economy in the Finnish public sphere from the early 1950s to the new millennium. Her research focuses on the construction of consumer society and the interconnection between consumerism and citizenship. She is interested in symbolic and aesthetic aspects of politics and consumption.

**Matthias Lehner** is PhD candidate at the School of Economics and Management at Lund University. He has an interdisciplinary background with a strong focus on sustainability and food systems. His doctoral project deals with the role of the retailer-consumer interaction in respect to sustainable food consumption. Matthias' research interests also include ethical consumerism, collective consumer action, and the role of branding in sustainable consumption.

**Hanna Leipämaa-Leskinen** holds a PhD in Marketing and is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Marketing, University of Vaasa, Finland. Her research interests focus on cultural consumer research, consumer identity, food consumption, sustainable consumption and poor consumers.

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**Magdalena Petersson McIntyre** is Associate Professor at the Centre for Consumer Science, Gothenburg. She holds a PhD in ethnology and is currently doing research on the cultural meanings of mass-produced packaging and aesthetic labour in retail. She has worked with gender and consumption in several research projects and contributed to the study of gender, technology and consumption by looking at objects that were designed to challenge gender norms. She has also studied fashion and the role of dress in pole dancing, as well as second-hand markets and normative dimensions of taste. Recent research interests concern the digitalization of consumption practices.

**Minna Ruckenstein** works as a Senior Researcher at the National Consumer Research Centre in Helsinki. She holds a PhD in anthropology and is currently doing research on everyday analytics, particularly focusing on self-tracking technologies. Her earlier research contributes to the study of childhood, consumption and capitalism by looking at technology-related practices from the perspectives of materiality and economic developments. She has recently published in *The Journal of Consumer Culture*, *Childhood*, *Information, Communication and Society* and *Children's Geographies* (forthcoming).

**Mari Rysst** is Head of Research at the National Institute for Consumer Research. Her research areas are children, youth, gender, body ideals, popular culture, consumption, race, ethnicity, inclusion and exclusion. In her PhD she discussed the issue of sexualisation of childhood. Her present project is about race, ethnicity, consumption and inclusion among children in a multi-cultural suburb of Oslo.

**Sara Sardari Sayyar** is a PhD candidate at the School of Architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden, and her current research is focused on investigating the role of spatial structure of cities on developed functional diversity in them. Retail uses, as one of the most influential activities on experienced urban vitality, are chosen to be further studied to develop a deeper understanding of how urban form, structured and shaped in urban planning and design, acts as a means to develop spatial structures in our cities that are adequate for current and more complex urban economy.

**Kakee Scott** is an adjunct instructor at Parsons The New School for Design and a first year doctoral student at Lancaster University, working between design and sociology. Her research interests include design for sustainability, ordinary consumption, socio-technical change, and, more recently, design for economic futuring. During her master's thesis research, conducted in industrial ecology at Delft University of Technology, Kakee produced an exploratory study for the EU Living Lab project that has subsequently been presented in an article for *Design Studies*.

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**Ardis Storm-Mathisen** holds a PhD in Sociology and is Senior Researcher at SIFO, the National Institute for Consumer Research. Her work has concentrated on the everyday consumption of children, young people and families, focussing primarily on consumption related to the body and to digital media, and with respect to the formation of identity. Her research interests are also in the epistemologies and methodologies of consumer research. Current research projects tap into how new technologies such as NFC and RFID impact on the everyday life of consumers. She has published in *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, *Fashion Theory* and *Human IT*.

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**Lill Vramo**, researcher and PhD student at the National Institute for Consumer Research, is an anthropologist who has done research in Norway, India and Bangladesh. Her PhD is on Transnational Consumption: Indian Sikhs living in Norway and their networks and family in Punjab and the UK. Vramo has recently been involved in the project "Valuing Wool". Her fields of interest are migration and transnational consumption, consumption and ethicality, and material culture.

**Karin Wagner** is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Applied IT, Chalmers University of Technology and University of Gothenburg. She holds a PhD in art history and visual studies, and her research interests include visual communication, photography, and new media. She participated in the project *From celluloid to pixels. Network and ritual around mobile phone cameras and e-cinema* 2006-2008. Within the project "The (Un)sustainable Package" she has studied the packaging design of organic food, the semiotics of pharmaceutical packaging and the tactile dimension of packaging. She has published in *Visual Communication*, *Photographies*, *Photography & Culture* and *Journal of Cultural Economy* (forthcoming).